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The European Public Sphere in Times of Crisis: Disentangling the Debate

Guest editor: Hans-Jörg TRENZ

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The European Public Sphere in Times of Crisis: Disentangling the Debate

Hans-Jörg TRENZ*

The European Public Sphere in Times of Crisis: Disentangling the Debate. Introductory Remarks

Over the past two decades, the European public sphere has emerged as one of these scientific meta-narratives (like European identity or European democracy) with a potential to bridge theory and practice and define a common interdisciplinary agenda in European studies. Academics, intellectuals and political reformists have been united in the attempt to lay the social foundations of European integration and confine its ‘unity in diversity’. There has been a long debate whether a European public sphere is feasible and desirable and what could be its possible mechanisms of emergence and manifestations. In the most fundamental sense, this debate has been linked to the unfinished constitutionalisation of the EU, i.e. the question of how the EU should consolidate as a political order and on which basis or through which principles its legitimacy should be grounded (Habermas, 2006). The broad literature on this topic has proposed different models of a European unifying public sphere or differentiated Europeanised public spheres (Schlesinger, 1999; Trenz, 2007; Wessler *et al.*, 2008; Koopmans & Statham, 2010). Through expanding forms of communication and debates, Europe should be made salient and relevant for the citizens. Participation in meaningful and shared communication was seen as a precondition for citizens’ inclusion and possible identification as members of a political community. The public sphere, in short, should turn European citizenship meaningful and consequential. It should not only empower individual citizens to make use of their civic, political and social rights but also bind them together and engage them in a process of public opinion and will formation.

Little attention has been paid instead to the fact that a public sphere is not only needed for the consolidation of political order and the integration of a political community. Public sphere dynamics can be also made responsible for the breakdown of political order and the emergence of new conflicts and cleavages that divide social groups. The current economic and political crisis fundamentally impacts on how citizens, media, public intellectuals and political elites perceive the legitimacy of the project of European integration. Given the multidimensional character of the current crisis, which affects citizens differently and generates diverse responses across the European political space, the ‘Euro-crisis’ has an extraordinarily high potential for generating a deep and ongoing politicization of the EU within and across national domestic politics (Statham & Trenz, 2012). Understanding how contestations of the ‘Euro-crisis’ in different public arenas (Eurozone and non Eurozone countries) interrelate is, therefore, particularly pressing. In this new scenario, the people of Europe do not necessarily *unite* in opposition to established EU power and hegemony. The new resistances against European integration also *divide* the people of Europe along traditional left-right and new

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pro- and anti- European cleavages. Opposition and support with the project of European integration find expression through traditional offline and new online media formats within and across national public spheres. Mediated public debates can influentially translate the Euro-crisis into: conflicts within a country; conflicts between EU countries, or blocs of countries (North versus South, East versus West or centre versus periphery); or over democracy (elites versus citizens), or between social constituencies (winners and losers of debt reduction measures). Interdisciplinary public sphere research is useful here to understand how redistributive and identitarian conflicts overlap and shape belonging of the European citizens and public perceptions of the legitimacy of the EU as a political project.

In line with the 'cultural turn' in European integration studies in Europe and worldwide, this issue of the *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* collects contributions that deal with recent transformation of political communication, public sphere, the media, protest and mobilization, empirically and theoretically. The issue on 'The European Public sphere in times of crisis' opens a forum for cutting-edge research in the fields of political communication, the media, collective identity formation and the socio-cultural dynamics of European integration. In particular, through the focus on public sphere transformations in Europe we aim to advance interdisciplinary research in European studies on the topics of a) media, citizens' participation and democratic legitimacy; b) the transformation of citizens' allegiances and identities; and c) the reconfiguration of the political space between the nation state and Europe.

The economic and financial problems that the EU and the Eurozone currently face have re-opened the debate on the possibility of a European public sphere and its socio-cultural prerequisites. The new round of constitutional and institutional reform that has been initiated by the heads of states and government in response to crisis will have perhaps the most intriguing influence on the possible shape of a European space of communication. In light of these challenges, it seems that the prospects of a genuine European public sphere have turned rather bleak. Public debates in response to crisis are driven by new re-nationalising dynamics of contestation. Furthermore, the new rounds of intergovernmental negotiations and the strengthening of the executives are perceived as contributing to Europe's *democratic deficit* instead of reducing it; nation-state interests and politics have been more visible and more definite than the European interests, and the national political sphere still remains the primary arena of public debates over the future of the EU.

On the other hand, European Union and its member states are expected to join their efforts to deal with the crisis and to recognise their shared interests and identity. We also observe that public debates and contestation of the 'Eurocrisis' are manifested in redistributive and identitarian conflicts which are interlinked in a particular way to allow for cross-cutting allegiances across the European space. At this point, we propose with this issue to recapitulate and further advance the debate on the European public sphere. The contributions collected in this issue describe current trends of public sphere and media developments in times of crisis. They help to conceptualise the Europeanisation or re-nationalisation of existing public spheres and media. These insights are needed to discuss the role for the New Media in the current transformation of the European communicative and identitarian space. Readers will further find answers to the political and normative questions of how a European communication space should look like and how it can be promoted. We hope that this debate between scholars from different disciplines and from different educational and cultural backgrounds will in itself be a contribution to the proliferation of a European public sphere that is not on-

ly confined to the consolidation of a European identity and solidarity but also contributes to the mobilization of political and social action.

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The Emergence of Two European Public Spheres: Center vs. Periphery

Abstract: This article discusses a topic of great salience: the Eurozone crisis and its consequences on the future of the European project. The paper argues in favor of a divide triggered by the crisis between the center and the periphery of the EU. This gap impacts both on the economic and financial prospects of the Union as well as on the emergence of a European public sphere.

Keywords: eurozone crisis; centre vs. periphery; European public sphere.

1. Global periphery, European periphery

If we look closely at what is happening today in the European Union, we could summarise the situation like this: the “periphery” is questioning the center. “The periphery debt crisis threatens to engulf the core in huge bank capital shortfalls and fiscal liabilities, trapping both in protracted stagnation. This reflects possibly intractable eurozone design flaws” (Das & Roubini, 2012). The main question is this: which periphery? Traditionnaly, periphery used to have a geografic connotation, too. It was the same as the “Third world”, and from a spatial point of view it had the dimension of continents: Africa, Asia, and South America. We represent our planet in a more simple way: the “Center” (the Western, developed world) and the “periphery” (embodied, mostly, by the above mentioned continents).

Studies on the relationships between the metropolis (center) and the periphery examine the possibility for emancipation and development of the periphery. In essence, these studies show the following: the periphery processes messages coming from the center in accordance with certain specific contexts. The emancipation of the periphery is closely related to the quality of this transformation. In fact, the relationship between the two can be seen in terms of competition: the center wants to preserve its position (including benefits) and the periphery seeks to emancipate and to stop dependence on the center (disadvantages). Therefore, this relationship was often interpreted as one between the exploiters and the exploited. The latter

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category – be it persons, groups, or communities –, besides many disadvantages and obstacles, has a statute that keeps it alert. Immanuel Wallerstein, one of the fathers of the center-periphery theory, saw this with acuity: “In general, being in deep conflict, the exploited ones have a better understanding of the current state-of-affairs. It is in their own interest to have a correct perception and to expose the hypocrisy of leaders. They are less interested in ideological deviation” (Wallerstein, 1992, p.11).

The rise of the emerging countries, the shift of power from West to East represents a confirmation of this model. There is a “message” of the metropolis (of developed countries) embodied in what is called *globalization*. Today, few people still doubt that globalization has been built initially to serve the interests of the developed world, especially those of America. However, the real beneficiaries of globalization have been other countries. Here is what Kupchan says: “Brazil, India, Turkey, and other rising democracies are benefiting from the shift of economic vitality from the developed to the developing world... China is proving particularly adept at reaping globalization’s benefits” (Kupchan, 2012). It is true that globalization brings a series of new elements, such as cash flow, technology, which could not be controlled entirely by the developed countries. This gave the possibility to emerging countries to develop a more appropriate historical response to a completely new development context. Thus, the reaction of the “periphery” has surprised the metropolis and has surpassed it in strategic terms.

For some time, even in Europe one speaks of “periphery”; and not only in Europe but in the European Union, as well; not only in the European Union, but even within the eurozone area. What does “periphery” mean (or could mean) in the European Union? Willen Buiter (2011) proposes a specific criterion: countries facing serious financial difficulties. From this perspective, he speaks of five countries that would represent the “periphery”: Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy. The author also mentions a “soft” periphery, consisting of three other countries: Belgium, Austria and France¹. These are countries barely touched by the financial crisis; they were affected by its impact, but not in a profound way.

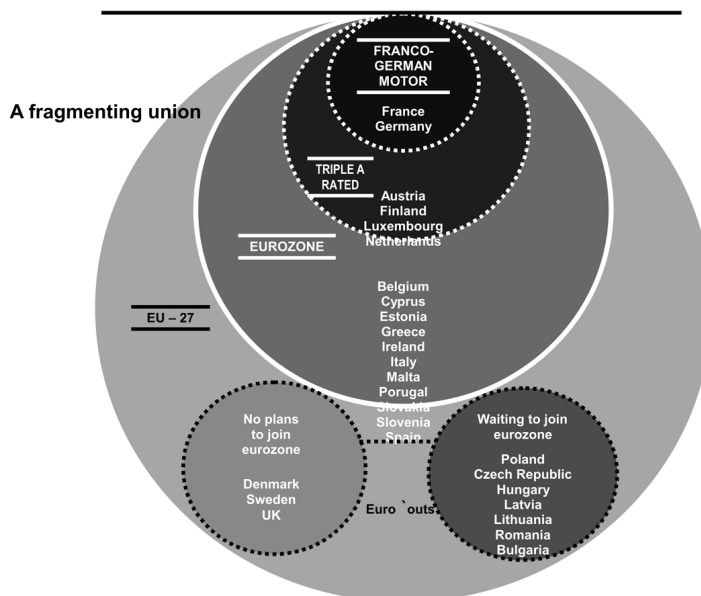
Why did the author use such a criterion? Facing the difficulties, these countries may have in mind the possibility of leaving the euro zone – each or all together, “an event to which I attach a probability of no more than 5 per cent”. If it were just about Greece, things would not be so serious; an exit by Greece alone would be manageable. Greece accounts for only 2.2 per cent of eurozone’s GDP and 4 per cent of public debt. A Eurozone exit by Italy would bring down much of the European banking sector. But if it were about all five, the gravity of the situation couldn’t be avoided: “Disorderly sovereign defaults and eurozone exits by all five periphery states – would drag down not just the European banking system but also the North Atlantic financial system and the international exposed parts of the rest of the global banking system. The resulting financial crisis would trigger a global depression that would last for years, with GDP likely to fall by more than 10 per cent and unemployment in the West reaching 20 per cent or more. Emerging markets would be dragged down too”. Exits by Germany and other fiscally and competitively strong countries would mean the breaking of the Union. In such a case, calculations would be useless.

¹ In the article “The driver and the passenger”, October 15th, 2011, *The Economist* affirms that France has a financial fragility which directly affects the eurocrisis. It has the largest debt and biggest deficit compared to GDP ratio among AAA rated countries, and its banks are most exposed in the south of Europe. It did not have a budget surplus since 1974. „France is the weakest of the strong, or strongest of the weak”. We have made these remarks in order to understand both the behaviour of France in the crisis, and the debates and political positions of this country, which could be understood by reference to its financial situation.

2. “Multi-speed Europe” erodes the Union

According to Alex Stub, Finnish Minister for European Affairs, it would not be necessary for some countries to leave the euro area. “I don’t see some countries dropping out, but I see countries inside losing their influence” (Stub, 2011). What would be required is only a repositioning of them in a concentric structure of the power of influence. In the middle of this structure would be situated the six European countries rated triple A. They should have greater say in economic affairs within the single currency and act as its inner “core”. For this it is not necessary to promote new rules, or to create new institutions. It is a fact that would impose itself: “A country that is not triple A rated is not going to be the best one to give you advice on your public finance”. This way, “multi-speed Europe” becomes a fact. According to the Finnish minister, there are three concentric circles (of influence) in Europe: the EU-6, comprising triple A-rated countries, the eurozone countries and the EU-27.

Figure 1. A fragmenting Union, *Financial Times*, November 17, 2011.



Why do we insist on this somewhat paradoxical theme: the periphery of the euro zone area? If we talked about the periphery of the continent, everything would be understandable. EU periphery is much less acceptable. A Union has rules, rigors and standards. When we speak about the Union’s “periphery”, the first question is: how could this occur? How come it has not been prevented? What are the responsibilities of the country(ies) belonging to the periphery and the responsibilities of the Union?

Lately, one has been talking serenely about the “speeds” of the European countries. It is forgotten or ignored that “speeds” tell us, in fact, about differences. The different “speeds” which represent the *policy wisdom of each country* is something natural. Uncorrelated speeds, unattended speeds, leading to gaps, refer to “diseases” and “sick” countries of Europe, they refer to the suffering, which tend to cement and even deepen. Whether we like it or not, the

more we speak about speeds, the more the idea of Union fades, and appears helpless. From the Union's perspective, speeds leading to gaps can be regarded as a disease that erodes the vitality of the whole.

The emergence of sovereign debts shows that there was a relationship – a special one, it could be said – between metropolitan banks and states that are now placed in the “periphery”. This was the time when banks granted loans very easily, based on the idea that governments were solvent. And now we realise that governments are no longer solvent. Where was the Union when these debts were created, when the higher deficits limits set by the Maastricht Treaty were violated?

The fact that the Union did not intervene and prevent makes the problem of *sharing responsibilities* for the situation created within the “periphery” even more up to date, and which now threatens the whole union; sharing responsibilities must include the states concerned, the banks that have granted loans and the Union.

3. Greece's impossible math

If it didn't exist, the Greek crisis should have been invented to better understand the relationship between the Union and the new financial order about to be born. The Greek crisis represents the “mandatory reference” to understand all these things. Since there was a lot written about Greece, we will present briefly the analysis made on the financial situation of this country by Martin Feldstein (2012).

At the end of last year Greece's budget deficit was 9 percent of its GDP. In other words, Greece has to borrow the amount of 9 percentage points of its GDP in order to be able to operate as a state. The country's debt reported to GDP was of 150% during the same period. Although it borrowed a lot, Greece still needs new loans to be able to operate. Due to its very special situation, Greece could not borrow money from the capital market. Therefore, the only solution was to support the country with significant loans from the IMF and the European Central Bank. This is what happened. Recently, in Europe, it was decided that Greece should receive another bail-out worth of 130 billion euros. This comes on top of other bail-outs. To understand the situation of Greece, it is necessary to mention that only the interest on up to now lent funds represents 6% of the country's GDP. Greece can only roll over the existing debts. But a rollover like this also means an increase of the interest amounts on the outstanding amounts, which leads to an increase of the total debt.

How should Greece act in order to achieve a sustainable path? The fundamental priority would be to reduce the ratio between its national debt and its GDP. The first condition for this purpose would be to increase the GDP. But Greece's GDP keeps falling. This year it is estimated that Greek economy will shrink by 5 percent, the fifth consecutive year of contraction. “Greece really has suffered: between 2007 and 2012 its economy is expected to have shrunk by almost a fifth” (*The Economist*, 2012), which makes the ratio between public debt volume and the GDP grow automatically (it is estimated that at the end of this year it will reach 170 %. This year, unemployment would rise to more than 19% from 17,7 % in 2011 (*Financial Times*, 2012). Cutting budgetary spending would be another way to achieve such a path, but it is limited, in the sense that these cuttings can be made only to a certain extent, beyond which adverse effects are obtained.

States that have experienced similar situations in history have also used another tool: reducing the value of the national currency, which made the products of that country competitive. Thus, exports were stimulated and the process of economic recovery began. Greece cannot resort to these solutions and it seems that it has no way out. Therefore, many authors, among them Martin Feldstein, argue that leaving the eurozone would be the only viable solution for this country. Otherwise, Greece will have to make, endlessly, more and more loans.

We are dealing with a new situation in which banks lend money with one hand (even if we are dealing with special banks such as the IMF or the European Central Bank) and take with another. A new *bank-bank* circuit appears, from which the real economy is removed. From the three actors who helped create the debt, only the states were left on the scene. The Union took the side of the powerful banks belonging to big European countries, and together kept a low profile, somewhere in the background of the turmoil caused by the economic crisis. The gesture is blamable not only because it means leaving periphery states behind, but also because it ensures the perpetuation of the metropolis-periphery dichotomy within the EU.

The evolution of Greece is important because it shows us the hopeless situation not only of this country, but also of the euro zone “periphery”. We have in mind the “periphery” of the euro zone and the “periphery” that did not join this area, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This European periphery does not have the fundamental right of any suburb; to process messages (policies) from the center, to conceive solutions, to find their own way out of crisis. Classical periphery has this right and has, at least theoretically, the hope of emancipation. *Financial periphery can only follow rules designed by the financing entity.*

4. We move away from the goal of the Marshall Plan

Since we are in Europe, it seems inexplicable that the lessons of the Marshall Plan were forgotten so fast, which contributed greatly to restore the Western part of the continent. The Marshall Plan involved a financial effort of \$ 171 billion from the United States (the dollar value of 1989, meanwhile the dollar has depreciated considerably). As indicated by Zbigniew Brzezinski, from this amount France received 45 billion, Italy – 20 billion, the United Kingdom – 38 billion and West Germany – 20 billion. Since it was a ten-year plan (1945-1955), the American contribution amounted to \$17 billion annually (Brzezinski, 1990). This money was all of it directed to the real economy, it was used for the construction of new buildings or restoration of old ones, the rise of new factories (hence the creation of new jobs), in other words, it was used to restart the economic activity in the countries devastated by war. Naturally, this support was added to their own impressive effort, which consisted of money invested by other European states and by European companies, and by the great sacrifices made by the population. The important thing here is not the amount, but its *destination*, that of moving the real economy. Thus began the process of rebuilding Europe.

The distance between the destination of the Marshall Plan’s financial support and today’s bail-outs is the same as the distance between two distinct eras. Right after the war, the target was a real economic recovery and the money would naturally follow this destination. Therefore, recovery was relatively rapid and lasting. Today, banks and their capital are the destination, while the real economy must serve this purpose. It is the difference between the international economic order and the financial order about to be born today. In the international order, the banking system served the economy, whereas in the financial one, the econ-

omy serves the banking system. If the Union does not restore normal relations between the banking and the economic systems, between these two and ??the values of the political system, then it will weaken its own foundation. The more it will put itself in the service of the banking system, the less it will be accepted and will be felt more oppressive.

5. The economic level of the crisis

There is another source of the problems that the countries in the euro zone periphery are facing today: performance gaps that cannot be funded. This is difficult to solve and to place in a sustainable equation. If we look more closely at the EU, it is not hard to see that the EU is marked by “structural imbalances”, that come to the surface as commercial imbalances and, ultimately, as debts. Therefore, it seems essential to better understand the peculiarities of the “economic level” of Europe, in order to picture the sources of its financial difficulties.

Martin Wolf (2011) quotes Thomas Mayer from Deutsche Bank, who wrote that “below the surface of the euro area’s public debt and banking crisis lies a balance-of-payments crisis caused by a misalignment of internal real exchange rates”. On the other hand, Wolf adds that “the crisis will be over if and only if the weaker countries regain competitiveness. At the moment, their structural external deficits are too large to be financed voluntarily”. Indeed, the commercial picture of the Union illustrates instructive situations of the state of the Union. Some members – most notably Germany and the Netherlands – have had large surpluses in trade with other EU member states and large current account surpluses year after year. Both countries currently enjoy account surpluses in excess of 5 % of gross domestic product. Others – most notably, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and France – have had large deficits in trade with other EU member states and large current account deficits year after year. Over the past 10 years, the Greek current deficit has averaged more than 13 % of the GDP. In Portugal, it has averaged almost 10 %. In France and Italy, the current account deficit has increased from less than 1% of the GDP in 2002-2006 to more than 3 % this year (Cameron, 2011).

Germany’s trade surplus with the EU – the 200 billion Euros – is for other countries a trade deficit of the same size. Therefore, while Germany can invest this amount, Greece, for instance, has to borrow an amount equal to the deficit of 13 % of its GDP, if it wants to maintain the level of imports.

Europe remains stuck too much in the financial-banking level, without insisting on the fundamental link between the economic performance and the financial-banking issues. If we look closely at the world today, we see that the most prosperous countries are those that have embraced real production as basic guidance for their development. There is much talk about the differences between Northern Europe, which is prosperous, and the South facing difficulties. The explanation given is the South’s exaggerated consumption, waste, etc. The fact that Northern Europe was much less affected by the crisis should be linked to the production orientation of these countries, led by Germany. If we accept this assumption, then we can say that the problems faced by the EU also come from syncope of the economic strategy of the Union. The Union does not exist from an economic strategic point of view that should be valid for the whole.

6. A huge amount of uncertainty

Even if faced with many financial and economic difficulties, the main problem of the European Union bears a specific name: *credibility*. The fact that the Union is the last area of the developed world that has not had a steady growth curve (this year, again, the Union will have a negative growth) is a fundamental problem of credibility. The Union has undergone a series of successive credibility tests, without success. The citizens' confidence in the Union thus fell. As John Mauldin and Jonathan Tepper remarked, „when confidence goes, the end is very near. It always comes faster than anyone expects, and it always seems to be unexpected” (2011, p. 43).

Lately in Europe a sequential approach has prevailed: “euro crisis”, “bail-outs”, “saving Greece”, etc. The Euro crisis brings back and restarts all the mistakes of the original design. We can say it outright: the euro crisis is therefore the crisis of the Union and one cannot be solved without the other. Therefore, in our opinion, the crisis should be used for a kind of re-designing of the Union. The redesign should not wait for the end of the crisis, but should be a part of the crisis resolution. Particular “cases” should be approached having the ensemble in mind, otherwise they cannot be resolved. The solution, in this case, is not to “settle” a case, but to prevent a similar one. Europe is dotted with many “Greeces”. We should be concerned not only with the current Greece, but also with the potential “Greeces” which are waiting to enter the scene. Europe is blocked by “today’s” problems and is delaying the issues that will affect it in the long run, in a way that is fundamental to its future. The way it evolves now, the Union shows an inconsistency which affects its efficiency and prestige. Credibility is fed by realistic measures, by the viability of responses to the crisis, and by anticipating situations that may appear. The financial pact is undoubtedly a positive thing. Austerity was a tool that became necessary. Not austerity is questionable, but the EU’s exclusive appeal to strictness. All this has generated a reaction from the markets, alarmed by the contraction effect of prolonged austerity. Even the IMF, known for its consistency (if not rigidity) and its orientation towards structural adjustment, “warns against over-zealous austerity” (*The Economist*, 2012).

We consider that the measures are not only unilateral and exclusive, but it is also a faulty timing. Not the financial pact (or at least its spirit) is questionable, but the fact that the next day after its adoption, the need for a development pact appears, which had not been included into the financial pact. The development pact is not the creation of the Union, but the result of debates questioning the vision proposed by the Union, focused on austerity. The Union gives the impression that it is always one step behind the reality or dominant trends about to arise: when the crisis emerged, the Union paused for a while and now we pay a cost by delaying the economic take-off; the emphasis on austerity only came about when the problem of growth and consumption stimulation was about to be felt.

All these feed a huge amount of uncertainty affecting not only the economy but the citizens' confidence, their attitude and their position towards the Union and its future. All this has a difficult to assess impact on what we call the European public sphere.

7. Are European themes framed in similar ways?

The idea that the European public sphere is permanently being built as EU-related themes are discussed is an indisputable gain derived from scholarly debates on the topic. The public

sphere has a particular dynamic, in line with the realities of EU development, of the debates and the interpretations over these realities. We shall not extensively discuss the numerous conceptualizations of the concept of the public sphere. We seek to assess the impact the EU crisis has had on the public opinion and on the European public sphere. We shall use in our assessment the views on the European public sphere adopted by Thomas Risse and Craig Calhoun.

Thomas Risse's formulation is essential. It states that the European public sphere "does not fall from heaven and does not preexist outside the social and political discourse. Rather it builds on the social and discursive practices that create a common reference horizon and at the same time, a transnational community of communication on the topics that affect us as <Europeans>, and not us as British, Germans or Dutch" (Risse, 2003). Put it differently, we cannot talk of a public sphere made by someone else and projected into the European space, but of a public sphere that is continuously being built in the process of public debates.

Prior to the publication of Risse's article, the debate over the European public sphere had gravitated around a quantitative perspective: how frequently are the European problems present in the media, how is the activity of the European institutions covered by the media from different countries, etc. This has led to a pessimistic conclusion: "there is no European public sphere to speak of in a meaningful sense given the rather low issue salience of European themes". Risse (2003) believed that the essence of the European public sphere consists of "analyzing media reporting on particular European issues". Here we observe the novelty of the analysis proposed by the author. We are tempted to think that adversarial discussions contradict the conditions for the existence of the public sphere. On the contrary, Risse remarked, the debates that bring together different points of view, even opposed points of view, are a requirement for the process of public opinion building. It is not the frequency of the debates over EU-related issues that is the problem here, but the framing of these issues, the perspective used to discuss and understand them so that they lead to similar judgements and points of view. Research has shown that "particular European themes are framed in rather similar ways across national media leading to similar interpretative schemes and structure of meaning" (Risse, 2003). We can have different points of view on the situation in Greece. However, the problem is if we discuss this topic from the perspective of promoting *European values*, of rescuing the euro, of consolidating the Union or, on the contrary, we analyze it in accordance with the national interest of any member state. Sooner or later this leads to the triumph of the national perspective over the European one.

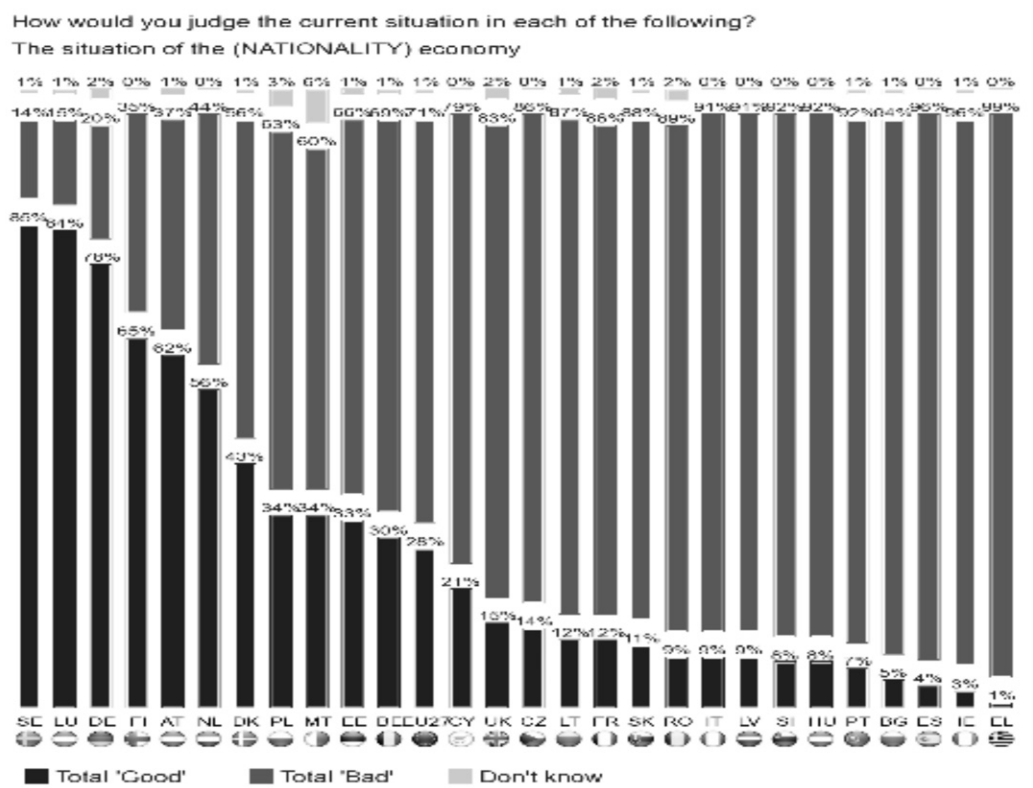
Risse points to a different situation, by quoting a research carried out by Hans Jorg Trenz and published in a study comparing Spanish with German media reporting of the EU Commission's corruption scandal. This research has shown that "the frames of reference giving meaning to the corruption scandal were constructed along national lines" (Risse, 2003). The press from Spain interpreted the scandal "as a German attack on a poor Spanish Commissioner", while the German media framed the issue as another example that proves "the violation of core principles of liberal democracies".

8. Possible fragmentations of the European public sphere

Today, there are numerous divisions and fragmentations of the European Union. Of all, one seems very important to us: the one between the developed north and the south who faces sovereign debt, or, in other words, the gap between the "center" and the "periphery". Gideon

Rachman (2012) was right to remark that “Europe suffers from a north-south divide, with mutual resentments growing between the citizens of a more prosperous North and an economically struggling South. Somehow, politicians have to persuade both sides to overcome their differences, by thinking of themselves as Europeans”. The making of Europeans is today’s task, according to Rachman. He even invokes the prominent Italian dictum from the nineteenth century, after the unification of Italy: “We have made Italy, now we must make Italians”.

Figure 2. The current situation of the economy at national level. Standard Eurobarometer 76, Autumn 2011.



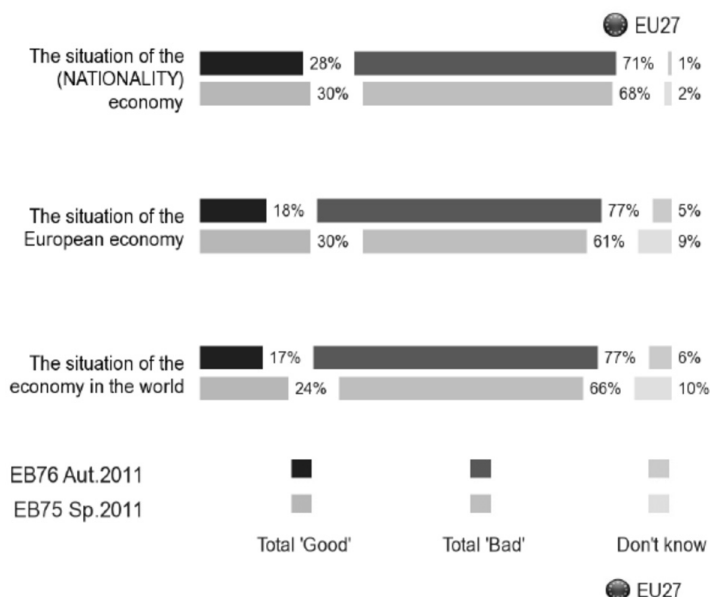
We can ask ourselves whether the frames for interpretation and the grasping of meaning differ based on the economic region, on its particularities and on the public perceptions that it favors. Furthermore, we wonder if the differences in public perceptions of the economic situation fuel a gradual change of the dominant frames that we find in the Nordic countries and in the Southern countries of Europe, respectively. Would the interpretation frames used by German media be similar to those used by the Greek media when the topics are sovereign debt and the need for a new bail-out for Greece? Unfortunately, we do not have yet the results of an ongoing research, which would have allowed us to answer this question. However, our hypothesis is that there are *at least two public spheres* that are currently emerging in Europe and that have different characteristics: on the one hand, there is a public sphere of EU member states which the crisis has largely avoided (the Nordic countries) and on the other hand, a public sphere of the EU members who were hit hard by the crisis, the periphery states,. In fact,

we are dealing with two main approaches to the crisis. The Northern countries are more optimistic, while the Southern ones are less confident.

The data collected by the Eurobarometer 76 (Autumn 2011) seems to support our view. The answers to the question regarding the economic situation at the national level reveal significant differences in public perceptions. For example, in some member states, such as Sweden, Luxembourg and Germany, around 80% or more of the population who filled in the questionnaires considers the situation of their national economy as “good”. In other countries, such as Greece, Ireland and Spain, less than 5% of the population appraises their economic situation as “good”.

Let us take a deeper look at the Figure 2. We find pessimistic answers in almost every country that faces difficulties caused by the crisis. The periphery appreciates correctly its problems. Moreover, it seems to believe that the most difficult times are still ahead. Two out of three Europeans are pessimistic about the impact of the crisis on unemployment. These are data that favor the usage of particular interpretation frames appropriate to the economic situation of the periphery. These particular frames may provide the premise for the emergence of a periphery public sphere, which will frame the reality differently than the dominant frames used by the European core. If our research shows a difference in frames used by the two public spheres (the core and the periphery) then this would represent a perception premise for a *psychological division* of Europe, as important as the *economic division*. Furthermore, if the economic gap might be relatively rapidly shortened, the psychological and attitudinal gaps have a longer duration and bear important consequences in the medium and long term.

Figure 3. The current situation of the national, the European and the world economy. Standard Eurobarometer 76, Autumn 2011.



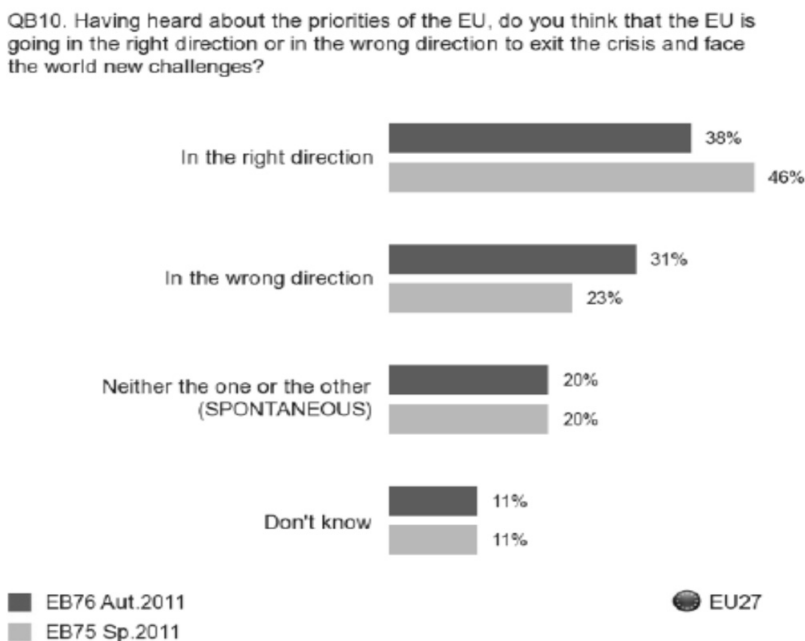
Differences in the public perceptions of the economic situation at the national level draw on a consensus on a less promising economic evolution at the EU level. Such a pessimistic evaluation supports the idea that “the Europhilia is in decline everywhere in Europe” (de

Voogd, 2012, p. 64). There is a visible decrease of confidence in the EU, in its institutions and in its ability to solve the problems of the crisis. This “spiral of depression” that the confidence in the EU is facing today has multiple faces. For instance, from the spring of 2011 until the autumn of the same year, there was much more deterioration in positive appraisals of the economic situation at European level (-12 points), in comparison with the opinion at world level (-7 points).

Europeans clearly see the economic situation as the most important issue for the European Union. The importance of this issue has considerably changed in the public perception from 43 points in the spring of 2011 to 59 points in the autumn of the same year. It gained 16 points in just 6 months.

There is a clear decrease in the number of those who trust the direction in which the European Union is heading. Slightly fewer than four in ten Europeans (38%) think that the EU is going in the right direction to overcome the crisis, an 8-point decline since spring 2011. 31% think the opposite – that the EU is going in the wrong direction –, an increase of 8 points.

Figure 4. The direction in which the EU is going. Standard Eurobarometer 76, Autumn 2011.



As it can be observed in Figure 4, the difference between those who share a positive opinion and those who have a negative opinion regarding the direction in which the EU is going has become very little. If we take into consideration the trend and the fact that beginning with the autumn of 2011 the EU has been facing many problems, we could say that in this interval the public opinion has significantly shifted towards a negative assessment of the EU's policies to overcome the crisis. With the exceptions of Latvia (+2 points), Sweden (+1) and Denmark (+1), the trend towards negative assessment of the direction taken by the EU is visible in every member state. This trend is particularly strong in the United Kingdom (-17

points), Romania (-14), Ireland (-14), Belgium (-12), Slovakia (-12), Spain (-12), Hungary (-9) and Italy (-8).

Here is another new trend – the negative assessments prevailed over positive ones in five countries: Spain (46%, compared with 28% of „right direction” answers), Greece (42% against 32%), the United Kingdom (42% against 32%), Italy (34% against 21%) and Portugal (33% against 33%). In spring 2011, only Greece registered such a negative ratio between the public perceptions of the “wrong” and “right directions”.

Moreover, trust in the four main EU institutions (the Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the European Central Bank) has been on a downward trend since autumn 2009. The aggregate result is that fewer people tend to trust the European institutions than those who tend to distrust them (Eurobarometer 76, 2011).

To our mind, the emergence of a majority or of a trend that leads to the formation of a majority of negative opinions regarding the direction in which the EU is going is the most worrying phenomenon. We can say that “the Euro only reinforces [...] its singular role as the unique, tangible symbol of the European construction. Furthermore, at the European level, the perceptions about the Euro are mostly defined by the feeling of national identity” (Pinzaru, 2007, p. 383) and not by an overarching European identity. This shows that popular support for the EU is decreasing, which erodes the cohesion of the European project.

Another important fact is that Europeans have not the greatest expectations for the future. People’s expectations for the economy over the next twelve months have become markedly more pessimistic. Such an attitude may be found with regard to the national, the European and the global economies, as well. However, in the current context, the evolution of the EU is thought of in more negative terms than the global evolution. The proportion of those who feel that the next twelve months will be worse has risen by 16 (national economy), 19 (European) and 16 (global) percentage points, respectively.

9. The nationalization of the European public sphere

This difference between the public sphere of the countries that the crisis has avoided and the public sphere of the countries deeply affected by the crisis would be a soft version of the division of the European public sphere. The *return to the national public spheres* becomes more obvious and more tempting. This may be a consequence of the “dramatic economic downfall of the euro zone and of the entire EU, which has boosted the concerns for ensuring the prosperity, and has fed the trend towards the renationalization or the de-Europeanization, a sort of delimitation of the European project” (Bărgăoanu, 2011, p.28).

In the new context of prolonged disappointment, citizens can readjust their attention towards national identities, towards “a place of refuge or at least to safety”. Returning to the national public sphere, to its values and dominants, appears not only attractive but also safe. Why is such a response appropriate? For the same reason why the center of gravity of the efforts to solve the crisis was at national level: because nation states (and their public spheres) *exist*. And the evolution of the European public sphere is moving towards real economic life. When the Union was promising and tempting for many countries, the Europeanization of the national public spheres was the key issue. Now that this trend has reversed, we are dealing

with a re-nationalization of the public sphere, with a reduction of the elements that marked the Europeanization and with an emphasis on those related to national concerns and values.

The shift towards the national sphere is not only a characteristic of the periphery countries, but is a *quasi-general response* of the Union. The reasons for such a shift are varied: some believe that the effort to lend credit to the South has reached the limit, others feel that they are oppressed by the conditions of the loans and by the unbearable rigors of the austerity measures. The dissatisfaction is general and it feeds this shift that seems dominant.

10. A substitute for success: the way to leave the crisis

We can see that the emergence of the European public sphere is not the result of strategies developed and implemented at European level. We are dealing rather with a process that has somehow accompanied the development of the EU, feeding on the economic success of the European construction. In this sense, we talk about the European public sphere as a *quasi-natural process*. Because the construction was successful, the European public sphere has developed and fostered a quasinatural trend, too, namely the *Europeanization of national public spheres*.

We also observe a similarity: the EU enlargement was also fed by the economic success. The UK sought membership mainly because the pace of development of the Common Market was then significantly higher than its own. While success seemed longlasting, there was no need to shape European values, to stimulate pro-European attitudes. Within the national public spheres European trends and options were developing, while the European Union values, backed by economic success, had an increasingly higher attraction level.

Now, the Union does not seem to be successful anymore. On the contrary, it is going through a deep crisis. It is an economic crisis, a financial crisis that feeds an identity crisis at the level of the Union and of the member states, as well. At this time, solving the crisis could be a kind of substitute for the past success. It is true that we are facing a severe crisis, but, one might say, there is a vision of how to overcome this difficult situation in order to return to the previous growth. Such a position might not have the persuading power of success itself, but would maintain citizens' confidence at a reasonable level. As shown before, the direction is just as problematic as the crisis itself. Like any other businessman, Arendt Kirkhoffs hates uncertainty. The biggest dissatisfaction of the businessman is not linked with the crisis but with delaying the response to the crisis, which erodes trust. "The response of political leaders to the crisis was dangerously slow and fumbling" (Kirkhoffs, 2011). The reality is that the Union is currently stagnating.

The European Union is attracted to the federalist perspective. However, it does not seem willing to step out of the national path. The result of this is a prolonged stagnation or an ongoing postponement, which Dominique Reynie has characterized as follows: "No member state and, within any of those states, few Europeans have really rejected the road towards a more closer Union; however, on the other hand, no member state and few Europeans have really wanted the shift to federalism. Europe seems to be deprived of a political dynamics, be it a sovereign or a federalist dynamics" (2011, p. 29).

If the European public sphere had been both the result of a strategy for growing independent European values, for highlighting the advantages that they represent for all the citizens

of the continent, the evolution towards integration, now we could have been enjoying European options, beliefs and attitudes that were not necessarily dependent on economic success.

These attitude acquisitions would have been a support in overcoming the difficulties and a point of resistance to the tendency of re-nationalizing the European public sphere. In any case, there would have been a perception, if not conviction that the current trend of re-nationalization is not a welcome trend, that the Europeans should reject it or at least show a clear reluctance towards it. Since there was no real concern for the shaping of European attitudes, now we are witnessing a paradox: instead of reluctance towards the trend of re-nationalization, we observe a kind of acceleration of the re-nationalization process as result of the discussions and doubts concerning the building of the European public sphere.

11. The public sphere shapes solidarity

Calhun's analytical perspective, according to which the public sphere does not lead to public opinion but instead fosters a type of occasion that stimulates and shapes the solidarity between members of communities, is useful for our purpose. "The public sphere has at least three dimensions important for European integration. First, it enables participation in collective choice, whether about specific policy issues or basic institutions. Second, public communication allows for the production, reproduction and transformation of a „social imagery that gives cultural form to integration, making Europe real and giving it shape by imagining it in specific ways. Third, the public sphere is itself a medium of social integration, a form of social solidarity, as well as an arena for debating others" (2003, p. 244).

The values of solidarity are fundamental, especially in the case of a common supranational construction such as the EU, because they stimulate the cohesion, the attachment, the will to advance *together*, all these being essential components of a public sphere. The monetary union itself was supposed to enhance European solidarity, since "the Euro is not only a unique currency [...], but it is also a concrete instrument to make Europeans come closer to one another" (Pinzaru, 2006, p. 359). The EU has thought of solidarity as a goal of its evolution, the solidarity funds being created to contribute to the reduction of the gaps between the member states. The EU's reaction to the crisis has been released with great haste and it has revealed shortcomings in its projections regarding solidarity and even undermined that value in difficult times.

Here are two examples that tell us something about the costs of the unfinished European construction. Immediately after the outbreak of the crisis, the European Union did not respond as a Union; in fact, the EU member states, especially the major powers of the continent, pulled back within their own national borders to manage the problems they were facing.

According to estimates done by the IMF, the total losses incurred by the euro area banks between 2007 and 2010 amounted to \$ 630 billion, which places them rather close to the figure for American banks, of \$ 878 billion (IMF, 2010). Similar to the bail-out strategy put in place by the Federal Reserve in the US, European governments provided guarantees for bank loans in their attempt to balance the financial market. The total commitment done by euro area governments accounted for 28% of the area's GDP, which is comparable to the total commitment done by the Federal Reserve of 26% of the American GDP (IMF, 2010).

Given all these efforts, one would expect similar results to the USA. Hence, questions start here. First, the economic recovery process is more visible in the US. Not as it was orig-

inally hoped, but still visible, economic growth of 2-3 percent, while the EU will have negative growth in 2012. Job creation in the US has begun to reach certain hopeful levels, while the EU is stagnating (at best). The US has passed a law regulating banking, the Frank Dodd law, a kind of response over time of the famous Glass-Steagall Act, which applied after the crisis of '33. In Europe, there is nothing like this under discussion. In fact, what does Europe want? There are a lot of discussions about fiscal governance and about the fiscal pact recently adopted. In fact, we are dealing with a financial discipline pact, whose basic stipulations are contained by the Maastricht Treaty. What is really new is automatic punishment of violations. After nearly four years of crisis what was written in the founding Treaty of the EU is finally adopted.

The second example was also selected from the American perimeter. America is an instructive example for the Union, because it went through this incomplete, confederate phase of the construction. A specialist in finance writes in the Financial Times that "as for American states, one might note that, in 1970, per capita personal incomes in Mississippi and Alabama were 73 and 64 per cent of the US average, respectively. By 1990, the two states had risen to 81 and 68 per cent, and by 2010 to 84 and 78 per cent. This means, by the way, that in 1970 Mississippi had to pay only one dollar in state funds to get \$4.88 in federal Medicaid funds; today it gets \$3.14, and the share will soon decline to \$ 2.76. Michigan at one point received dollar for dollar, it now receives two for one. The US is a complete system; far from perfect, but complete. Equalisation occurs automatically through both the tax and Social Security/Medicare/Medicaid systems. When Europe stops looking like the US of the 1840s and more like a comprehensive whole, both fiscally and socially, it will solve the almost inevitable recurring nightmares that its currency union has created" (Miller, 2012).

Any political structure must keep the discrepancies between different countries or regions within acceptable limits, as a condition for sustainable construction and acceptance of the organizational model that it proposes. From this point of view, the Union is in an alarmingly bad situation. The gap between the developed and less developed states in the US is 2 to 1. The gap between regions of Japan is 1.5 to 1. In the case of the Union, it is 14 to 1. Certainly, in the recent years of crisis this gap has widened. There are cohesion funds to mitigate the differences between various regions. These funds should be accessed. From the experience of the Central and Eastern European countries, with the exception of Poland, access levels remain modest.

Judging on its current functioning, the Union *creates periphery*. Not only does it not absorb tensions and support the effort of achieving development, but it emphasizes the difficulties and even becomes a favorable framework for inequality. The basic question is this: is the Union a union for all, a Union of development, or is it a Union of capital? Is it a Union consistent with the founding principles, or is it a union that has reached a new stage in which financial strength dictates? Is it a Union where the real economy comes first and everything is subsumed to it, or is it one in which the driving force tends to be the financial markets?

The value of the Union is also given by the situation of its periphery. Without a vision for the periphery and for its evolution, without the view that the center must support the periphery so it can develop and grow, the Union will not last long. From this perspective we can say that the periphery fosters vulnerabilities and represents the real test for the Union and its center. What does the center want? The center seems tired or undecided. In any case, the center is waiting for the periphery countries to move slowly on the track it has envisioned and which it favors. Meanwhile, it forgets something important: the Union accumulates tensions

that may prove irreversible. Furthermore, the citizens of the periphery may lose confidence in the process of building the Union. "Once lost, that confidence has proved almost impossible to regain" (*Financial Times*, 2011).

Rezumat: Acest articol tratează o temă de mare actualitate: criza zonei euro și consecințele sale asupra viitorului proiectului European. Lucrarea argumentează în favoarea ideii că se prefigurează o diviziune între centrul și periferia Uniunii. Această divizare are un impact mare asupra perspectivelor economice și financiare ale Uniunii Europene, dar și asupra dezvoltării sferei publice europene.

Cuvinte-cheie: criza zonei euro; centru vs. periferie; sfera publică europeană.

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Framing the Economic Crisis in the Romanian Online Media

Abstract: In the context of the current crisis, scholars pay more and more attention to how European issues are approached, made visible, and framed by the national media. So far, most of the research was focused on Western countries, such as UK, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. However, little is known about how the Euro crisis is actually covered by news media in the EU's new member states, such as Romania. Our research consists in a content analysis performed on the most visible Romanian news portals – hot-news.ro, and ziare.com. The analysis is focused on two important moments related to the economic crisis: 1. the signing of the first financial agreement between Romania and the International Monetary Fund at the beginning of May 2009, and 2. the organization of the Euro Summit for saving the Euro Zone at the end of October 2011. These events are not chosen arbitrarily, as they mark the peaks of the economic crisis, at least as far as Romania is concerned. A total of 11.570 news items were content analyzed in order to understand the visibility of the European topics, and, more importantly, the frames applied by the Romanian online media when approaching the crisis.

Keywords: economic crisis; online media; framing.

1. The Economic Crisis in the European Union. Converging Powers and Diverging Interests?

1.1. The European Union's Economic and Social Strain

The current economic crisis, which began in the summer of 2007, is now considered as an event with no precedent in the economic history after the Second World War. Although the crisis originated in the United States, the European Union was seriously hit by it. At the end of 2008, “the euro area suffered a major slump, with output falling by almost 5 percent – an even greater decline than that of the United States.” (Evans, 2011, p. 98).

There are various reasons for this rapid contagion. First, the European banking system is an important root of the strain in Europe. Attracted by the success of American financial services, large European banks aggressively expanded in the USA, and, therefore, they imported the toxic mortgages and, to the very final end, the American crisis (Evans, 2009; Stiglitz, 2009).

Second, analysts pointed out “a destructive imbalance in the regulatory and supervisory architecture” (Moloney, 2010, p. 3) of the EU. The Larosiere Group, mandated by the Commission in November 2008 to examine the EU crisis, highlighted a range of regulatory weak-

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nesses and gaps; it pointed out poor supervisory coordination, cooperation, and information sharing (*idem*). In addition, "the EMU was not built on detailed burden-sharing arrangements in the event of a crisis." (Dăianu, 2011, p. 14).

Third, some authors argue that EU's vulnerabilities are built into its own growth crisis. Macroeconomists have long indicated that the potential growth rate in the EU would decline. "The forecasted decline in the potential rate for growth is far greater in the new EU-12 countries (euro zone) than in the EU-15 member states." (Halmai & Vasary, 2010, p. 5). Furthermore, estimates show that between 2007 and 2030 output in the euro zone will expand far more rapidly than in the non-euro zone, which means that the convergence process will continue. However, "the pace of convergence will slow and stop after 2030" (*idem*); in the long run, there will be a switch from convergence to divergence. In sociological terms, these macro-economic aspects translate into a lack of integration and harmonization among Member States, which means that "conflicting views and interests among EU member states reduce its internal cohesion and harm its power projection externally" (Dăianu, 2011, p. 14).

Thus, we agree with Joseph Stiglitz, who wisely observed that "recessions can be seen as the tip of the iceberg; underneath are many "smaller" market failures, giving rise in the aggregate of huge inefficiencies." (Stiglitz, 2009, p. 293). As regards the European crisis, observing the unseen part of the iceberg means digging into the deepest level of European integration, which is the cohesion of the Member States. Europe's visionary leaders now lack the support of their key stakeholders – the Europeans. The Eurobarometers between 2008 and 2012 reveal a striking reality. From the outburst of the crisis until the end of 2011, the Europeans' trust in the EU, its institutions, its perspectives, and its ability to manage the challenges engendered by the globalization has dramatically decreased. The trend is not only very evident, but also very general. Citizens from all Member States seem to share this view and no correlations could be made between the actual aggravation of the crisis i.e. seen in macro-economic indicators, such as the GDP, on the one hand, and the citizens' eroding confidence in the EU. Furthermore, "to Euroenthusiasts, the integration into the EU does not mean the loss of the values of identity, but the active and shared contribution to the diversity of the European values" (Pinzaru, 2007, p. 383). In a nutshell, the transitory rehabilitation of the GDP in the EU has not generated a resurrection of people's trust, which proves that trust is the corner stone of the problems that the EU faces today.

According to G. Harding, "the economic crisis comes on top of the deepest political crisis that the European Union has faced." (Harding, 2012, p. 74) Several of the most ambitious European projects are now hanging by a thread. The single currency, the principle of the free movement of persons, the integration of periphery states – these are only a few of the most controversial issues on today's public agenda.

1.2. The Periphery of the European Union – the Centre of the European Crisis

The recession in the euro area officially ended in mid-2009, which did not actually mean that Europe could consider itself in a safe position. The social and economic strain was only at its beginnings. The "infamous PIGS" (Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain), as well as the structural problems that showed up in the new member states, threw a veil of despair over the citizens of the Member States. Furthermore, the economic turmoil divided the European public sphere between "net contributors" (i.e. Germany, France) and "net beneficiaries" (i.e. Greece, Portugal, Spain). However, this division is rather perception-based, than facts-based,

as the underlining causes of the crisis in the periphery of the European Union are deeply rooted in structural inefficiencies and lack of coordination at the central level.

D. Daianu considers that the countries in Central and Eastern Europe are among the states most affected by the crisis (2011, p. 2). Except for Poland, all these economies encountered very serious problems, while the public deficit rocketed. The financial support from the EU, the IMF, and other international financial institutions was a necessary solution. Starting from 2010, the EU periphery (the so-called “new member states”) became the new bridgehead of the European crisis. The IMF experts speak about the problems of the European Union periphery as being particularly acute (IMF, 2011, xv). Furthermore, “reestablishing fiscal and financial sustainability in the face of low or negative growth and high interest rates is a substantial challenge. And, while extreme, the problems of the EU periphery point to a more general problem: an underlying low rate of growth of potential output. Adjustment is very hard when growth is very low.” (*idem*)

Robert C. Shelburne (2009, pp. 90 – 95), chief economist within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, showed that new member states had an average deficit on 5,6% of the GDP before EU accession. This deficit increased following EU accession. The average deficit between 1999 and 2003 was of 4,9% of the GDP, whereas between 2004 and 2008 it grew to 6,3%. In 2008, five of the new member states had an average public deficit of over 10%. The credit freeze further aggravated this economic vulnerability. In order to understand how the crisis evolved in the new member states, we can follow Schelburne’s (2009) line of reasoning, who discusses about a rather simple equation. In economic terms, the current account of an entity represents the difference between savings and investments. So, the deficit can be either caused by low savings, high investments, or by both. By applying this equation to the new member states, one can discover considerable investments done right before the crisis, whereas savings were scarce (Schelburne, 2009, p. 91).

Aguiar and Gopinath (2004) link macroeconomics to behavioral and social aspects. The two authors show that advanced economies and emerging economies approach the economic boom in different manners. Advanced economies regard the episodes of economic growth as transitory periods, when they have the opportunity to make savings and to prepare for periods of economic slowdown; emerging economies approach the economic boom as being the first sign of long-term growth, and the resulting most often encountered behavior is increased consumption. Both types of economies aim at ensuring the well-being of their consumers; the difference resides in the means they use – savings vs. consumption. However, the new member states have a specific characteristic, which further enhanced their vulnerabilities – the negative and constantly decreasing birth rate. Bosworth and Chodorow-Reich (2006) show that the aging of population can be linked to the following economic behaviors: under-saving and hyper-investing.

The massive injection of private capital in the new member states is another aspect that contributed to the aggravation of the crisis in the periphery of the EU. According to Mugur Isărescu, the Governor of the National Bank of Romania, “the direct foreign investments in the countries from Central and Eastern Europe were done by countries in the euro zone in ratio of 73-95%”. (Isărescu, 2009, p. 14) Most of the bank assets in Central and Eastern Europe are owned by Central and West-European banks. According to O. Onaran (2011, p. 224), the Baltic countries, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria are more dependent on foreign capital than Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Slovakia, which makes them more exposed to the crisis.

During the crisis, nine out of the ten countries from Central and Eastern Europe passed through recession. Latvia and Estonia entered the recession in 2008. Romania is tributary to the same economic patterns that affected the emerging economies in the European Union. The abundance of cheap money, the real estate boom, the weakness of the financial regulatory system created important vulnerabilities that brought Romania on the edge of economic collapse. Similar to other states from the periphery of the EU, Romania benefited from the financial support on behalf of the IMF, the EU, and the EBRD.

Under the pressure exerted by both intra-European (i.e. the dilution of convergence, the polarization of the Member States, the private debt in the new member states) and extra-European forces (the pressure of globalization, the emergence of China as a genuine global player), Europe is “in the midst of a fundamental reordering” (Ilves, 2012, p. 44). This means that “we can and indeed must do those things that we have feared to do in the past”. (*idem*) One of these “fearful” aspects is related to the “two-speed” Europe, a division between the EU-17 (euro zone) and a slower non euro periphery. The analysts have gone even further and discuss about a periphery of the euro zone, consisting of those member states that did not achieve considerable economic outputs and recovery. Finland’s European Minister, Alexander Stubb, has proposed a new “geometry” of the EU, based on economic ranking of the Member States. “Within the EU-17 there is a divide between Germany, Austria, Finland, and the Netherlands, a core Triple-A, net-payers, plus a second tier of Slovenia, Slovakia, and Estonia, neither Triple-A not net-payer. And, on the other side, we can find Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal that for a variety of reasons have failed to follow the rules. In between there are euro-area members such as AAA Luxembourg, AA+ France, and AA Belgium, net payers, whose positions on fiscal disciplines are somewhat more ambiguous.” (*idem*) Therefore, within the framework of the crisis, the “two-speed” Europe risks to become a “three-speed Europe”, split among the first tier of countries (Germany, Austria, Finland, and the Netherlands), the second-tier countries consisting in the new periphery of the euro-zone, and a third-tier composed of the states outside the monetary union. An interesting remark on the specificity of the Eurozone and of the single currency, in particular, shows that “the originality of the Euro does not reside exhaustively in the economic setup, but rather in the tension between the Eurozone and the particularities of the countries within” (Pinzaru, 2006, p. 126).

In the spirit of this new “geometry” a question regarding the making of the European public sphere can be raised. Will Europe be able to cope with these new divisions? Will we have more Europe or less Europe after the crisis? Are Europeanization processes less probable in a highly polarized Europe? What is the role of mass-media – understood as a key-actor in configuring the European or Europeanized public sphere – in setting the public agenda about the crisis? We propose an analytical endeavor, meant to shed light on the role played by mass-media in mediating the “three-speed Europe” and in contributing to the Europeanization of the national public spheres. For this, we are going to follow three steps. First of all, we discuss about the Europeanization process in theoretical terms; secondly, we clarify several aspects about media effects i.e. agenda-setting and framing; lastly, we present the results of a complex quantitative research performed on the most popular Romanian news portals.

2. Europeanization Processes and the Public Sphere. Theoretical Considerations

In the context of European integration, the Europeanization processes have incited scholars to reflect on the mechanisms that would entitle us to call ourselves “Europeans”. Europeanization can be defined as a “top-down diffusion of common political rules, norms and practices in Europe” (Hughes, Sasse & Gordon, 2005, p. 27). It is often associated to the pressure of being a Member State and, thus, having to synchronize with other member states. Apart from its normative character, Europeanization has an essential role in assuring the convergence of institutions and policies, and in constructing a European identity (*idem*).

Europeanization consists of processes of “a) construction, b) diffusion, and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, shared beliefs, and norms, which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process, and, then, incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, political structures and public policies.” (Radaelli, 2004, p. 3). Europeanization can also be understood as a societal interpenetration, since European societies become more and more convergent and mixed as a result of the common currency, migration, multiculturalism, common norms, educational exchanges, media broadcasts with European distribution (Delanty & Rumford, 2005).

Kevin Featherstone (2003) differentiates among several aspects of Europeanization, promoting a three-fold approach. Europeanization as a *historical phenomenon* assumes the transfer of influence and European rules from developed Member States (“the first-tier countries”) to emerging economies (the new member states). Europeanization as a *transformative cultural diffusion* takes into account the transfer of values, practices and symbols of Member States. Europeanization as *institutional adaptation* includes the institutional reconfiguration of government, parliament and local authorities, non-governmental organizations, parties, academic environment as a consequence of implementing EU legislation and norms.

The concept of Europeanization includes all transformations that take place at the level of nation-states in order to increase the convergence level among member states by spreading common European values and perspectives and, thus, coagulating a common European identity. National media have a major role in distributing information and news regarding the EU as a whole, EU’s institutions, policies, official declarations and positions of the Member States. In these transformational processes, one cannot ignore the role of communication and media communication that might favor (or not) the Europeanization of public debates and national public spheres, beyond the institutional framework set by official regulations.

Regarding the significant role of the media in the process of Europeanization, some differentiations related to how European subjects are dealt with were made; two models resulted: *vertical* Europeanization and *horizontal* Europeanization. While within the first model, the media pay more attention to Brussels policies, positions and statements, to EU issues or European actors, within the second one, they focus on events, actors and statements of officials from various Member States (Koopmans & Erbe, 2004). By mixing these two dimensions of Europeanization, Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königslöw (2009, pp. 29-30) elaborate four distinctive processes:

1. *Comprehensive Europeanization*: both levels – vertical and horizontal Europeanization are present.
2. *Segmented Europeanization*: focuses on the vertical level, meaning an increased attention paid to EU as an entity, and not to Member States.

3. *Europeanization aloof from the EU*: focuses on the horizontal level, on communicative exchanges among member-states.

4. *A parochial public sphere*: in this case neither a vertical, nor a horizontal Europeanization can be identified in the national media.

The phenomenon of Europeanization implies two interconnected processes. While the first represents the way in which national political, social and economic forces give birth to a new supranational European political and institutional dimension, the second one consists of the way EU political, social and economic dynamics become an important part of the domestic political system. Thus, these two processes represent the construction and then the diffusion of European institutions and policies within EU members. Media have the role to spread news about issues and events taking place at EU level; otherwise, people are unable to participate in debates, to assign political responsibility to EU institutions and actors, to strengthen the sense of a common identity (Schiffrin, 2011).

Thus, media can raise the awareness of European matters by making the information available to the public and, also, by creating a certain European way of approaching issues that are relevant at a European level.

Among potential media effects, news framing has an important stake in advocating Europe: positive framing of European issues can attract public support and favour EU integration, whereas negative framing leads to a loss of confidence in the European project (Boțan, 2011). However, there are some limits of the Europeanization process in terms of expansion, such as the lack of interest regarding European subjects among people and the prevalence of national approaches to EU issues (Lauristin, 2007).

Considering the “depth” of Europeanization, we can then refer to a European public sphere, to Europeanized national public spheres or simply to national public spheres. We can speak of a European public sphere when people debate on the same issues, at the same period of time, using the same criteria in evaluating and forming opinions and being mutually aware of each other’s views (Risse, 2003). Both a European public sphere and a Europeanized national public sphere depend on the level of Europeanization transcending from media frames used when promoting issues regarding EU. The media can frame subjects from a national angle (national news, sources, perspectives and national interests are privileged over others), a European (European sources, perspectives and interests are asserted over national or global interests), or a global perspective (global sources, views and interests are presented as paramount).

Regarding the Europeanization process and the concept of a European public sphere, Claes de Vreese (2007, pp. 8-10) distinguishes among a utopian model, an elitist and a realist one, respectively. The utopian model consists of a singular, supra-national, pan-European public sphere as a communicative space which requires a shared identity, a transnational media system and a common language. The elitist model defines the segmented transnational public spheres, which are based on communicative spaces at national levels, determined by media with global or European outreach, and thus involving mainly political and economic elites. The realist model promotes the Europeanization of national public spheres and includes an increased coverage of European subjects and an evaluation of those issues that transcend the interests of one country.

Hans-Jörg Trenz and Klaus Eder (2004) state that a European public space emerges at the intersection of two elements: a self-justificatory resonance of institutional actors, and an external public resonance addressing these actors and institutions. Additionally, there is a need for an intensified communication among European political institutions and between these in-

stitutions and the civil society; furthermore, an increased level of awareness regarding European governance is necessary. In this regard, the national media are key factors of the Europeanization process.

3. How Mass-Media Shape Reality – Agenda-Setting and Framing

Previous research has provided sufficient evidence that mass media have the power to select and “pack” the events, and, thus, to influence the way we perceive the surrounding reality. Agenda setting and framing are among the most prominent media effects theories, which are largely used to analyze how the mass-media filters the information and, thus, influences the public’s reactions to a whole range of external stimuli.

Agenda setting theory supports the idea that there is a “very strong correlation between the importance given by the media to some issues, on the one hand, and the formation of opinions regarding these issues, on the other hand” (Dobrescu & Bârgăoanu, 2007, p. 223). This theory, which is attributed to Bernard Cohen (1963), emphasizes that media affect public opinion by simply paying attention to some issues while neglecting others. Max McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) conducted several experiments and developed a series of conclusions, enriching thus the theory at a conceptual level. According to them, the public learns about public issues through the media. Setting the public agenda means assigning relevance and significance to a topic. (Corbu *et. al.*, 2011).

McCombs, Shaw and Weaver say that the most important media effect is “the ability to sort and organize the world for us. In short, media might not have much success in telling us what to think, but they have an incredible success in telling us what to think about” (McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1997, p. 66). The media determine the significance of a problem. In this respect, this theory is rather similar to the gate-keeping theory – the media has the role of selecting the subjects, indicating which piece of information is worth our attention and which topics should be simply ignored (Dobrescu & Bârgăoanu, 2002).

Although most studies on media effects have focused on the agenda-setting role of the media, in recent years the concept of news framing has become more prominent (De Vreese, 2007). According to R. Entman (1993, p. 52), to frame means to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” The framing theory argues that the sender often influences the view of the receiver, the perspective from which (s)he evaluates the message. Framing effects refer to the way in which information is presented or framed in public discourse (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2010).

Wettstein (2012) analyzes how public attitudes and behaviors are shaped as a result of framing a subject. There are two factors that facilitate the adoption of frames (Wettstein, 2012, p 320): “the accessibility of an issue, and the correlation between a subject and the audience’s pre-existing opinions.” In other words, framing effects are not independent. Shuck and de Vreese (2006) have established that attitudes and knowledge that exist before media exposure play an important role in determining the framing effects. Kinder and Sanders (1990) have found correlations between low levels of political information, on one hand, and the predisposition to adopt frames, on the other hand. Maherswaran and Meyers-Levy (1990) and Shah *et. al.* (2004) have shown that, in general, the public is more affected by negative frames than

by the positive ones. Kahneman and Tversky's experiments (1984) have shown that the type of framing directs the audience's attention to specific aspects of reality, which means that, simultaneously, the frames adopted by mass-media can distract the public from other aspects. Many frames can be defined also by omission (Entman, 1993).

According to de Vreese, "the consequences of framing "can be analyzed at individual and societal level. An individual level consequence may be altered attitudes about an issue based on exposure to certain frames. On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes, such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions" (2005, p. 52). Identifying the frames used in the media coverage of various issues is a very useful approach, which has a major stake in formulating relevant hypotheses on how public opinion forms and evolves in relation to sensitive issues, such as referendums or elections.

De Vreese (2002) differentiates between *issue-specific frames* and *generic frames*. The issue-specific frames pertain to a specific topic and can be identified only in some contexts, having also a direct connection with the analyzed events. Generic news frames are applicable to a wide range of topics, and even in different cultural environments.

As already discussed, mass-media have a very important role in the Europeanization processes taking place in the Member States. The evidence provided by the two interlinked theories – agenda-setting and framing – suggest that the media's effects are potentially affecting our perceptions, thus determining our behaviors and attitudes. Exploring how the online media frames the economic crisis could prove to be a very useful endeavor, helping the clarification of several aspects. First, we want to see how the economic crisis is framed. Does the conflict frame prevail? Or is it the morality frame that is more prominent? Second, we investigated whether there are synergies between the experts' discourse on the crisis (i.e. according to scientific papers, essays, and books), on the one hand, and the mass-media discourse, on the other.

4. Framing the Economic Crisis in the Romanian Online Media: A Deductive Approach

EU-related topics rarely set national media agendas. However, important European events, such as elections, summits, treaties, etc. make good opportunities for raising Europe's visibility in the news. The global economic crisis and the Euro crisis became prominent topics in the Romanian online media, especially during two critical events that have determined Romania's response to the crisis.

In the context of the actual crisis, scholars pay more and more attention to how European issues are approached, made visible, and framed by the national media. So far, most of the research was focused on Western countries, such as the UK, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. However, little is known about how the Euro crisis is actually covered by news media in the EU's new member states, such as Romania.

Our research consists in a content analysis performed on the most visible Romanian news portals – *hotnews.ro*, and *ziare.com*. The analysis is focused on two important moments related to the economic crisis:

1. the signing of the first financial agreement between Romania and the International Monetary Fund at the beginning of May 2009, and

2. the organization of the Euro Summit for saving the Euro Zone at the end of October 2011.

These events are not chosen arbitrarily, as they mark the peaks of the economic crisis, at least as far as Romania is concerned. A total of *11,570 news items* were content analyzed in order to understand the visibility of the European topics, and, more importantly, the frames applied by the Romanian online media when approaching the crisis.

4.1. Methodology

The content analysis is deductive, working on pre-defined frames. To measure news frames regarding the European crisis, we built a grid containing eight types of frames, *five general frames*, and *three issue-specific frames*. We applied the measures already developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) for quantifying the conflict, the economic consequence, moral and human interest frames. Another classic generic frame is the responsibility frame, described for the first time by Iyengar and Kinder (1987) and then measured by Iyengar (1991) and other researchers (see Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). We added three specific frames: ‘powerlessness’, ‘paradigm change’, and ‘conspiracy’ frames.

The responsibility frame originates in the need to find those accountable for actions that affect people’s lives in one way or another. The conflict frame is mostly encountered in political news, especially in electoral contexts (Capella & Jamieson, 1997), and reflects the urgent need for the media to cover events as they happen, stressing the emotional side of the stories. The economic frame relates to the economic consequences of events on an individual, group, institution, region, or country (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96). The human interest frame refers to those elements that bring an emotional touch and drama to the news, emphasizing the human aspect of each event. Such frames are constructed to increase audience numbers and are specific to social news. The morality frame places the reported event in a religious or moralizing perspective. The powerlessness frame (de Vreese, 2005) is based on the idea that the relationship among the key actors of a story is unbalanced, unfair, and, thus, the need to identify the “ones to blame” for the current situation is rather urgent. The paradigm change frame reflects the elites’ discourse on the end of the capitalist paradigm, its limits and the need of a new politic paradigm, capable of managing the challenges of globalization. The conspiracy frame builds on the common belief that it is impossible for ordinary people to have access to the great “power games” of the global economic order.

Each frame was originally built by sets of 3 or 4 binary questions, answered with ‘yes’ (1) and ‘no’ (0). A total of 26 questions were coded in this way. In order to measure the compared weight of frames, a factor analysis was undertaken to measure the composite variables of the dominant frames. Two questions were eliminated from the total of 26; they did not logically group in the factor analysis solution and were not very present in the news.

We used a principal components factor analysis with *varimax rotation* for both generic frames, and specific frames. Corresponding to the five generic frames, items were grouped into five factors with *eigenvalues* higher than 1, explaining 55.60% of the total variance of the analyzed items. The factor solution is presented in Table 1.

For the three specific frames, one item was eliminated from the analysis; the remaining items were grouped into three factors with *eigenvalues* higher than 1, explaining 59,69% of the total variance of the analyzed items.

Table 1. Factor solution for generic frames.

	Conflict frame	Responsibility frame	Human interest	Moral frame	Economic consequences
The news underlines the tendency of a party / individual / group interest or country to blame another party / person / interest group or another country?	0.77	0.10	-0.01	0.18	0.02
The news suggests conflicts / misunderstandings among parties / individuals / interest groups / countries?	0.75	0.11	0.08	0.01	-0.09
The news suggests conflicts / disagreements within a party / country?	0.72	0.15	0.18	-0.01	-0.06
The news suggests the existence of "camps" or pressure groups?	0.70	0.10	0.07	0.14	0.06
The news suggests that governance structures have the power to alleviate the economic problems?	0.07	0.82	-0.04	0.01	0.01
The news suggests that the responsibility lies with the government sector / policy makers?	0.27	0.77	-0.05	0.05	-0.08
The news suggests taking responsibility for finding solutions to get out of the problematic situation?	0.10	0.64	0.11	0.13	0.17
The news refers to how ordinary people are affected?	0.04	0.15	0.79	0.02	0.08
The news refers to ordinary people's reaction regarding the events?	0.19	-0.01	0.75	0.04	-0.01
The news gives a human face to the subject, by using adjectives that suggest suffering, hardship, humiliation, etc..?	0.04	-0.11	0.67	0.14	-0.05
The news refers to morality / moral messages?	0.24	0.05	0.05	0.71	0.02
The news refers to religious values?	-0.17	0.00	0.13	0.67	-0.12
The news refers to behavior / social norms that should be adopted?	0.29	0.14	0.03	0.60	0.02
The news refers to financial gain or loss on short or long term?	0.04	-0.14	-0.10	-0.08	0.77
The news includes estimates regarding costs involved by the economic, social, political situation as a whole?	-0.17	0.06	0.12	0.02	0.62
The news refers to the economic consequences that could derive from adopting / not adopting a set of measures?	0.11	0.36	-0.02	-0.04	0.55

All factors loaded more than 0.50, a limit generally considered acceptable for keeping items in the factor. It should be noted that binary encoding reduces the correlations power. The factor solution shows a clear grouping. We further constructed composite variables using the mean of item values in each factor. Values were measured on a scale from 0 to 1, where 0 indicates the absence of the frame and 1 indicates its presence in all measured aspects.

Table 2. Factor solution for issue-specific frames.

	Conspiracy frame	Powerlessness frame	Paradigm change frame
The news suggests “backstage games” that guide the course of events?	0.84	0.09	0.10
The news suggests the existence of parties (political, economic, etc.) that obtain net gains from the events?	0.83	0.01	0.10
The news suggests the deliberate generation of events?	0.76	0.11	-0.01
The news suggests the inability of society as a whole? (Society is overtaken by events)	0.05	0.79	0.07
The news suggests the inability of the involved actors?	0.26	0.77	-0.17
The news suggests that, regardless of the implemented measures, the situation cannot be improved? / The news suggests that it is a no escape situation?	-0.05	0.56	0.27
The news suggests the failure of the European Union as a government formula?	-0.02	0.12	0.77
The news suggests the failure of capitalism / democracy?	0.16	0.00	0.67

The body of research includes all the news published on the two portals – *hotnews.ro* and *ziare.com* – in the two periods analyzed: 20 April – 19 May 2009 and 15 October – 13 November 2011. The research questions that drove the analysis of the frames used in the media to cover the subjects about the economic crisis were:

1. How is the subject of economic crisis framed on the two portals analyzed during the signing of external financing agreement with the IMF, the EBRD, the EU, and the World Bank (April-May, 2009)?
2. How is the subject of economic crisis framed within the Euro Summit period from 23 to 26 October, 2011?
3. Which is the most prominent generic frame in the online media coverage of the economic crisis?
4. Which is the most prominent specific frame in the online media coverage of the economic crisis?
5. Which are the differences between the two analyzed periods in framing the economic crisis (2009 vs.2011)?

4.2. Media Framing of the Economic Crisis during the Period of Signing the Financial Agreements with the IMF, EBRD, EU, and World Bank (April-May, 2009)

In the two analyzed periods, the economic frame was the most prominent, a phenomenon easy to predict given the very economic character of the crisis. The almost similar values of this frame in 2009 (0.44) and 2011 (0.45) led us to choose it as a benchmark in analyzing the importance of other generic or specific frames.

Around the signing of the Stand-by Agreement with the IMF, the responsibility frame was the closest to the economic frame, having an average value of 0.31 at the level of the two portals, compared with the 0.44 average of the economic frame (see Table 3). According to de

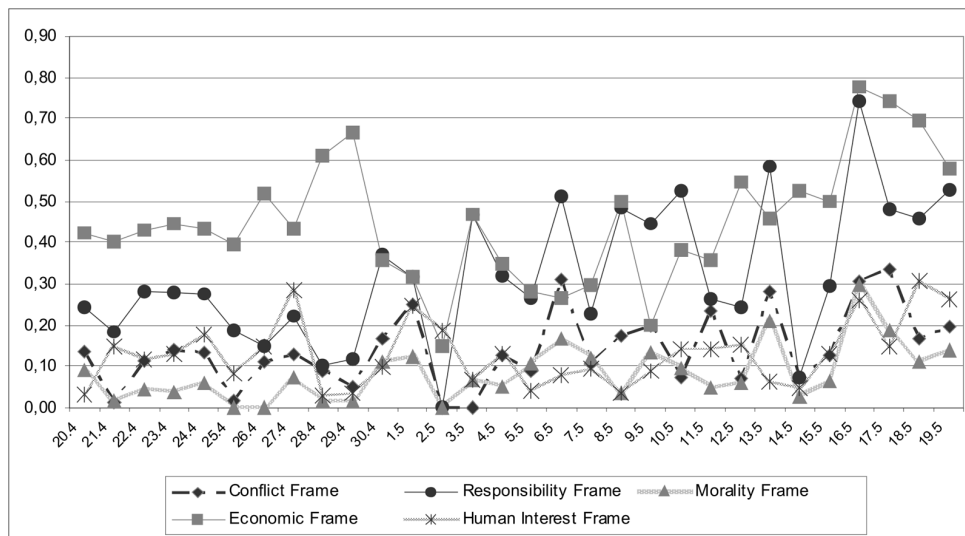
Vreese (2005), the responsibility frame presents a situation or a problem in terms of identifying those responsible for it and/or the solutions. The responsibility frame is used by some researchers (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000) to test the reliability or accuracy of publications: if the responsibility frame is well-marked, then the analyzed newspaper is considered to have an increased level of trustworthiness.

Table 3. Generic and specific frames values for the news on the crisis subject, during the period 20 April – 19 May 2009, on each portal.

Portal		Conflict frame	Responsibility frame	Morality frame	Economic consequences frame	Human interest frame	Powerlessness frame	Paradigm change frame	Conspiracy frame
hotnews.ro	Mean	0.08	0.30	0.04	0.43	0.18	0.16	0.00	0.04
	N	169	169	169	169	169	169	169	169
	Std. Deviation	0.22	0.34	0.13	0.34	0.28	0.26	0.04	0.13
ziare.com	Mean	0.17	0.32	0.10	0.44	0.11	0.11	0.02	0.14
	N	376	376	376	376	376	376	376	376
	Std. Deviation	0.29	0.36	0.20	0.31	0.22	0.21	0.11	0.31
Total	Mean	0.14	0.31	0.08	0.44	0.13	0.13	0.02	0.11
	N	545	545	545	545	545	545	545	545
	Std. Deviation	0.27	0.35	0.18	0.32	0.24	0.23	0.09	0.27

However, the responsibility frame triggers complex mechanisms, as it involves institutions and high-level officials. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) showed that the responsibility frame is predominant in the news about the European Union, followed by the conflict and economic consequences frames. The news published on *ziare.com* and *hotnews.ro* position the EU as the entity in charge of clarifying the actual situation, and, also, responsible for identifying the right solutions. Our research shows that *in 2009 the responsibility frame was mainly related to national aspects, such as the national government or the national bank.*

Figure 1. Generic frames between the 20th of April and the 19th of May, 2009.



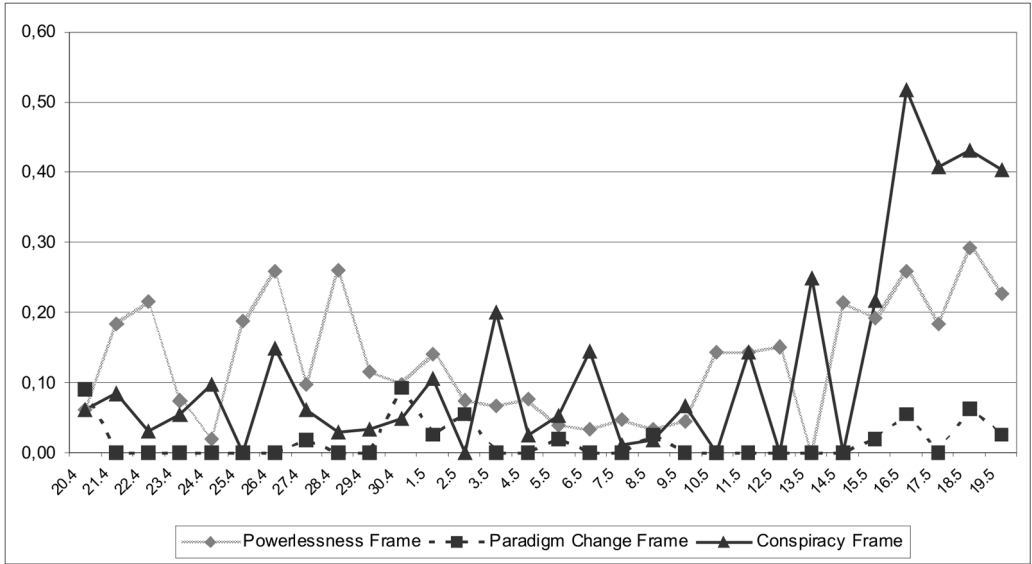
The conflict frame was poorly represented, *ziare.com* increasing the prominence of this frame by publishing news on internal (national) conflicts between political parties. The conflict frame was used by researchers to make estimates about the potential of a story in becoming a headline (Eilders, 1997), this aspect being considered as the main criterion used by the media in setting the public agenda.

On *hotnews.ro* the human interest frame was more prominent than on *ziare.com*. However, the overall value of the human interest frame (0,13 on average) was low, taking into account that the Stand-By Agreement with the IMF was conditioned by the implementation of unpopular austerity measures that affected a wide category of public. Clearly, we expected the human interest frame to be rather visible, even more prominent than the responsibility frame. This means that the Romanian online media framed the crisis in terms of responsibility, being less interested by the human face or social implications of the crisis.

The morality frame was hardly visible, which largely contradicts the approach promoted by scholars and writers. This confirms that the online media’s discourse is not in line with the elites’ discourse, where the moral dimension of the crisis is vividly debated.

The specific frames had an interesting development in 2009. The powerlessness frame was as visible as the human interest frame, while the conspiracy frame reached a peak after the signing of the Stand-by Agreement. The conspiracy frame was the most prominent right after the National Bank of Romania made a public announcement regarding the official start of the recession in Romania.

Figure 2. Specific frames between the 20th of April and the 19th of May, 2009.



The paradigm change frame was insignificant throughout the analyzed period. This is an additional argument towards the idea that there are important differences between the elites’ discourse, on the one hand, and the online news, on the other hand. In 2009, the Romanian online media was not tempted to comment the crisis by indulging into analyses about the limits of the current democratic models, or by tackling the extremely sensitive subject of the collapse of the European Union.

4.3. Media Framing of the Economic Crisis during the Euro Summit (23-26 October 2011)

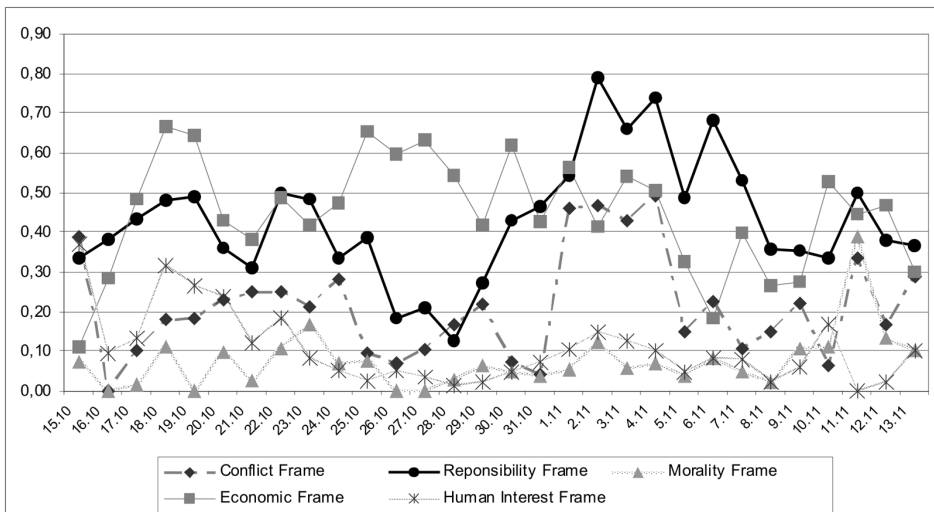
During the period 15 October – 13 November 2011, the overall intensity of generic frames was much higher than in 2009. In 2011, the online media clearly divided its discourse in terms of framing. *Two generic frames prevailed throughout this period – the economic consequences and the responsibility frames. At the same time, the morality and human interest frames further decreased in prominence. After the Euro Summit, the responsibility frame became very obvious – this being also the period in which the issue of recapitalization of foreign banks in Romania was discussed (see Table 4).*

Table 4. Generic and specific frames values for the news on the crisis subject, during the period 15 October – 13 November 2011, on each portal.

Portal		Conflict frame	Responsibility frame	Morality frame	Economic consequences frame	Human interest frame	Powerlessness frame	Paradigm change frame	Conspiracy frame
hotnews.ro	Mean	0.25	0.40	0.09	0.45	0.08	0.09	0.01	0.12
	N	348	348	348	348	348	348	348	348
	Std. Deviation	0.31	0.39	0.18	0.31	0.20	0.20	0.08	0.26
ziare.com	Mean	0.20	0.49	0.05	0.44	0.11	0.07	0.02	0.04
	N	366	366	366	366	366	366	366	366
	Std. Deviation	0.31	0.38	0.15	0.34	0.23	0.18	0.11	0.12
Total	Mean	0.23	0.44	0.07	0.45	0.10	0.08	0.02	0.08
	N	714	714	714	714	714	714	714	714
	Std. Deviation	0.31	0.38	0.16	0.32	0.22	0.19	0.10	0.21

The responsibility frame got similar or even higher values ??than the economic frame (see Figure 3), which shows that the tendency to identify those responsible for the economic turmoil became very acute in 2011.

Figure 3. Generic frames between the 15th of October and the 13th of November 2011.

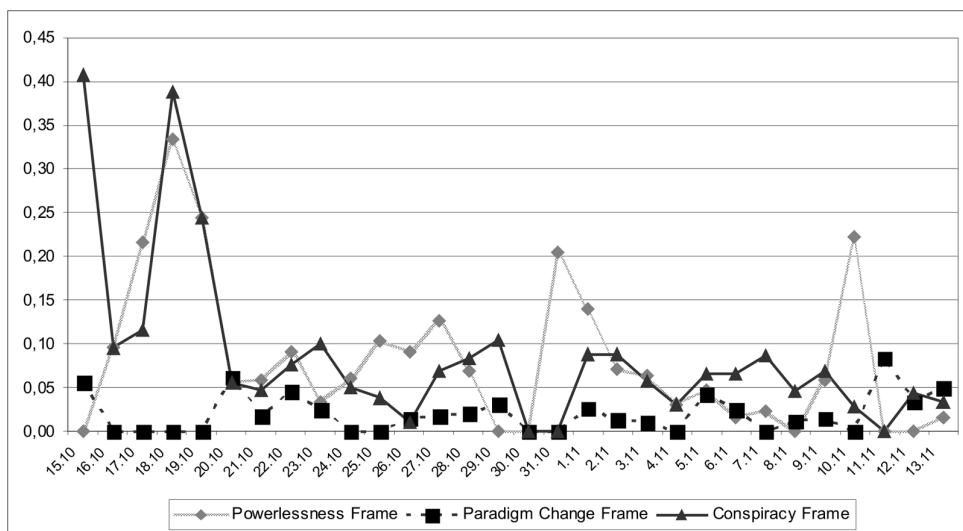


The conflict frame was more prominent in 2011 than in 2009, especially in the period that followed the Euro Summit. The conflict perspective intensified as a result of the long debated “Greek issue” (i.e. the referendum on the implementation of austerity measures, the Greek government’s resignation). Greece’s problems were a pretext for publishing news about internal political disputes (i.e. Elena Udrea vs. Victor Ponta), even though these conflicts did not hold a real significance towards managing Romania’s or, even less so, the EU’s crisis.

The responsibility frame, which underlines the seriousness of media (de Vreese, 2002), becomes much stronger in 2011, when its average value (0.44) is very close to the average of the economic frame (0.45). This means that during Romania’s participation in the Euro Summit, the tendency of finding solutions and identifying those responsible for the current situation was striking; on *ziare.com* this frame has a higher value than the economic frame (0.49 vs. 0.44).

The human interest frame decreased in importance in 2011, this fact being largely inconsistent with the implementation of austerity measures from the second half of 2009 and throughout 2010. The online portals framed the austerity measures especially in economic or responsibility-taking terms.

Figure 4. Specific frames between the 15th of October and the 13th of November 2011.



The issue-specific frames (see Figure 4) had an interesting development, with some notable peaks of the conspiracy frame on the 15th and the 18th of October 2011. On the 15th of October both portals published news about the street protests against banks and corporations accused of having unwisely and ineffectively managed the bail-out funds. On the 18th of October, the EBRD revised the economic forecast for Romania over the period 2012-2013, in a negative way. Even though both portals disseminated the same information, the presentation (framing) differed substantially – *hotnews.ro* constantly used the conspiracy frame for presenting these events. The powerlessness frame is more visible right after the Euro Summit, but also during the official assessment visit done by a joint team composed of IMF and EC experts. This visit conditioned IMF’s granting of the third financial package to Romania. The average values for the conspiracy frame and the powerlessness frames are slightly higher than

the morality frame. The poor visibility of the paradigm change frame confirms that this perspective is rather specific to elites and to academic journals, than to media.

5. Conclusions. It's Not All about Finding the Ones to Blame for the Crisis

The economic crisis in Romania developed in a way that is typical to other emerging economies in Central and Eastern Europe. High investments, poor savings, feeble demographic growth, alienated bank assets, and an overwhelming private debt, are only a few trends that created aggregated vulnerabilities. Even though the macroeconomic perspective is extremely tempting to analyse, we will not insist on it. Rather, we will just focus on the very short time frame in which all these vulnerabilities transformed into a complex mechanism and into a true challenge for our society. Given this turbulent context, no wonder the mass-media did not succeed in keeping up with the very rapid pace of the crisis in both national and European settings.

Our research provides some surprising insights on the media's tendency to promote an increasingly matured discourse on the European Union in the context of the economic crisis. We consider the research corpus (over 11,000 news) as a strong point of our project, and, also, as a means of assessing the credibility of this scientific endeavor.

Romanian online media constantly covered the economic crisis in 2009 and 2011. We could observe some interesting developments in terms of visibility, actors and framing during the two analyzed periods. From a longitudinal perspective, the crisis visibility in the online media increased between 2009 and 2011; the visibility was leveraged by *hotnews.ro*, which in 2011 dedicated more articles and editorials to the crisis. The EU crisis was an important topic on the media agenda and perhaps on the public agenda, this relationship being implicit, if we consider scientific evidence provided by the agenda-setting theory.

The online media's framing of the crisis emphasizes the use of the responsibility frame, with an additional space given to the conflict and conspiracy frames. The responsibility frame prevails, suggesting the need for identifying solutions and ideas to manage the crisis. It also implies the tendency of pinning down and punishing at all costs those to blame for the current situation. This approach may prove constructive in the short-term, but destructive in the long run, because it blocks us in a paradigm focused on chasing the guilty ones.

The research has some limitations as well, considering the fact that in investigating media effects we relied on previous research, without implementing our own survey. Also, the research corpus contained only the news from the two online portals, while the news from the online newspapers themselves would have provided additional or new research guidelines. Nonetheless, the key audience of the online media is the young and highly-educated public, which is also the least vulnerable type of public to media effects.

Our research reveals that online media urges us to "blame the others", instead of giving us the impulse to find solutions, to react, to participate in constructive debates, and, to eventually to configure a Europeanized discursive space. In our view, the online media still lacks this expert-like perspective, meant to bring citizens closer to real problems, and, more importantly, to empower them to advisedly act and react.

However, our findings suggest that the online media could be used as a vehicle of Europeanization, provided there are sufficient initiatives aimed at tightening the relationship between media institutions, understood as a hub of publicly available information, on the one

hand, and the national/European institutions, seen as a “broadcaster” of first-hand information about the economic crisis, on the other hand.

Rezumat: În contextul crizei economice, analizarea modului în care temele europene sunt abordate, vizibilizate și încadrate de media naționale devine o temă predilectă a cercetărilor din sfera comunicării sociale. Până la ora actuală, cele mai multe cercetări s-au concentrat pe țările vestice, precum Marea Britanie, Germania, Danemarca sau Olanda. Modalitatea în care media naționale din statele membre mai noi, precum România, se raportează la criza economică constituie o noutate academică. Cercetarea noastră constă într-o analiză de conținut realizată la nivelul celor mai accesate portaluri de știri românești – *hotnews.ro* și *ziare.com*. Am avut în vedere două evenimente importante legate de criza economică, respectiv: 1. semnarea primului acord financiar cu Fondul Monetar Internațional la începutul lunii mai 2009 și 2. organizarea Eurosummit-ului pentru salvarea zonei euro la finalul lunii octombrie 2011. Un număr total de 11.570 de știri au fost analizate cu scopul de a înțelege cum sunt vizibilizate temele europene și, mai important, cum este încadrată criza economică de presa online.

Cuvinte-cheie: criza economică; presa online; cadrele.

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Citizenship, Identity and Historical References in the European Union¹

Abstract: When assessing the role of European citizenship in the context of the 27 odd national sovereign states we have to approach the idea of citizenship from two different angles, which are connected 1. historically and 2. objectively, i.e. legally and politically. These connections revolve around the ideas of nationhood and nationality. We will argue that someone's objective legal identity and subjective feeling of identity are closely linked but not the same, and may even result in contrarious expectations and actions. We will also argue that the idea of European Citizenship may be thwarted by national citizenship feelings. But we will also indicate that many national problems caused by phenomena of globalization, like the treatment of ethnic minorities, immigration, refuge, and economic traffic may be more easily solved by taking European legal arrangements and the *de jure* right of European citizenship as starting point for discussions and arrangements. When, finally, planning research into the ideas of European and national citizenship we should reckon with the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted character of the concept, particularly when we perform comparative research all over the European Union.

Keywords: European Citizenship; historical development; legal basis; comparative research.

1. Introduction

Since the Maastricht and Amsterdam treaties (1993/1998) each individual is *de jure* not only a national citizen, but also a European citizen. Europeans are not specifically aware of the rights and duties of this citizenship, as they generally perceive its basis – Europe – as a fragmented identity and the European institutions as opaque. Moreover, a new wave of conservatism sweeps over the continent and quite a few populist politicians make the impression that Europe has *stolen* their countries from its citizens, not acknowledging that Europe is still a quite successful and profitable project of all its members *together*. Thus it appears to be very difficult to explain Europe to the Europeans and to urge them to participate in European decision making. So what is the European identity in comparison to the national one, and what are their respective constituting bases? Let us peruse the concepts of Citizenship and Identity first. Although they seem closely linked we should realise that we are easily tempted to fall into a category mistake (*metabasis eis to allo genos*), because the idea of citizenship is first and foremost a political and legal concept whereas the idea of a (national) identity is first of all a social-psychological construct that is used in a political context as focus point for rallying support (cf. Easton, 1965). Nationality, the container concept which overarches

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citizenship and identity is described in the famous *Nottebohm* case (ICJ, 1955, 4, p. 23) as follows: “the legal bond having at its basis a *social fact of attachment*, a genuine connection of existence, interests and sentiments, together with the existence of *reciprocal rights and duties...*” (*italics, h̑cr.*)

Thus we may approach the idea of citizenship from two different angles, which are connected historically and objectively, i.e. here legally. These connections revolve around the ideas of nationhood and nationality. We will argue that someone’s objective legal identity and subjective feeling of identity are closely linked but not the same, and may even result in contradictory expectations and actions. We will also argue that the idea of European Citizenship may be thwarted by national citizenship feelings, but that many national problems caused by phenomena of globalization, like the treatment of ethnic minorities, immigration, refuge, and economic traffic may be more easily solved by taking European legal arrangements and the *de jure* right of European citizenship as starting point for discussions and arrangements.

2. The idea of Citizenship, a historical account

The concept of citizenship has originally been linked to the idea of democracy (*demos* = people, *kratein* = ruling, i.e. self ruling of the people). In that context, present day discussions must focus on whether European citizenship is based on a true European ‘*demos*’, understood as a common predicament of the European population (cf. Tambakaki, 2011).

By the 4th century BC citizenship implied *rights* and *duties*, albeit that they were merely reserved for the male freemen of the city (*polis*), whence the concept of politics (*ta politika*, i.e. the things of the city). For a very long time – from around BC 400 to far into the 15th century AD, and in some cases of the city-states even later – the idea of citizenship was connected to the rights and duties of the ‘city-dweller’. *Rights* were conceived of as the opportunity to vote or to let one’s voice heard, *duties* as the obligation to participate in common decisions and to defend one’s city against external predators. It should be acknowledged, however, that women, foreigners and slaves were exempt from this type of citizenship and that only a minority was able to exert the rights of a citizen. In a certain sense, today refugees and immigrants belong to a comparable second-hand citizens group as women and foreigners were in ancient Greece.

The second original conception of citizenship was much more encompassing and was mainly geared to certain rights under Roman law. In the Roman Empire rights were enlarged to encompass certain rights under the Law and duties mainly pertained to taxpaying (cf. Faulks, 2000, pp. 14-21). These two conceptions lingered in the minds of the rulers of the late Middle Ages and formed the basis of the, at the time, modern interpretation of them. Citizenship had received a much wider meaning than belonging to a people in the further course of history. It was connected to the idea of Sovereignty, juridically established in the Westphalia Peace Treaty of 1648, which put an end to the many -year wars on the European continent. Sovereignty granted the right to self-determination to the people, or more often to their rulers, considered to represent the State. No external force was supposed to intervene in the business of other States. We know historically what the issuing results were: possibly a weak sense of commonness among people, but on the other hand continuous attempts at dominating the external world by the now sovereign rulers and elites. Liberal rights, however, were

hailed, and the basis of it was formed in the free exchange of opinions in circles of the well-to-do (e.g. in the then popular coffeehouses), but duties practically almost forgotten.

The conceptual relationship between ‘sovereignty and citizenship’ was first defined by Jean Bodin (1576) in the middle of the 16th century, in which he made the connection between the Sovereign and the alleged family basis of society. The general regime governing the *future* citizenship concept received a more specific *legal* basis in 1648 when the Westphalia Peace treaties defined the national jurisdiction of the European countries as ‘Sovereignty’. Citizenship was guaranteed by internal and external sovereignty, i.e. jurisdiction within the country and inviolability of the internationally recognised borders (cf. Philpott, 2006).

This changed considerably with the major event of the French Revolution in 1789. The sense of belonging was imbued into the hearts and minds of the French people, also due to the external threat by nations that wanted to restore the ‘old regime’. In 1798 the representative (and later Napoleonic general) Jourdan proposed a ‘mass conscription (levée en masse)’ for the male population of France, which was accepted in Parliament. Later emperor Napoleon would use it as the ‘nation in arms’ to make the citizens of the French territory more aware of their identity and to execute his plans for expansion.

The principle of external inviolability thus came under stress when the *social* identity of a nation became another hallmark of citizenship and from that basis the right to expand the nation outside its own borders was claimed in Napoleonic times. From this pivotal period in European history the idea of citizenship consisted of a combination of ‘rights and duties’ based on the ‘nation-state’ concept. Citizens were supposed to be strict loyalists to the nation-state, a combination of the *legal* entity of the state and the *social* entity of the nation. Although the border idea was reinstated in 1815 at a pan-European congress in Vienna, the social identity remained an inalienable part of the citizen-concept.

A period of more than a century would follow all over Europe in which the social-legal sovereignty ideas – in operational terms of common roots, a common language, a common cultural heritage, one people and like myths – were impregnated in the hearts and minds of the people, thus tainting the concept of citizenship with a rather nationalistic flavour, the *nation-state*. It would result in two devastating World Wars from which the urge to ban all hostilities forever led to the idea of a common Europe (cf. Churchill, 1945; Schumann, 1950). The idea of an inhabitant of a nation-state is also known as ‘nationality’ and in many publications citizenship and nationality are used interchangeably (cf. Bauböck *et. al.* 2006, p. 2). The idea behind national citizenship is often conceived of as ‘nationalism’, which differs from country to country, depending on their historical predicament. The whole of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th had seen numerous attempts at investments in the ‘sense of belonging to a specific country (nation-state)’, where often the state principle dominated the idea of the nation. In some circumstances, however, (e.g. Poland) the national identity was preserved despite the lack of a formal state. These differences between historical developments will surely have repercussions for the interpretation of the idea of citizenship in the member states of the European union, one of the reasons why it is absolutely imperative to do comparative research in this matter. *But Europe was/ is neither a state nor a nation and that circumstance still is haunting the conception of European Citizenship* (cf. Soin, 2005, pp. 13 – 28). Although Herman van Rompuy, the present chair of the European Council, has recently pronounced the *nation-state* dead (2010, p. 5), this will probably not yet be followed by most of the Europeans, politicians and journalists, today.

3. Citizenship in the present era, a politico-legal account

The idea of Citizenship is rather complex, not only do we deal with the aforementioned historical developments, but the concept as such is a multi-faceted one, that has been subject of scrutiny in sociology, political science and judicial science. Each of them deals with objective aspects of citizenship, which stand over and against the more subjective ‘sense of citizenship’ that has been shown to be an object of study for social-psychology and for history. Conclusions from one approach are not easily transferred to another, which may definitely lead to misunderstanding about the very essence of the concept. We now start with the more objectivised approaches.

Citizenship is an ‘attribute’ from the perspective of sociology, and attributes can be either ‘ascribed’ or ‘achieved’, according to the work of the American anthropologist Linton (1936). The literature on citizenship speaks about (*differential*) *nationalism* versus *universal post-nationalism*, which comes close to the praxes of ascribing and achieving. The ‘ascription’ is typically guided by legal constructs, of which there are two specific forms:

a. the *jus soli*, according to which one ‘has’ citizenship-rights, when one is born on the territory of a nation. Examples are all the American countries and some South-East Asian ones;

b. the *jus sanguinis*, when one is born from parents who had citizenship rights in a country. Examples are most EU-member states.

Legal problems of citizenship might occur if the parents are descent from different countries, with different legal regimes or different countries in general, for which no legal constructions are made to remedy the differences. Some scholars expected the Idea of European Citizenship to play that very role, but the original formulation of European Citizenship in the Amsterdam Treaty – “citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace”... national citizenship – precludes an easy conceptual comparison, so far. It is that fact which – in my view – makes the EU citizen think of rights of citizenship rather than duties (cf. Hailbrunner, 2006, pp. 37, 86, 100).

The ‘achievement’ is a political problem, viz. how to deal with migration for whatever cause: economic, political, safety reasons, etc. The politico-legal construction comes in two forms as well:

a. *declarative (discretionary) naturalisation*, as what took place, e.g., in the decolonisation period (1945 – 1965) for inhabitants of the colonies of EU countries, who happened to have worked for the alleged ‘occupants’ and were ‘repatriated’.

b. *conditional naturalisation*, which is asked for almost all over the world by, e.g., the mastering of a national language, having sufficient income, a prolonged stay in the country of choice, ‘proof of good conduct’, etc.

Combining both categories ‘ascribed and achieved’ provides an insightful overview of the present day objective situation.

Table 1. Citizenship ascribed and achieved.

Citizenship Rules (legal regime)		Differential nationalism (<i>ascribed</i>)	
		<i>ius soli</i>	<i>ius sanguinis</i>
Universal post-nationalism (<i>achieved</i>)	declarative (discretionary) naturalisation	Antique Greece / EU	Antique Rome / post-colonial countries
	conditional naturalisation	USA	EU-member countries

We have indicated that specific historical circumstances might be a fruitful explanation for ‘national citizenship regimes’ and naturalisation rules. In that perspective Van Gunsteren (1998, p. 143) spoke about ‘*historical contingency*’ and ‘*path dependency*’. In this context, one might distinguish between the following types of countries:

A. The fifteen and their date of entry in the EU (cf. Bauböck *et.al.*, 2006 & European Gateway)

Former European Colonial Powers: France (1957), Italy (1957), Belgium (1957), the Netherlands (1957)

Large Empires or Language Regions: UK (1973) / UK Commonwealth, German speaking regions/ Germany (1957)

They are all united in this respect that in the third quarter of the previous century large quantities of inhabitants of regions connected to the motherland found their way into Europe (cf. Jordi, 2003, pp. 40-59)

The Nordic Countries: Denmark (1973), Sweden (1995), Finland (1995)

These three countries, together with the non-EU member Norway, are united in this respect that they show a preference for accepting each others nationals over other immigrants from EU-countries.

Former migrant countries and dictatorships: Greece (1981), Portugal (1986), Spain (1986)

Quite a few inhabitants of these three countries moved northwards to work as ‘guests’ in the original 6 EU founders: France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg and Germany; Italians had preceded them before WW II. Portugal and Spain both swallowed scores of compatriots from their former colonies, too.

Smaller Countries: Luxemburg (1957), Austria (1995), Ireland (1973)

The last three countries do not share a common predicament, Luxemburg being one of the founders of the EEC, Ireland joining together with the UK, and Austria entering in the same round with the other ‘neutral’ countries Sweden and Finland, after the end of the Cold War and the subsequent break-up of the Warsaw Pact.

Each of these countries answered the specific historical challenges of the time by adapting their individual understanding of the idea of citizenship: by enlarging or restricting it, by accepting groups as new commoners, by making the criteria of naturalisation more or less specific, etc.

B. The new EU twelve/ thirteen. (cf. Bauböck *et.al.*, 2009 & European Gateway)

Restored States: Estonia (2004), Latvia (2004), Lithuania (2004)

The group of three Baltic states were formerly – after WW II – occupied territory of the Soviet Union and after the dismantling of the SU through which Russia remained as a large rump state, established their pre-war independence, very much tainted by the reminiscence of the previous occupation.

States with histories of shifting borders: Poland (2004), Hungary (2004), Romania (2007), Bulgaria (2007)

In the long course of history after 1800 all four countries were being characterised by a difference between the nation as ‘idea and notion’ and the (restored) ‘state as territory’ after WW II. Minorities of neighbouring states or stateless minorities often reside within their border, such as Hungarians in Romania and Roma in Romania, Hungary, and Poland (and in Czech and Slovak republics).

Post-partition States: Czech (2004), Slovak (2004), Slovenia (2004), Croatia (due to 2013).

After 1992 the Czech and Slovak republics decided to peacefully split the country known as Czechoslovakia into two independent ones and after the death of the former president Tito (1991), the Yugoslavian republic split into 6 independent countries, of which Slovenia was the first to enter the EU. Other former Yugoslavian republics have a candidate status; the first of which that will enter the EU will be Croatia, others to follow later in the twenties, the last one probably being Serbia; for Bosnia-Herzegovina the application is still unknown.

Mediterranean post-imperial states: Malta (2004), Cyprus (Greek speaking part; 2004)

The two small Mediterranean isles of Cyprus and Malta were formerly British dominions, becoming independent in 1960 and 1964 respectively, that are closest to the North African territories, from which many refugees presently try to escape to the promising European continent. This situation will probably have an impact on the national citizenship regimes.

Besides path dependency or historical contingencies another possible influence on the choice for a construct of citizenship could be the *length of duration of the country as an independent one*, for which *jus sanguinis* is most characteristic:

The oldest independent nations, which seem to possess the most stable identity are: the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark and France; they have existed for over 400 years now.

The second group – often splits from some of the older nations – is formed by: Germany, Luxemburg, Italy, Belgium and Greece; they were established about 150 years ago and could be named *19th century independent nations*.

The third group came into existence during or shortly after the Great War: Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Finland, Austria and Ireland although quite a few of them reckon to be much older. But this is more a matter of mythology than of a formal legal establishment *post Great War independent nations*.

The fourth group, finally, came into existence in the latter half of the 20th century: Slovenia (and Croatia), Czech and Slovak republics, Cyprus and Malta, as remnants of the Yugoslavian partition, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the British decolonisation. We will call them the *post WWII independent nations*.

The second explanation is the development of a hybrid form of citizenship regime (*jus soli* and *jus sanguinis*), which mainly counts for most of the middle European countries. The *historical shifts in the territorial status* of these nations (types III and IV mainly; cf. Liebich, 2009, p. 21-38) often urged them to accept the citizenship claims of anyone who once belonged to the former nation (either on ethnic or on territorial grounds).

The final important historical explanation for a citizenship regime could be the *effect of contemporary global migration* on the feeling of insecurity of original inhabitants of the old countries, when *jus soli* is applied to later generations of immigrants (types I and II; cf. Sievers 2009).

Thus differential historical circumstances may have given rise to the construction of the citizenship policies in EU-members: *length of independence, decolonisation effects, entry into the European Union, national position at the end of the Cold War, and pressure exerted by migration (invited labour force, reunification of their families, refugees and asylum seekers)*.

4. European Citizenship, the present situation

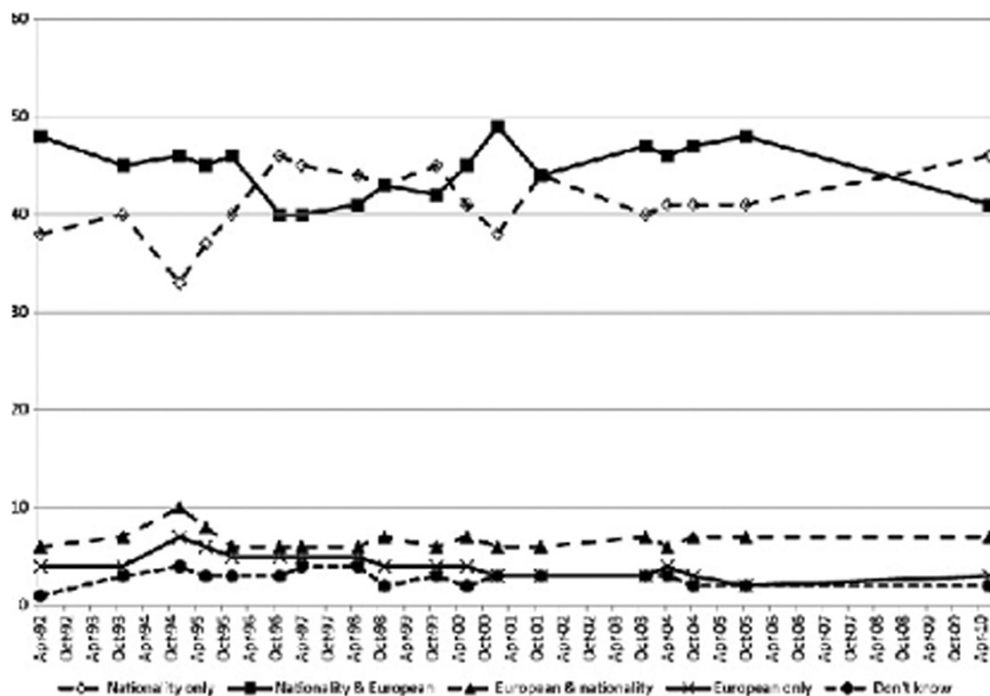
From the moment that six European countries – i.e. Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands – started a common future in the ECSC (1951) and the EEC (1957), the *legal* and *social bases* of citizenship have been constantly reinterpreted and redefined, both from a national and from a European perspective. This is also due to the gradual enlargement and deepening of the original Treaty of Rome. The role of the European Court of Justice in the fine-tuning and reinterpretation of the consequences of the Treaties has been rather undervalued so far. It seems undeniable that the ruling in the Van Gend & Loos case (1963) by the European High Court had far reaching implications for the rights of the citizens, because European law was placed above national law and all subsequent primary (treaties) and secondary laws (regulations and directives) had to be considered as legally superior: “...the Community constitutes a new legal order of international law for the benefit of which the states have limit their sovereign rights (...) and the subjects of which comprise not only Member States, but also their *nationals*” (my italics, hjcr; cf. Phoa, 2011, p. 5). Therefore, legally, national citizenship has turned into European citizenship, at least partially.

Until the early nineteen eighties the consequences of ever new EU- treaties were merely interpreted in their consequences for an embryonic (“thin”) idea of citizenship (Olsen, 2007; Jenson, 2007): economic (market) citizenship, freedom of movement and residence and equal treatment (non-discrimination). Even today – 2012 – these criteria are predominant among the population. The economic aspect – the currency – is considered the most important by 36 % of the EU-population. Democratic values – e.g. equal treatment (as in ‘social protection’, 13 %) and freedom of movement – rank second with 32 %. More factual aspects rooted in the past, like geographical belonging (22 %), common culture (22 %) and common history (17 %), European symbols (11 %), and common religious heritage (5 %) are deemed far less important. The Euro is most valued by the 15 original members (39 vs. 25 %) and the common history by the 12 new member states (22 vs. 16 %). These results do not change very much in subsequent polls after 2009. (cf. Debyser, 2012, pp. 2-3). Even these tentative criteria appear to be ill known by the population at large, let alone the much further reaching consequences of the Single European Act (1987), the Treaties of Maastricht (1992) and Amsterdam (1998).

Many civilians and politicians seem to have missed that “EU-citizenship does not mirror national citizenship” (Kostakopoulou, 2007), but the former is often erroneously played out against the latter. If any educational method on European citizenship is employed, it is almost always against the backdrop of traditional curriculums on national citizenship (Keating, 2009). Whereas in the recent past “citizenship tended to be defined predominantly in terms of identities, cultures and histories, the policies that emerged after 1992 instead tend to depict citizenship as a multi-faceted and largely *post-national* concept.” (Keating, 2009, p. 144). It might be that this is the reason why in our days European citizenship is mainly defined in terms of global and human ‘rights’ and that there is hardly any spoke of ‘duties’, which would be a precondition for the development of the sense of *EU identity*. Most Europeans seem to endorse the inalienable *human rights (freedom and equality)*, but show considerable hesitation towards the also necessary duty of *solidarity (brotherhood)* with the underprivileged, in particular when this results in financial obligations. (cf. Leydet, 2006). European citizenship was underpinned by a promise of a spillover effect that would utilize an economic European entity as a springboard toward the creation of a full-fledged political identity (the neo-functionalist school; cf. Haas, 1958). Nevertheless, in 2010 a majority of Europeans still cling to their

national identities vis-à-vis a European and national identity. Moreover, the percentage of Europeans identifying themselves primarily to be European citizens was at a record low between 2005 and 2010, amounting to no more than a few percentage points (cf. Figure 1).

Figure 1. National versus European identity perception



Source: Fligstein, Polyakova, Sandholtz (2010).

Concomitantly, ever since the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties a plethora of initiatives have sought to narrow the gap between the Union and its citizen, but this seems to have failed so far.

5. National and European Citizenship in interaction, civic citizenship

The referential object of Citizenship is therefore an unclear concept if it concerns European Identity, which is quite contrary to the idea of national identity and in several cases even regional identities. The idea of national identity and in some cases a regional one involves a combination of common historical experience, a common spoken language and a form of geographical vicinity. If these elements are supported by educational activation, the national/ regional identity will be clear to most inhabitants. To the contrary, if we speak of European identity.

First of all, the geographical basis of Europe is debatable. The Ural is not a natural barrier, which separates Europe from the Asian part of the continent, although this chain of hills is often indicated as such. Dumont (2008) chooses arguably more to the West for the Volga basin as the most Eastern part of Europe, but he seems to forget his own natural criteria when

he subsequently ignores the Bosphorus and the Caucasian mountains in the South-East and draws a line which incorporates Turkey in Europe.

A rather different picture emerges when we describe Europe on the basis of the religious parameter. A millennium of scissions occurred between East and West (1054 AD, orthodox versus Roman Catholic), and within the Western part between North and South – and a mixed zone in between – (1517 AD, Protestant versus Roman Catholic). At the geographical borders the influence of Islam was noticeable, most of the time by conquering parts of Spain (from where they were repelled in the centuries from 732 AD on, after the victory of Charles Martel at Poitiers). Later greater parts of South Eastern Europe were resealed, from where they were pushed back after their retreat after their siege of Vienna (1683 AD). In the second half of the 20th century mass immigration for economic reasons and because of decolonisation from Islamic cultures renewed the influences of this religion in disparate cities all over Europe. The age of Enlightenment, from around 1750 AD, generally led to a diminishing influence of religion on societal relations. Nevertheless it is correct to assert that Europe in general is liable to the spirit of the Christian faith, which translated itself into the common ethic of ‘human rights’, ‘care for the needy’, and even the separation of Church and State, due to influential thought in Protestantism and the Enlightenment (cf. Nemo, 2008, pp. 45-65.). If we conceive of Europe (and more specifically the EU) as a structure of religiously based cultures we can distinguish the South-Eastern Greek (/ Russian) Orthodox part, the predominantly Southern Roman Catholic part, and the predominantly Northern Protestant and non-religious part, interspersed with Muslim enclaves in the major cities.

The third – and probably the most noticeable – parameter is the political one. Ages of dominance of regional rulers after 800 AD had resulted in the gradual coalescence of regions into nation-states, which we have discussed above. In some regions the reminiscence of the older governing system still evokes some feelings of pride to be a regional citizen, but due to nation-building educational activities in the 19th century most Europeans consider themselves nowadays to be citizens of a nation-state. The first half of the 20th century saw the absolute deficit of nation-state thinking by engendering two World-Wars, which at first resulted after 1945 AD in a political split between Eastern and Western Europe. Communist Utopia stood over and against Socio-economic Capitalist Society until 1989. The cultures of both halves of the European continent have been greatly determining the values of their inhabitants, albeit more often in an affirmative way in the West and in an opposing way in the East. At least one single value came out of WW II, viz. never again ‘war between European nations’. It was the major impetus for Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann for starting to work on a gradual unification of Europe, or in Monnet’s words: “an ever closer union”, which he considered to be an act of civilisation (Monnet, 1962, p. 211). This unification has deepened in content and broadened in number of, now counting 27 participating countries. This process of deepening and broadening has led to a peculiar (West and Middle) European Culture. First, one remarks the acknowledgement of a mutual dependency of member countries and the acceptance of certain rules of governance: the ‘acquis communautaire’ (presently numbering over 30.000 laws). This ‘common attainment’ takes on the general idea of ‘human rights’ and the principle of subsidiarity in multi-level governance, and solidarity within the borders of the EU social measures – and across the borders in ‘humanitarian aid’. Secondly, there is the acceptance of being a ‘unity in diversity’. Each peculiar national and regional culture is honoured as a unique contribution to European unity. European unity is valued for its economic possibilities and for guaranteeing the ‘human rights’. Finally, as Jacques DeWitte (2008) ar-

gues, the mental characteristic of European society (in comparison to other cultures) is its tendency and openness to 'self-critical reflexion'. Its cultural basis can be read from the commonness of traditions and developments in the arts and the planned structure of the cities, despite their diversity leading to a typical European habitat.

Although some liberal intellectuals and some 'post-modern' philosophers seem to negate European identity, the values that come out of these three aspects of European civilisation are undeniable, and should be heeded in research on European Citizenship. Despite the present tendency of Western European politicians to withdraw from the European challenges, the original causes and aims of unification have not diminished. It might be the unique contribution of some of the new member states from Central Europe (Europe cadette: Nowicki, 2008, pp. 27-43) to teach the nations how to educate Europeans to become real *cosmopolites*, and to remind the Europeans that European unification is the basis of common *freedom*.

A powerful European citizenship is pre-conditional for a free and democratic Europe. This assumption is widely endorsed by politicians and civil servants in Brussels alike and by the majority of their national counterparts and by the people of Europe. However, although the Europeans still endorse the European Union they presently seem to become rather lukewarm than enthusiastic for it. Moreover the idea of citizenship is endangered by many factors, e.g. the widespread phenomenon of corruption in some of the younger European member states, a feeling of fatigue in the older ones, leading to non-participation and an overall questioning of the possibility of the EU to solve the credit crisis, leading to suggestions of a solitary solution by the economically more powerful nations. The Barroso Commission therefore has chosen for Citizenship as one of the spearhead principles of their incumbency (cf. Barroso, 2011, p. 9).

6. Modern theories of Citizenship from a European perspective

The ideas of citizenship, which we have discussed so far, have been approached in political science from three different normative perspectives (Van Gunsteren, 1998, pp. 11-24, 133-149). Van Gunsteren distinguishes between the liberal conception, the communitarian conception, and the republican conception.

In this section we will apply the three theories to the EU situation and the EU-members from a sociological perspective. Secondly, we will discuss the possible developments after 1989 of a neo-republican conception (Van Gunsteren, 1998, pp. 24-33, 149-153) and of a post-national conception (Faulks, 2000, pp. 132-172). Finally, citizenship in our view can be considered as a *specific role-set*, that can be executed as its characteristics have been attributed to *freemen* in the original Greek, Roman and Mediaeval traditions (in our days all men and women, where-ever and whenever). We will elaborate on the research approaches from this perspective.

The *liberal* view of citizenship is thoroughly individualistic. Although in the 19th century the liberal view dominated, its effectiveness was restricted to male and well-to-do people. The emancipation of ordinary men and the female half of the population in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century enlarged the number of citizens to almost all inhabitants of the sovereign state. In that perspective it is conceivable that some scholars want to replace the idea of citizenship with 'the general working of human rights' (Faulks, 2000, p. 133). But Van Gunsteren (1998, pp. 17-19) rightly points out with Thomas Hobbs, that a

society of purely libertarian individualists may end up in a ‘warlike situation’ where everyone is the enemy of everyone else (*homo homini lupus est*). Moreover, individuals are prone to become misled by smoothly talking politicians or people may simply not understand the intricacies of society at large. A society without any coherence is doomed to fail, as the example of ‘failed states’ will tell, and the proposed solutions – educating to a form of civic-mindedness – will not work out as long as each single citizen can reject this as going against his personal freedom. The communitarian view may act as an antidote to the liberal one.

The communitarian view was promoted in the last decade of the previous century as solving the problems inherent to liberalism, viz. the lack of commonness. It is more an action program – a social movement – than a view on citizenship (cf. Etzioni, 1993). One might designate it as the revolt of a moral majority against the spirit of the age, with a definite overtone of going back to the past, when everything was much ‘quieter and predictable’. But at the same time this is also its inherent weakness. Although it cannot be denied that individuals are rooted in a social context and need the support of family and friends or peers to realise its own Self, this social context as such is not a ‘natural’ one, a solid ontological basis for citizenship. The fast developments in society, the globalization which leads to phenomena like migration, fast transfers of money all over the world, extensive travelling, etc. preclude any conceivable stability upon which the ideas of communitarianism are vested (cf. Van Gunsteren, pp. 19-20). Although a minimum of social coherence is definitely called for in society, the philosophy of communitarianism is not able to keep up with the change that is going on in our days. Moreover, the weak side of communitarianism must not be forgotten either: too much of it can be suffocating. In that perspective one might look at the third view as steering between the Scylla of a selfish individualism and the Charybdis of a repressive communitarianism: *the republican view*.

The republican view goes back to the Ancient and Mediaeval practices of the rights and duties of the single individual towards the things of the State (*res publicae*). It is not society at large as in communitarianism, neither the individual on its own, but it is the citizen over and against the political collectivity that is at stake here, just like in the city states of ancient Greece and the Middle-Ages. As this view harks back so far in history, it is definitely not apt to be a guide-line for a present day view on citizenship, and for this reason Van Gunsteren pleaded for a new form of the old philosophy: *neo-republicanism*. One might say that neo-republicanism takes up the stronger elements of the two older views: the values of *freedom* from liberalism and *equality* from communitarianism and tries to balance the two in the context of the relationship between the citizen and the sovereign (state). Van Gunsteren (1998, p. 149) took the end of the Cold War – the year 1989 – as the watershed between the older philosophies and the new one.

And indeed, a lot has changed since, not only the growth of individualism in society unhampered by the threat of an impending nuclear war, but also the tremendous growth of globalization. For that reason the traditional limitation of the idea of citizenship as a relation of an individual to a single nation-state is gradually replaced by a relation to much wider circles, to start with the EU in Europe, and finally ending at world level encompassing global human rights and care for peace and for the planet (cf. Faulks, 2000, pp. 132-162). Van Gunsteren describes citizenship as “an office in the public community” (cf. pp. 24-30), which is situated in the Habermasian ‘public realm’ (cf. Habermas, 1962). Some people occupy a double office, when they have a political or administrative function, but every man (m/f) is a responsible politician in the republic. For that reason we prefer to use the age-old concept of

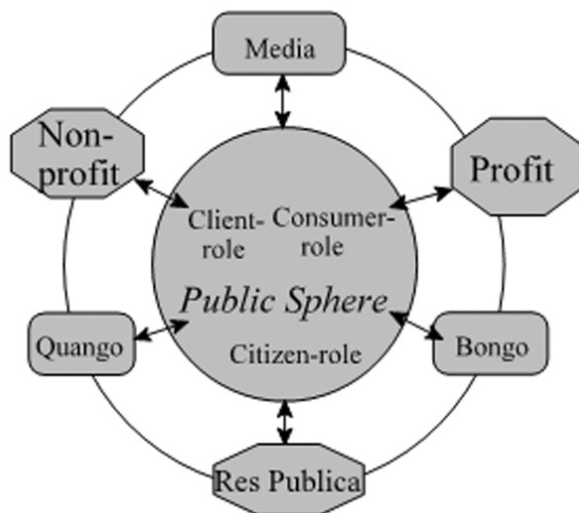
the '*freeman*', who has his/her rights and duties in the community, which in Van Gunsteren's eye is definitely local. This community, and the overtones of communitarianism are apparent in this respect, is characterised by 'consensus and justice and a minimum of equality (no great differences of wealth, as this may lead to unjustifiable differences in political power)'. The predicament of the citizen, and here we recognize the liberal-individualistic view, is based on 'freedom and loyalty to the state'. The last aspect emphasizes the ancient Greek idea of 'virtues', except for the military virtue, which is rejected as 'not of our time'. Important in the public realm are the institutions, an idea which Van Gunsteren attributes to the anthropologist Mary Douglas, and in order to understand the relationship between the *freeman* and the institutions we will hark back in history and take a social-psychological edge on society and argue that the *freeman*, which we already encountered in the Greek city-state, is actually in our days a role-set (cf. Merton, 1967, pp. 41-45) of citizens, consumers and clients (cf. figure 2, below).

In the undifferentiated past until the Middle Ages, the major differentiation in society consisted of ordinary people and their rulers. As society was hierarchically structured some types of institutions (e.g. religious and educational) mediated between the god-like rulers and ordinary men, and very hesitatingly, some ordinary men coalesced into cooperative structures of a merchant class and assemblies of craftsmen, thereby being able to move upwards to the ruling elites. It is in the High Middle Ages, that merchants united as in the Hanse League, Venice and Genua (cf. Gilbert, 1998, ch. 3) and craftsmen in Guilds, and the Church structured its services in schools and hospitals and promoted the fine Arts to embellish its churches. These developments formed the starting points for what after the French revolution and in the same days the Industrial revolution were later recognized as the *profit* and *non-profit* sector. The three sectors – profit, non-profit and government – were not only employers where ordinary men came to work, but also the points of orientation for the *freemen*. The freeman became a *citizen* towards the 'res publica', a *consumer* towards the profit sector, and a *client* of the non-profit sector. Choices of the freeman show a mixture of loyalties towards the three main sectors, which makes the free choice characteristic of the public realm. In between the sectors in society hybrid structures have developed, such as the media in between the profit and non-profit sector, the quasi autonomous non-governmental organisations between the non-profit sector and the government, and the business oriented non-governmental organisations between the profit sector and the government. Every-time an individual steps out of his role as freemen, he adds a new 'role' to his repertoire, a role array of freeman, worker/civilian, reader, interest group member, etc. In the EU-context the freeman's role is a multi-level one, in terms of being influenced by local to multi-national firms, local to multi-national NGOs and formally recognized (the principle of subsidiarity) multi-level governance. In this way we may describe the freeman as a 'node' in multiple networks in European society.

However, despite all the promising developments after 1989, Van Gunsteren formulated his scepticism as to the results (p. 149): "Although 1989 marked a liberation from oppression, it soon became painfully clear that this liberation was not identical with the triumph of liberal democratic ideas and practices or with the judicious implementation of a tried-and-true mix of market reform (...) and democratisation (...).", as witness the experience of extreme-nationalistic and often anti-European party formation all over the European Union. Others resist these tendencies and try to realise human rights, humanitarian international interventions, a strengthening of world opinion and alliances of democracies. That is the very predicament of the European Union, but with the acknowledgement that the nation-state remains indispen-

sable for real citizenship (p. 150). Citizenship is in Van Gunsteren's view 'a status', not unlike Merton's role-set, to which our freeman should have unlimited access (p. 151). All this urges us to take a more essentialist – here radical (from radix = root) – stance to the idea of citizenship, European, national or else, as an element of culture. It is this approach that has been taken by Faulks, when he discusses 'Citizenship in a global age' (2000, pp. 133-161).

Figure 2. The role-set of freemen in the Public Sphere.



Quango: Quasi Autonomous Non Governmental Organisations;
 Bongo: Business Oriented Non Governmental Organisations;
 (cf. Van Schendelen, 2002, pp. 35 – 37)
 Res Publica: Any conceivable political organisation (republic).

Faulks tries to shift the foundation of citizenship from the nation-state to a post-national position (ibid. pp. 139-145). Although he shows himself to be very critical of a fundament in 'human rights' it is actually the only new ground that he possesses, as 'human rights' form the basis both for European cooperation (e.g. Charter of the Fundamental Rights in the EU) and for world governance (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, signed by all members of the UN). The problem with this point of view, however, is that neither the UN nor the EU have the right to or the power of 'enforcement', or guaranteeing if one prefers. The EU has chosen in the Amsterdam Treaty to leave the legal bases for enforcement in principle with the nations resulting in the 'third pillar of the EU construction'. And although the United Nations from time to time organises enforcement in the form of peace-keeping operations, it is very dependent on the willingness of the permanent members of the Security Council, that have a veto-right and do not hesitate to use it to block initiatives to interfere even in blatant breaches of human rights anywhere in the world. The only stable basis for the right of enforcement – in democratic societies by the judiciary power – so far remains the nation-state. For that reason we will discuss further developments in the idea of citizenship from that perspective.

Faulks is right when he remarks that the nation state is relatively powerless when it concerns world wide problems, e.g. international criminality, infectious diseases, nuclear prolif-

eration, and environmental pollution (ibid. pp. 145-151). But it should be acknowledged that – with the possible exception of the nuclear arms – the *sources* of evil can only be traced and fought within the states, although cooperation between the states is absolutely necessary because national borders are no hindrance for the dissemination of these problems. The populist ideas of the extreme right wing parties in Europe are typical ‘wrong answers’ to them, you cannot deny or define away globalizing tendencies. The ‘citizen’ within the freeman most of the time demands from the government protection against (international) criminality, fight against pollution (caused by profit world activities), and control over the world-wide spread of diseases. There is no denying that the freeman as ‘consumer’ and as ‘client’ is also a factor in these threats, which should be recognized as his/her own responsibilities. Citizenship is not only a system of rights, but also of duties. Problem on the other hand is that the adherence to the nation-state is gradually waning because many – most well-to-do – are travelling around the globe and learn about other cultures, but the less privileged stick to their own region and nation, thereby defining the influx of outsiders (work force, refugees, etc.) as a threat. This is grist to the mill of right wing politicians. To remedy this problem *cultural education* is an important, although often ill-recognised ground for the idea of European citizenship (cf. Keating, 2009, pp. 138, 143-147).

Post-modern citizenship – as Faulks describes it – is a combination of *deep* citizenship (regional/national) with rights (protection of life and liberty, and equality) and duties (tax paying, military/social service, political participation), and *thin* citizenship (European and supra-national) with an emphasis on universal rights protection (ibid. pp. 168-171).

7. Research into European Union Citizenship

Problem thus remains how to stimulate the sense of European citizenship with the Europeans and the ordinary answer ‘with help of communicative efforts’ is unclear. It is to that specific theme that the EUPRERA research committee ‘Communicating Europe to the Europeans’ has started research in a number of countries, which finally purports to encompass all member states. The research is geared to analysing, understanding and explaining the relative success – or lack of it – of the communication by the European institutions. On the one hand this may be due to the channels and messages in use; on the other hand it may also be attributable to the idea of ‘Citizenship’ which is not always clear neither to the academic world let alone to society. Therefore we will have to outline the origins of the concept of citizenship as this is conceived as the target idea, by which we can assess or measure the communication results of European institutions. With the upcoming of new social media, a new channel may be available, although it remains to be seen whether their content is sufficiently substantive to play an influential role in this connection (Boucault & LeTheule, 2007).

Since the incumbency of Jacques Delors at the European Commission (1985 – 1994), however, there seems to be a third type of channel available, viz. the route via interest groups and their constituencies. The upsurge of the Civil and Social dialogues with the European Commission and the development of a transparent registration of interest groups witness a development which might be called *horizontal subsidiarity* (Malosse & Vever, 2008) which is mainly executed at European level. The initiative of the Committee of the Regions in its 2008 “White Paper on multi-level governance”, coupled with the acknowledgement of the rule of *vertical subsidiarity* in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty opens up a last route to the European citi-

zen, via the lower level political institutions, regions and municipalities. Both initiatives pinpoint to the lower level developments of governance in which social, civic and political institutions interact continuously, as such better recognised by ordinary Europeans because it is not too far up in the national capitals or in Brussels/Strasbourg. The possibilities of a renewal of European Communication might be coming from the two official advisory committees of the European Union, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, when they act in unison. All in all, at present there is a plethora of channels available for European Communication, some of which are quite traditional and others novel and still inadequately researched. The alternative channels – which we might characterise as networks of social and civic NGOs and lower level political institutions – will be described as *Intermediary Frameworks* and they deserve to be researched as such. At the lowest level of aggregation we deal with the assessment of personal opinion formation, in this case on the idea of ‘European Citizenship’.

The conceptual interpretation of Citizenship as target variable of European ‘transformational’ communication should be our guideline for further operationalisation. The assessment itself as opinion – or the measurement in quantitative terms – yields several problems of interpretation and explanation as has been extensively argued by Lippmann (1922), Oppenheim (1966), Crespi (1989, 1997), Rebel (1991, ch. 7) and Splichal (1999). In this article we conceive of Citizenship as a *behavioural* category and the sense of European Identity as an *attitudinal* one. The attitudes are supposed to constrain human behaviour rather than being the cause of it (cf. Rebel, 1991, ch. 2 & 6).

The factual image of the (normative) conception of European Citizenship is a *dependent* variable, which we will have to research. The referential object of Citizenship, as we have seen, is an unclear concept as far as European Identity is concerned. It may exist at odds with the idea of the national identity, and even with regional identities. The idea of national identity and in some cases a regional one involves a combination of common historical experience, a common spoken language and a form of geographical vicinity. If these elements are supported by educational activation, the national/ regional identity will be clear to most inhabitants. To the contrary if we speak of the European identity, which is even doubted when it concerns a common European Culture (Keating, 2009). See above the different ideas in the 15 older members and the 12 newer ones. A citizen has several roles to play in its interaction with government. A common distinction between the different roles of citizens is the one that Pieterse (2009) provided: the citizen as a voter (democratic representation), the citizen as a legal subject of the state, the citizen as a *citoyen* (participation), and the citizen as a customer (client) of public services. When we speak of a European identity, the awareness of that identity should be linked to each of these four citizen perspectives.

The uneasy connection of the legal (political) principle with the social one still haunts the idea of citizenship nowadays (see *table 1*). This goes especially if the loyalty to the own nation (or even region) is contrasted with the legal basis of being a European citizen *de jure*. Most Europeans seem to endorse the inalienable *human rights (freedom and equality)* of the individual, but show considerable hesitations towards the also necessary *solidarity (brotherhood)* with the under-privileged, specifically when this amounts to financial obligations, or with minorities. Loyalty to the own nation-state may result in a willingness to participate in national (or regional) politics and accepting some responsibilities for it, whereas European citizenship is often seen as a mere guarantee of classical human rights, but no duties. For these reasons we must conceptualise *European Citizenship* as a two dimensional concept

(rights and duties; cf Faulks 2000, pp. 55-73). Acknowledging rights and duties as of equal importance to Citizenship we could conceptualise *European Citizenship* as a two dimensional construct, the dimensions of which stand to each other in so-called 'inverse opposition', semantically (cf. Faulks, 2000, pp. 55-73).

Table 2. The concept of European Citizenship (inverse opposition of rights and duties).

<i>Duties</i> <i>Rights</i>	+ <i>spelc</i>	- <i>spelc</i>
+ <i>spelc</i>	Nation-State <i>(deep citizenship)</i>	EU (confederation?) <i>(thin citizenship)</i>
- <i>spelc</i>	Dictatorship <i>(obedient citizenship)</i>	Failed State

(Due to the multidimensional character of the tables I chose to employ bold settings besides the italics, for the sake of clarity)

In *table 2* this conceptualisation, which should be leading for the research-operationalisation of the concept, is displayed. In addition, one should realise that the concepts of duty and right are liable to contextual influences, which make them multi-faceted concepts as such. The main present day facets that can be distinguished in a European context, are: social (s), political (p), economic (e), environmental (l = life) and cultural (c). (cf. Soin, 2005, pp. 163-217). The last one is multifaceted in itself; examples of the sub-facets being: attitudes towards e.g. humanitarian aid, corruption, criminality, European culture vs. national culture, etc. and the gender differences. *All these facets should be translated into concrete indices of Citizenship* (cf. Shye c.s.1994). Therefore the ideas and attitudes on citizenship cannot be measured with simple public opinion statements, but only through thorough scale-construction (cf. Rebel, 1991b.)

When doing research on European citizenship one has to realise that each of the member countries do have their specific historically based citizen regime, and that the *understanding* of the working of European citizenship may therefore differ from country to country (cf. Bauböck & Persinig, 2006, pp. 431-477; Sievers W., 2009, pp. 439-456). Moreover, the pressure felt by the governments and the population of the member countries through the decisions taken by EU-political institutions and the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, should be part of the research design. Research in this matter should be thoroughly comparative (cf. Frey, 1970, pp. 173-295). Therefore, we would suggest that *the normative conception of European Citizenship is a (from local and historical factors) dependent variable, which should be researched as such.*

Abstract: Acest articol propune o analiză a conceptului de cetățenie și a derivatului acestuia, cetățenia europeană. Studiul are la bază o analiză comparativă a acestui concept, bazată pe investigarea reperelor istorice asociate acestui concept în diferite state. Atunci când se examinează tolul cetățeniei europene în contextual unei Uniuni cu 27 de state member suverane, acest concept poate fi explicat din două puncte de vedere conectate: 1. din punct de vedere istoric și 2. din punct de vedere obiectiv, i.e. legal și politic. Autorul argu-

mentează că ideea unei cetățenii europene autentice poate fi erodată de însuși sentimentul posesiei unei cetățenii naționale.

Cuvinte-cheie: cetățenie europeană; repere istorice; cercetare comparativă.

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La crise dans l'espace socio-économique européen

Résumé: Cet article se propose d'identifier les causes et les conséquences de la crise que nous vivons aujourd'hui dans l'espace socio-économique européen par le biais d'une approche socio-économique. Les différentes interprétations de la crise sont cristallisées dans les discours des responsables politiques, des économistes, des experts et des journalistes qui font partie intégrante de la réalité économique et sociale. Face à cette crise financière et économique, sociale et politique, l'Union Européenne a adopté et mis en œuvre des mesures visant à renforcer la supervision et la régulation financière dans l'espace socio-économique européen. Les institutions européennes ont développé différents outils pour faire remonter l'information et ainsi favoriser la participation des citoyens.

Mots clé: crise; attitudes ; discours ; mesures.

1. Introduction

Les sociétés contemporaines sont confrontées à des risques divers et multiples, telle que la crise financière et économique redevable à l'explosion du crédit. La perspective adoptée dans cet article envisage la crise d'un point de vue socio-économique et vise à relier les « enchaînements » gouvernant le monde économique (défaut de crédit, restriction de crédit, baisse de prix des actifs financiers, baisse de prix de l'immobilier, dégradation des bilans bancaires) et certains processus mentaux, fondamentalement sociaux, qui caractérisent les individus. On utilise ici les approches de Charles Kindleberger et François Simiand, et tout particulièrement leurs analyses des fluctuations économiques. On donne une place centrale aux phénomènes de croyance collective, conçus comme le moteur des fluctuations observées dans l'univers économique. Les sociologues envisagent l'économie comme un univers en perpétuel mouvement, traversé de conflits, d'actions, de réactions et d'attentes de diverses natures, qui sont le fait d'agents sociaux situés et dotés d'une histoire, cristallisée dans leurs représentations (Brian, 2009). Au sein du champ économique (Bourdieu, 2000) se confrontent des agents et des groupes inégaux, animés par des logiques et des psychologies, des formes de pensée et de raisonnement fort diverses. Mobilisant des représentations, des désirs et des croyances particuliers, les agents économiques prennent des décisions au jour le jour, sur fond d'incertitude mais aussi en fonction de leurs positions dans l'espace social (Simiand, 2001).

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2. Les causes de la crise. Interprétations

La crise que nous vivons aujourd'hui ressuscite le débat qui a fait rage dans les années 1930 entre Keynes et ses adversaires, les promoteurs du laissez-faire. À l'hypothèse que les acteurs avaient un comportement rationnel dans un univers où les marchés fournissaient toujours une information sur les valeurs fondamentales à long terme des actifs, Keynes opposait une conception de l'incertitude qui conduisait les acteurs rationnels au mimétisme et au court-termisme. Au point de vue que les crises éclatent comme des événements exogènes que les marchés sont capables de résorber, Keynes opposait l'idée qu'elles sont endogènes à un cycle financier, parce que les acteurs de la finance oscillent entre un optimisme et un pessimisme collectifs en raison desquels le mouvement des prix et du crédit touche aux extrêmes.

La crise provient d'un déséquilibre macroéconomique dans l'économie réelle (Lebaron, 2010), ce dernier résultant de la déformation du partage des revenus, de plus en plus inégalitaires au sein du capitalisme financier décrit par Alain Minc (2005, p.146), c'est-à-dire de ce „capitalisme patrimonial, fondé sur la speculation et sur l'endettement”. Ce déséquilibre se manifeste sous deux variantes différentes: excès d'épargne et excès d'endettement privé. Son épïcêtre est une répartition des revenus de plus en plus inégalitaire et de moins en moins favorable aux revenus du travail. Cette répartition des revenus débouche sur une crise du pouvoir d'achat des classes moyennes populaires, dont la propension à consommer est forte. À ce déséquilibre se superpose un déséquilibre interrégional, résultant du différentiel de compétitivité entre les États membres. Cela se matérialise par les excédents commerciaux des uns et les déficits des autres. Ce déséquilibre rend la gouvernance économique de l'Union Européenne encore plus délicate dès lors que l'adoption d'une monnaie unique, rendant impossible les ajustements de change en cas de déficit, requiert un certain degré de convergence entre les États membres.

Cette crise qui est à la fois financière et économique est aussi sociale et politique, avec une montée du chômage et de l'instabilité politique (Aglieta & Rigot, 2009). Il y a des tensions et beaucoup de politiciens ont changé ou bien sont en train de changer. Le processus de changement, de crise et de mutations que nous vivons est extrêmement vaste et profond. Les acteurs politiques disposent surtout de légitimité électorale et d'un capital social qui les met au centre du fonctionnement institutionnel. En fonction de leur position sur l'axe politique, ils maîtrisent l'allocation des budgets publics qui innervent le système économique dans son ensemble. En période de crise, ils sont en mesure de laisser l'État accroître ses déficits et s'endetter pour favoriser la relance de l'activité. L'espace politique est le lieu d'une lutte pour la légitimité de l'intervention publique et la définition de la norme fiscale. C'est une crise sociale, pour la simple raison que les difficultés financières ont entraîné des dommages collatéraux comme les organisations et les citoyens qui travaillent dans ces organisations. Voilà pourquoi les territoires et les communautés locales européennes sont aujourd'hui confrontés à un problème d'identification du pouvoir économique. Ce phénomène contrevient tant à la notion de „communaute productive” proposée par Jean Saglio (1991) pour décrire les ressorts des districts industriels qu'à celle „d'épaisseur institutionnelle” proposée par Ash Amin et Nigel Thrift (2003) pour rendre compte des nouvelles économies régionales. La crise est aussi une crise de croyance : elle affecte les perceptions des agents et elle est en tant que telle la manifestation d'un changement dans les représentations collectives. Elle s'accompagne de processus cognitifs étroitement insérés dans les structures sociales de l'économie, en particulier les structures politiques et juridiques qui la conditionnent.

La sociologie des marchés financiers et l'histoire des crises ont depuis longtemps décrit des alternances de périodes de régulation et de dérégulation qui sont liées aux cycles de l'activité économique et financière. À la suite d'une phase d'euphorie spéculative débridée qui contribue à faire oublier les règles en vigueur, la survenue d'un krach, d'une faillite retentissante ou encore d'un scandale financier entraîne un retour au moins ponctuel sur le devant de la scène de l'État, des autorités de régulation et des normes juridiques, qui annoncent vouloir éviter que les phénomènes critiques ne se reproduisent.

Charles Kindleberger (2004) a montré la récurrence des cycles financiers. Ils n'ont pas de régularité précise, ni dans leur périodicité, ni dans leur amplitude, mais ils ont une cohérence du fait de l'enchaînement de cinq phases. La première phase, l'essor, suit une récession ou au mieux un ralentissement conjoncturel. La croissance alimentée par l'investissement réel est robuste. Celui-ci est financé par l'expansion du crédit qui reste en ligne avec la progression des revenus. Cette progression crée des anticipations optimistes qui entraînent la hausse des prix d'actifs. La deuxième phase, l'euphorie, est caractérisée par le processus circulaire de l'inflation du crédit par rapport aux revenus et de l'accélération de la hausse des prix des actifs. Ce phénomène se transmet entre les pays si les mouvements de capitaux sont libres. Il aboutit au surendettement par rapport au service de la dette et à la sous-évaluation concomitante du risque. La troisième phase est le paroxysme et le retournement. Les fragilités s'insinuent dans les bilans au fur et à mesure que les leviers d'endettement s'accroissent et ne se soutiennent plus que par la hausse spéculative des valeurs prises pour garantie. À l'approche du pic, le processus devient vulnérable à un événement catalytique fortuit qui renvoie les anticipations à une date imprévisible. Le reflux et l'instauration du pessimisme est une autre phase. Les deux forces qui entraînent la finance dans la crise sont l'obsession de la liquidité chez les agents endettés et la montée de l'aversion pour le risque des pourvoyeurs de liquidités. Si le stress atteint les banques, un étranglement de l'offre de crédit (*credit crunch*) est probable. Les cycles de régulation et de dérégulation, les discours et les actions publiques qui les accompagnent correspondent étroitement aux phases d'euphorie et de pessimisme des acteurs financiers, qui sont aussi „portées par l'ensemble des acteurs qui entretiennent l'illusion d'une croissance saine et indéfinie” (Brender & Pisani, 2009, p. 56).

La déflation de la dette et la restructuration des bilans, c'est la dernière phase décrite par l'auteur. Le désendettement est l'enjeu de cette phase. Mais il est rendu difficile par la baisse rapide de la valeur des collatéraux qui entraîne des pertes plus ou moins grandes. Leur ampleur, la rapidité et la pertinence des réponses des autorités publiques déterminent la durée de la crise. Les pertes sont d'autant plus difficiles à absorber que la contraction de la dépense privée sape les revenus nécessaires pour couvrir les pertes redevables au désendettement.

3. Discours sur la crise

Les politiciens, les économistes, les experts et les journalistes ont développé des analyses de causes de la crise, de ses enjeux et des réponses qui devaient ou doivent lui être apportées. Les débats d'interprétation, cristallisés dans des discours, font partie intégrante de la réalité économique et sociale. Galbraith (1978, p.19) écrivait que « les prévisions officielles dans le domaine économique ne sont pas censées être justes, elles ne font que refléter les vœux des gouvernements. Nous n'attendons jamais d'un conseiller économique d'un gouvernement

qu'il nous prédisse l'aggravation du chômage, l'accélération de l'inflation et un déficit budgétaire record ».

Les discours économiques, diffusés quotidiennement dans les médias et repris par les acteurs politiques, reposent de façon prédominante sur une forme d'expertise. Les conjoncturistes sont en premier lieu employés comme des économistes au sein des autorités publiques: instituts de statistique, ministères de l'Économie, banques centrales, organisations internationales et, secondairement, au sein d'institutions privées : banques, instituts privés d'études, think tanks, journaux économiques, etc. Dans la presse et les médias, des conjoncturistes, en général issus des banques et des institutions financières, sont souvent cités pour nourrir un diagnostic particulier. Ils ont ainsi partie liée avec le journalisme économique, du moins avec la couverture médiatique de l'action publique et de la situation globale en matière économique" (Duval, 2004, p. 102).

Décrite comme un art autant qu'une science, la conjoncture s'appuie sur la production quasi continue d'indicateurs et de données par l'appareil statistique public, sur les informations financières quotidiennes (les résultats d'entreprises, qui donnent une idée du niveau des profits), sur les indices conjoncturels et sur toute autre source d'information considérée comme pertinente pour poser un jugement solide sur le climat passé, présent et futur des affaires (y compris les prévisions issues de modèles macro-économétriques). „Elle consiste en un travail d'interprétation et de prévision, systématiquement argumentées" (Lebaron, 2010, p. 43). Elle mobilise des techniques discursives particulières, marquées notamment par l'usage de la redondance et d'ajustements incessants. L'analyse de conjoncture s'élabore au jour le jour, de façon continue, en fonction des dernières données, des événements et des prévisions issues des modèles macro-économétriques, par un commentaire sans fin sur une actualité qui est essentiellement perçue à travers le jeu de certains indicateurs quantitatifs.

Par leurs interventions quotidiennes, les conjoncturistes contribuent à forger un ordre cognitif ordinaire qui est indissociable de l'action publique, de la gouvernance des marchés et du fonctionnement au jour le jour des différents secteurs de l'économie. Leur discours n'est pas seulement le compte-rendu neutre de réalités auxquelles ils seraient étrangers. Le conjoncturiste participe au premier plan des dynamiques qu'il observe, en s'appuyant sur des données (Galbraith & Salinger, 1978).

Les enquêtes de conjoncture occupent une place importante à côté des modèles de prévision : elles reposent sur l'interrogation à dates régulières d'échantillons d'agents économiques quant à leur moral et à leurs intentions concernant diverses décisions économiques (consommation, investissement, embauche, etc) durant l'année ou les mois à venir. Les indicateurs tirés de ces enquêtes permettent d'établir avec une certaine fiabilité ce que sera le comportement des principaux agents de l'économie à court terme. Ils sont censés refléter la tendance de l'activité, en mobilisant une psychologie sociale et cognitive implicite: très efficaces pour la prédiction à très court terme, ces indicateurs reflètent bien ce qu'on pourrait appeler « l'état d'esprit » collectif des agents économiques.

Une prévision officielle est beaucoup plus qu'une simple proposition scientifique portant sur l'avenir à laquelle on peut associer une probabilité : elle est aussi une action ayant pour fonction de construire une représentation officielle de l'ordre économique et de légitimer un cadre cognitif qui sert ensuite de repère aux agents. Selon les caractéristiques de son auteur, un discours conjoncturel a dès lors plus ou moins de crédibilité et, partant, d'efficacité sociale (Gadrey, 2001). Le discours conjoncturel est un univers de prophétie auto-réalisatrice qui participe à la construction de la réalité, tout en étant directement lié aux données statis-

tiques objectives qui le fondent. Il s'agit d'un travail collectif de production et de diffusion de croyances pour lesquelles les données fonctionnent comme des garde-fous ou des supports. Un conjoncturiste ne peut pas s'écarter de ses données d'enquête et, en même temps, il est porté à afficher un optimisme de rigueur, surtout lorsqu'il est lié à un agent économique particulier: État, branche, entreprise, etc. La représentation légitime de l'ordre économique qu'il élabore participe ainsi à la fois à l'action publique, ne serait-ce qu'à travers les hypothèses retenues dans les budgets, et à l'action privée, en fournissant des repères cognitifs sur l'environnement économique global ou sectoriel.

Le discours de la conjoncture est très métaphorique, ce qui fonde sa capacité à s'écarter des simples constats statistiques pour induire certaines représentations plus ou moins orientées de la situation économique (Guilbert, 2007). Le caractère idéologique du discours conjoncturel, en particulier lorsqu'il se déploie dans les médias, repose somme toute sur la capacité de produire, à partir des données les plus diverses, des interprétations apparemment cohérentes, tout en érigeant certains enchaînements en phénomènes naturels ou quasi naturels participant ainsi du gouvernement cognitif de l'ordre économique.

Pendant la crise, les banquiers centraux ont adopté différents types de discours. Un type de discours est celui de l'affirmation identitaire de la Banque centrale, qui sert à réaffirmer la valeur de la monnaie et de la politique menée par l'institution qui recherche un ancrage solide des anticipations d'inflation au niveau correspondant à la définition de la stabilité des prix. Un autre type de discours est le discours régulateur, qui insiste sur le contrôle et la surveillance des marchés que les banques centrales assurent à côté des autorités de régulation et qui s'intensifie avec la crise. C'est aussi un type de discours qui met en avant l'unité culturelle de l'Europe. Le discours libre-échangiste est centré sur la comparaison entre la zone euro et le reste du monde: „la zone euro est plus ouverte que les États-Unis et le Japon” (Bertoncini & Chopin, 2010, p. 179).

Le discours officiel des économistes des États et des organisations internationales laisse en arrière-plan les éléments de déséquilibre ou les signes d'épuisement d'un processus de croissance qui ne semble pas, à les lire ou à les entendre, présenter de limites. Les discours des économistes apparaissent relevant d'analyses à prétention rationnelle qui visent à interpréter les évolutions des principales informations économiques et financières.

Contrairement à ce qu'un discours très optimiste sur le rôle protecteur de l'euro et des institutions européennes a laissé entendre pendant quelques mois avant d'être mis en sourdine devant les faits, l'Union Européenne et la zone euro ont été très fortement affectées par la crise mondiale. Parmi les explications données on évoque souvent le lien étroit que les marchés financiers européens ont noué avec les marchés des États-Unis et qui a „permis une rapide transmission de la crise financière, ou encore la proximité entre le modèle de développement adopté par plusieurs pays de l'Union Européenne et les dynamiques ayant cours aux États-Unis, comme en Irlande ou dans les pays du Sud : fort endettement privé, forte spéculation immobilière, etc” (Lebaron, 2010, p. 76).

Le scénario de la crise est qu'un changement structurel s'est opéré, même si sa persistance dans un avenir éloigné est impossible à prévoir, parce que les croyances collectives sont fragiles et instables et que la prévision socio-économique est si hasardeuse. „Les croyances qui étaient si fortes ont été anéanties” (Jacquillat & Lévy-Garboua, 2009, p. 122). Des mouvements de conversion doctrinale, au moins partielle, se sont produits.

Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa (2009), ancien ministre du gouvernement Prodi et président du comité des ministres du FMI, ancien membre du directoire de la Banque Centrale Européenne,

note que „l'essence de la crise est économique et sociale. Ce qui a fait défaut au système économique, c'est la charpente de règles, de contrôles et d'actions gouvernementales qui, dans une économie de marché, constitue l'indispensable complément de la libre recherche du profit par les individus et les entreprises. Cette crise est en réalité politique et institutionnelle : l'échec dont elle résulte est davantage celui de la politique économique que celui de la finance et des marchés. Enfin, de manière plus générale, la crise trouve ses racines sur le terrain de la culture, intellectuelle et anthropologique : elle découle d'attitudes mentales, d'idées et de comportements devenus dominants dans nos sociétés. La crise n'est plus uniquement conjoncturelle ni même seulement économique pour beaucoup d'acteurs dirigeants”.

Une preuve a contrario de l'ampleur de la révision des croyances qui se joue depuis la fin de l'année 2008 nous est donnée par la tonalité défensive de la conclusion du Rapport sur la compétitivité du Forum économique mondial 2009-2010 : „La sous-régulation du secteur financier aux États-Unis et au Royaume-Uni a été décrite comme responsable de la crise économique. En réponse, les gouvernements, partout dans le monde, sont maintenant tentés d'accroître la régulation dans d'autres domaines de l'économie, notamment les marchés de biens et services. Pourtant, ce serait là tirer de mauvaises leçons de la crise. Il serait dangereux de conclure que le besoin de plus de régulation financière dans quelques économies fortement dérégulées devrait impliquer d'accroître la paperasserie ailleurs. L'indicateur global de compétitivité montre l'importance de marchés efficaces pour la productivité et la compétitivité nationales”. Contre-offensive idéologique issue d'un *think thank* lié aux milieux dirigeants des compagnies multinationales anglo-saxonnes, ce type de raisonnement, pointant les excès potentiels de la „régulation”, est désormais devenu minoritaire dans l'espace public, même s'il exprime certainement « tout haut » ce que beaucoup d'économistes et politiques pensent « tout bas », ne s'étant pas résolus à abandonner leurs croyances antérieures.

La domination des économistes professionnels, en tant qu'interprètes légitimes des causes et des conséquences de la crise, n'a pas été remise en question, alors même que la science économique a été fortement critiquée, ce qui a donné lieu à quelques vives polémiques.

Patrick Artus (2010) dit que la crise est sortie de son « lit » conjoncturel pour apparaître un phénomène structurel mettant en cause des éléments plus fondamentaux et plus stables de l'ordre établi. L'apparition d'anomalies du point de vue des théories ou des doctrines établies est la manifestation la plus nette de la remise en cause des croyances économiques qui accompagne le processus de la crise elle-même. La crise a commencé au cœur du système financier le plus développé, qui s'était justement hypertrophié pour couvrir les risques et a manifestement échoué de ce point de vue. Elle s'est traduite par la défaillance d'acteurs privés et le recours massif à l'intervention publique, alors que la supériorité des premiers sur les seconds, à l'ère de la mondialisation néolibérale, semblait solidement installée.

4. Les attitudes économiques et sociales dans la crise

Les institutions européennes ont développé différents outils pour faire remonter des informations et ainsi favoriser la participation des citoyens. Un premier type d'outil largement utilisé est l'enquête d'opinion ou le sondage : la stratégie de communication de la Commission (2007) le considère comme essentiel pour savoir ce que les Européens attendent de l'Union Européenne. Il a vocation à révéler l'état de l'opinion sur un sujet afin d'améliorer l'efficacité de l'information et de la communication de l'entité concernée et d'adapter les dé-

cisions en préparation. Les enquêtes d'opinion et d'attitude montrent une rapide montée des préoccupations et des inquiétudes relatives à l'avenir. En Europe, les récentes vagues des Eurobaromètres (données collectées en 2011) indiquent que les citoyens de Roumanie ont une vision négative de la situation de l'économie européenne (62% pensent qu'elle est mauvaise), mondiale (48%) et roumaine (56%). Le sentiment que l'Union Européenne ne dispose pas de suffisamment de pouvoir et d'instruments pour défendre ses intérêts au sein de l'économie mondiale s'intensifie lui aussi. L'Eurobaromètre est utile car il compile des informations mais il n'a pas vocation à faire réellement participer les citoyens au processus politique européen. Les enquêtes Eurobaromètre s'en tiennent à mesurer l'attitude générale des peuples vis-à-vis de l'Union Européenne et de ses grandes évolutions. L'importance des choix européens s'étant accrue au cours des dernières années, c'est désormais plutôt d'un „eurothermomètre” que les responsables européens ont besoin ; il devrait ainsi s'agir pour eux de recueillir l'avis des citoyens sur les décisions communautaires. Par ailleurs, et au-delà de son utilité pratique immédiate, la publication fréquente de sondages évaluant la position des citoyens européens à l'égard des grandes décisions communautaires pourrait avoir une portée symbolique. L'opinion publique européenne demeure, pour l'heure, une réalité difficile à saisir : c'est aussi la multiplication des sondages et autres enquêtes qui pourraient contribuer à son émergence.

5. Assistance financière au moment des crises

Depuis 2009, de nombreuses mesures, dont la création de trois autorités de surveillance, des marchés, des assurances et des banques, la création du conseil européen du risque systémique, le règlement sur les agences de notation, la directive sur les fonds spéculatifs dits „hedge funds”, la directive sur les produits dérivés visant à renforcer la supervision et la régulation financières ont été adoptées. Toutes ces mesures visent un meilleur contrôle du système financier et l'instauration d'une supervision financière. Les banques, les agences de notation, les fonds d'investissement voient leurs règles prudentielles se raffermir. Devant cette crise financière et économique, d'origine américaine, l'Union Européenne a choisi la voie de la régulation. La crise a mis en exergue la non adéquation du cadre réglementaire de Bâle aux situations extrême. La réforme de Bâle III part du constat que la sévérité de cette crise s'explique par la croissance excessive de l'encours des banques et de leurs activités hors bilan. Le Comité de Bâle a donc recommandé en décembre 2010 un nouveau cadre prudentiel : Bâle III, progressivement applicable de 2013 à 2019, qui s'appuie sur de nouvelles règles dérivées des accords de Bâle II et que s'engagent à adopter l'Union Européenne, la Chine et le Japon (Vendin, 2011). Ils visent : une augmentation de la qualité des fonds propres exigés par de nouvelles éligibilités du capital au ratio, ainsi que leur augmentation par la mise en place de réserves complémentaires représentées par le capital de conservation. Il a aussi pour objectif la mise en place de charges complémentaires en capital pour prendre en compte le risque de crédit au niveau des titres spéculatifs et l'impact du risque de contrepartie sur la valeur des instruments dérivés. Le Comité de Bâle III durcit la composition des fonds propres réglementaires par la mise en place de critères d'éligibilité plus stricts et introduit des exigences minimales de détention par nature de capital. En 1988, la base d'une réglementation prudentielle du système bancaire est établie par le Comité dit de Bâle, lequel rassemble les gouverneurs des banques centrales de l'O.C.D.E., sous l'égide de la Banque des règlements

internationaux (BRI) dont le siège est à Bâle. L'objectif est d'assurer la stabilité des systèmes bancaires et, par voie de conséquence, celle du financement.

Le 27 octobre 2011, après avoir longtemps résisté, les banques de la zone Euro, sous la pression des dirigeants politiques, ont fini par accepter de renoncer à 50% du montant total de leur souscription à la dette souveraine de la Grèce. L'autorité bancaire européenne (EBA) vient de publier (le 8 décembre 2011) une estimation définitive du besoin de recapitalisation des soixante-dix plus grandes banques européennes. Celles-ci devront jusqu'au 30 juin 2012 se recapitaliser pour un montant global de 114,7 Mds euro. Ces banques devront aussi se doter d'un plan de démantèlement de leurs activités pour faciliter la tâche des régulateurs.

Une très grande partie des mesures promues par les experts et les gouvernements en réponse à la crise sont de nature juridico-institutionnelle, ce qui les rend peu faciles à transmettre au grand public. Qu'il s'agisse de la mise en place de nouvelles autorités de régulation, de leur redéfinition, ou encore de l'attribution de pouvoirs étendus aux autorités existantes, des normes prudentielles, des normes comptables et des modalités de calcul de la valeur des actifs, de la compensation centrale qui doit faire disparaître l'opacité des échanges de „gré à gré, la reconfiguration de l'industrie financière et du système bancaire échappe assez largement au débat public pour se cantonner à des arènes particulières et à la presse économique et financière où elle continue cependant à animer les opinions contradictoires. Les débats sont à la fois feutrés, techniques et vifs, laissant entrevoir des camps mouvants mais mobilisés et dotés d'atouts inégaux” (Lascoumes, 2010, p. 26).

La Banque Centrale Européenne a endossé ses responsabilités et a répondu de façon risquée, aidant directement les États européens et le système financier. Elle a eu une politique monétaire prudente pour permettre à la zone euro de rester stable et garantir la valeur de monnaie. Tous les États font des efforts pour restreindre leurs dépenses, l'idée que l'Union puisse s'exonérer des contraintes budgétaires qui s'appliquent aux autres sera donc difficile à vendre.

La Banque Centrale Européenne est depuis 1999 responsable de la mise en œuvre de la politique monétaire de la zone euro. Dans l'accomplissement de ses fonctions, la Banque Centrale Européenne agit au sein du système européen de banques centrales (SEBC), qui réunit les banques centrales nationales de tous les pays de l'Union Européenne, ainsi qu'au sein de « l'euro système » qui réunit les banques centrales des pays de la zone euro. Dans ce cadre, elle est chargée par le traité de maintenir la stabilité des prix au sein de la zone euro, à hauteur d'un taux d'inflation fixée par elle à 2%, en se fondant sur les évolutions de la masse monétaire en circulation et sur la prise en compte de différents indices (salaires, indice des prix, etc). Le principal outil de régulation dont la Banque Centrale Européenne dispose est le maniement de plusieurs taux directeurs : celui des opérations principales de refinancement, qui permettent de fournir de la liquidité aux banques ; celui des facilités permanentes de prêt marginal et celui de la rémunération des dépôts, qui permettent d'injecter ou de retirer de la liquidité du marché. La Banque Centrale Européenne peut « également fixer le niveau des réserves obligatoires imposée aux banques afin de déstabiliser la demande de monnaie et, du fait même, les taux d'intérêt. Elle est enfin la seule habilitée à autoriser les émissions des billets de banque et des pièces de monnaie » (Bertoncini & Chopin, 2010, p. 228). Elle a financé directement le déficit budgétaire grec, au mépris de l'interdiction qui lui a été faite, de financer les États.

L'Union Européenne a le pouvoir d'intervenir directement en cas de crise dans l'un des États membres afin de lui accorder de l'assistance financière. En vertu de l'article 122 du

TFUE, l'Union Européenne peut ainsi aider un État membre qui connaît des difficultés ou bien la menace sérieuse de graves difficultés, en raison de catastrophes naturelles ou d'événements exceptionnels échappant à son contrôle. C'est le Conseil, sur proposition de la Commission, qui peut accorder, sous certaines conditions, cette assistance financière de l'UE, en informant le Parlement européen. Une telle décision a été prise en 2010 afin de soutenir la Grèce.

En vertu de l'article 143 du TFUE, l'Union Européenne peut intervenir aussi « en cas de difficultés ou de menace grave de difficultés dans la balances de paiements d'un État membre », lorsqu'elles sont « susceptibles notamment de compromettre le fonctionnement du marché intérieur ou la réalisation de la politique commerciale commune ». Cet article prévoit que la Commission doit tout d'abord examiner l'action qu'a entreprise l'État concerné, à qui elle peut faire de recommandations. Il prévoit par ailleurs que c'est le Conseil qui accorde l'éventuel concours mutuel de l'Union Européenne, qui peut notamment prendre la forme d'une « action concertée auprès d'autres organisations internationales » (exemple du FMI) ou d'un « octroi de crédits limités de la part d'autres États membres, sous réserve de leur accord ». Une telle disposition a été invoquée en réaction à la crise de 2008 afin d'organiser l'assistance financière de pays de l'Union Européenne n'appartenant pas à la zone euro (exemple de la Hongrie). Elle a en revanche été écartée au moment de l'adoption d'un plan de sauvetage massif au printemps 2010, qui a été opérée sur la base de mécanismes ad hoc prévoyant une série de concours bilatéraux de la part des États membres de la zone euro.

6. Conclusion

Une crise financière qui frappe de plein fouet le cœur du système bancaire ne peut pas se résoudre sans une remise à plat des règles de comportement des acteurs financiers. La crise actuelle peut être qualifiée de „crise de valorisation”. L'incertitude relative à la valorisation de certains produits financiers complexes a entamé la confiance des marchés européens. Des mesures diverses ont été prises et mises en œuvre pour améliorer les effets de la crise. Certaines mesures sont d'ordre microéconomique, d'autres d'ordre macroéconomique. Elles visent la réduction de la subjectivité et de la volatilité attachée à la valorisation de marché, la minimisation de l'impact pro cycle provoqué par les réglementations comptables et prudentielles actuelles, le renforcement de la gouvernance et l'encouragement de la transparence. Il faut renforcer la pertinence, la fiabilité et la comparabilité de l'information. Dans un tel moment critique, l'action ou l'inaction des gouvernements est tout aussi cruciale. Les citoyens se tournent vers les gouvernements et se méfient plus fortement des acteurs dominants de l'ordre capitaliste, mais, faute de perspective collective, ils se réfugient de plus en plus dans l'abstention et diverses formes de révolte individuelle.

De façon relativement attendue, la crise semble d'abord avoir été perçue à travers des attitudes individuelles d'inquiétude, voire d'angoisse, des travailleurs face à un choc externe. Elles n'ont pas été converties en mouvement collectif ou revendicatif global et ne pouvaient guère l'être, vu, l'état des forces collectives et la faible valeur symbolique des discours de mobilisation.

Rezumat: Acest articol își propune să identifice, printr-o abordare socio-economică, cauzele și consecințele crizei pe care o traversăm astăzi în spațiul european. Diferitele interpretări asupra crizei sunt cristalizate în jurul discursului responsabililor politici, al economiștilor, al experților și al jurnaliștilor care sunt parte integrantă a realității economice și sociale. Confruntată cu această criză financiară, economică, socială și politică, Uniunea Europeană a adoptat și a aplicat măsuri care vizau întărirea disciplinei și reglementării financiare a spațiului socio-economic european. Instituțiile europene au utilizat diferite instrumente pentru a informa și, în consecință, pentru a stimula implicarea publicului în adoptarea unor măsuri anti-criză.

Cuvinte-cheie: criză; atitudini; discurs; măsuri.

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Essay

Paul DOBRESCU*

Conflict or Cooperation in the Pacific. Kissinger's Answer to the Strategic Challenge of the 21st Century

Recently, the Comunicare.ro Publishing House has published a book¹ that has two undisputed assets. First, it is written by a first-rate figure of the international arena: Henry Kissinger. The subject chosen this time by Kissinger is also a response to current political concerns: the birth of a new economic superpower, China. When such a far-reaching writer focuses on such an urgent topic, the outcome can only be a definite editorial success.

The purpose of these lines is to show why this book is important to an international readership in a contemporary context. Kissinger's book represents a very useful reading not only because of the amount of information provided or the considerations supported by the overwhelming experience of the writer in the area of the relationships with China, but also because of the way the book has been conceived: open, providing not simply ultimate judgments, but a comprehensive background for interpretation, to which the reader is invited to take part.

At the beginning of 1970, the United States of America initiated a vast process of reshaping its international relationships. In this context, in July 1971, Kissinger secretly travelled to Beijing in order to prepare President Nixon's visit. The official visit of the American President occurred in February 1972 and was characterized by Nixon himself as "the week that changed the world"². Through the initiative of Nixon's administration, China was taken out of isolation and thrust on a new global track. What, at the time, represented "a tactical aspect of the Cold War" (p. 243) evolved to a genuine axis of global politics and linked the first two economic powers of the contemporary world.

Now, the individual who initiated this process writes a book for the country he discovered then, in an obvious attempt to create new global connections. Today's China is completely different from China as it was then, marching impressively towards development and thrusting itself in the second position of the world economic hierarchy. It is interesting how China's rising process is dealt with by an author who, as he himself confides, has been "more than fifty times in China", "as a senior official, as a carrier of messages, and as a scholar" (p. XV) and has had meetings with high officials of four generations of Chinese leaders.

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¹ Henry Kissinger, *On China*, Comunicare.ro, București, 2012.

² Margaret MacMillan took over this remark in the title of her book *Nixon and Mao: The Week that Changed the World* (Random House, New York, 2007).

The book is organized into four critical areas, each of them appearing with the ability to represent a separate essay. The first one and, in a sense, the most important of them, is dedicated to a cultural and mental picture of China, as it has been shaped by a millenary evolution. The analysis that Kissinger presents does not attempt to convince readers of the truthfulness of the Chinese perspective on one phenomenon or another, but to help them understand this perspective and its deep mechanisms. The invitation to first fully understand, before forming a judgment, could be the real motto of the book. It takes on special meaning in the case of China – the country with a chequered history that built a cultural universe with features and subtleties difficult to grasp in ordinary analyses. There is a scene in the book that speaks very eloquently about this need to know China, as the main way to decipher the “mystery”. At the beginning of his secret visit in July 1971, Henry Kissinger was invited to make the opening statement by Zhou Enlai, China’s Prime-Minister at that time. Henry Kissinger made a somewhat conventional remark: “Many visitors have come to this beautiful and, to us, mysterious land...” At this point, something unusual happened. Zhou interrupted the special guest and added: “You will find it not mysterious. Once you have become accustomed to it, it will not be so mysterious as before” (p. 243). Is China “mysterious” (we would rather say “different”) or are we too comfortable to go deep into its cultural universe, to truly decipher its distinctive features that result from an impressive historic evolution?

The description of what the author calls “the paradox of China’s origins” is remarkable. For almost every country there is an underlying myth, a legend of its creation, of its beginnings. With China, things are different. There is not a real myth of its creation. China should not be seen as a nation-state. Rather, its millenary existence makes it more similar to what the author describes as “a permanent natural phenomenon”. There are important moments in Chinese history that illustrate this very special perspective. The Yellow Emperor is considered as “a founding hero” of China, but “he is reestablishing, not creating, an empire”. Confucius is normally perceived “as a founder of a culture”, “although he stressed that he had invented nothing and that he was merely trying to reinvigorate the principle of harmony which had once existed in the golden age” (p. 5). That is why Chinese history seems to be a process of “patient recovery of forgotten principles” (p. 14), a shift from glorious to hectic times, followed by efforts to restore a balance.

China’s historical and cultural portrait also contains a strategic vision of China, established by two completely different “documents”. There is a Chinese traditional game, named *wei qi*, or *go* in Japanese. Although *The Economist* presents Kissinger’s resort to this game with irony (May, 19th 2011), we believe his choice to mention this game and compare it to Western chess is very evocative and emphasizes the distinctive characteristics of Chinese strategic thinking. Westerners are chess players, tacticians aiming to get rid of their opponents’ pieces “in a series of head-on clashes”. *Wei qi* players wish to avoid encirclement. They don’t want to eliminate their opponents’ pieces, but to occupy strategic positions in order to mitigate “the strategic potential of their opponent’s pieces”. “Chess teaches the Clausewitzian concepts of ‘center of gravity’ and the ‘decisive point’... *Wei qi* teaches the art of strategic encirclement” (p. 24).

The second document is *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, a book that has been translated and debated in Romania. The avoidance of direct conflict is the tenet of this seminal work. A book like this, that proposes a unique and highly refined strategic vision, could only be published in a country where war has resulted in so many victims that at a certain moment China faced the danger of demographic decline and even of extinction, despite its impressively

large population. There is no doubt that “the Clausewitzian moment” had been experienced by China. The length, size and many victims of these domestic conflicts motivated the country to overcome these moments by adopting a new strategy. The new key factor was no longer outright conflict, but victory (or dominance) without conflict. It is the result of an ancient and checkered history that had the wisdom to pursue and to reach to truths almost as natural themselves.

Any attempt to decode and understand China's political and diplomatic positions is doomed to fail once removed from such a strong traditional context, from this mental framework that has been shaped over a long period of time. That is why we consider the first part of the book as very important: not only because it successfully outlines certain assets of the Chinese mindset, but also because it helps us better understand subsequent history (not so much history in itself, but the way in which it was experienced and felt by the Chinese people). For instance, it helps us have a more accurate picture of what the Chinese call “the century of humiliation”, a historical, political and psychological reality, that constitutes the second category of issues presented in the book. What happens when empires clash or when superpowers fight over rights, territories and even political systems? There is no standard answer.

China missed the encounter with the new technological revolution, with the force that had started to shape history at the turn of the 19th century. It preserved the picture of itself and its central position, while surrounded and assaulted by the new superpowers of the time: England and France from the West, Russia from the North, and Japan from the East. A new paradoxical context, sad in many ways, was created: the great Middle Kingdom was no longer fit for the emerging world and China continued to see and judge reality according to obsolete standards. The Western superpowers wanted free trade, but had to confront the fundamental canons of Chinese order, where the Europeans were labeled as “barbarians” and their trade as “a tribute”. This resulted in open conflict where the Western powers obtained not only the right to trade, but also special prerogatives in various areas in East and South-East China.

The book includes some eloquent pages on Russia's diplomatic moves: the new context was wisely used by Russia in order to take over vast territories that were outstandingly valuable in terms of strategy. Moreover, Russia reached its goals while leaving the impression that it helped China, protecting it from greater loss. We not only discover the Russian Empire's eagerness to expand its territories, but also the force of its diplomacy, its ability to benefit from favorable contexts and to create false or artificial threats in order to obtain otherwise unthinkable benefits. Each powerful state, Great Britain, France, Russia and Japan, has used the decline of Imperial China to get as many benefits as possible. However, Russia is the country that obtained the most important long-lasting advantages, underlining an essential truth: well-conceived diplomatic action carries greater weight than multiple armies combined.

Here is one example. China's capital was occupied by British and French troops. Russia's ambassador to Beijing accomplished something unique: he promised the Chinese he would protect them by convincing the occupants to leave Beijing. It was not difficult for the Russian ambassador to show the leaders of the occupation troops the potential dangers they were exposed to during the winter. When the river froze, the escape ways could get jammed and the crowds could attack at any moment. “For these services Moscow exacted a staggering territorial price: a broad swath of territory in the so-called Outer Manchuria along the Pacific Coast, including the port city now called Vladivostok. In a stroke, Russia had gained a major naval base, a foothold in the Sea of Japan, and 350,000 square miles of territory once considered Chinese” (p. 68).

All the “foreigner” victories were painful, but Japan’s was particularly frustrating. Beyond the military victory was Japan’s successful industrialization. It was the first country in the region that had already been successful in the modernization process. Whereas the result of China’s division was painful, the process itself was downright humiliating. An impressive amount of literature was published on what was called “100 years of national humiliation”. So much the more that after World War I the German concessions on Chinese territory have been conceded to Japan. This “national humiliation” has become a part of the Chinese modern identity, and China’s leaders of the first half of the last century – Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek – have often mentioned this profound feeling that pervaded the Chinese mindset; Mao himself declared in 1949: “Never again shall our nation be subjected to insult and humiliation” (Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung, 1977, p.17).

We cannot understand Mao’s victory and the rule of socialism in China without considering this unwritten commitment to avenge the century of humiliation: “Mao had unified the country and, except for Taiwan and Mongolia, restored it to its historic limits... It had produced pride in the reemergence of a national identity” (pp. 333-334). Thus, the socialism brought by Mao provided an illusion of the greatness the country once had. Mao’s process of restoring the country to its entirety provided the new system with a psychological support that can only be understood through the contrast with China’s century of humiliation and sadness. We notice the depth of this feeling and the resulting political attitude in a position expressed by Mao in 1958, when Nikita Khrushchev visited the country. The Soviet leader made a suggestion he had made before: in exchange for “special access” to the Soviet submarine base in the Arctic Ocean, China would allow the Soviets to use one of its harbors in the warm waters of the Pacific. Mao said no: “We’ve had the British and other foreigners on our territory for years now, and we’re not ever going to let anyone use our land for their own purposes again” (p. 168).

The third category of issues includes Washington’s efforts to open relationships with China, thus starting a new era for the relationship with the most populated country of the world. Historically, it is the most important part of the book, as it provides information, descriptions, and accounts of a direct participant in the events. This part carries the value of a historic document, indispensable for future research and analyses.

Henry Kissinger is a master of portraits – he paints portraits of ideas. The characters are shaped by highlighting the attitudes and the visions they embody, making the book very special. Here is such a contrast between Mao and Deng. We are dealing with two Chinese leaders who both had the ability to decisively shape the destiny of their country. Both have historical greatness, but have different visions of China’s destiny; what separates them is the answer to the question: where should China reach and, more importantly, how can it get there? The two leaders are influenced by two different sources of Chinese tradition, both powerful, both relevant: “Mao had governed as a traditional emperor of a majestic and awe-inspiring kind. He embodied the myth of the imperial ruler supplying the link between heaven and earth and closer to the divine than to the terrestrial... Deng held no major office; he refused all honorific titles; he almost never appeared on television, and practiced politics almost entirely behind the scenes. He ruled not like an emperor but as the principal mandarin” (p. 334). Deng’s key accomplishment is that he restored the relationship with the mandarin tradition, which had been shadowed, if not despised, in Mao’s time. Its fundamental principle is legitimacy based on performance. The pragmatism of Chinese politics so much debated today is the modern

name of the mandarin tradition. The basic difference between the two distinct eras of socialism in China – before and after 1978 – consists of exactly this.

This might seem like a risky allegation, especially because Mao's position is still central in today's China, from official events to the billboards displayed in the smallest villages. Mao is an emblematic political figure. Over one year ago I was in a village in the South of the country accompanied by two students of the closest university. Mao's picture was a dominant presence in that village. O.K., I said, what about Deng, Deng who built today's China, where is he? "We know what you mean", the answer came, "but it's better this way!" Deng's role is well-known and it has a well defined place in people's consciousness. From a symbolic perspective, however, things are different. Mao's image continues to unify today and a change of symbol would be risky. Likely, some years from now, Deng will also have his own symbolic place. It is a fact accepted only by a great culture. This attitude's durability is demonstrated by the fact that it is shared by today's young generations.

There is an intense literary debate on whether or not the development of China and of other emerging countries will also generate factors that will shape tomorrow's pattern of development. We shall not go into the details of this debate. However, several aspects should be mentioned.

We would mention the Chinese vision of the role and responsibilities of the state in the process of development. Whereas globally the state's role was experiencing a downward trend, China placed it at the center of its development strategy – not a Maoist state, but a state that had to find its main source of legitimacy in starting and supporting the process of modernization. Such an attempt cannot be separated from the influence of tradition – the Chinese state and, generally, the Asian state plays a key role in history – but neither can it be separated from the immunity that a great culture acquires from what we could call "ideological fashions" (which usually fascinate the less mature people). In this way, China has avoided joining the ordinary debate that shifts from one extreme to another: "more" or "less" state, and engaged in a direction that is called by specialists "shrewd state management". The close connection to the process of development provided the Chinese state with a real compass that helped it move forward in a direction confirmed by contemporary development.

The importance of the role of the state was emphasized by the current economic crisis, which found China better prepared. At the same time, Anthony Giddens (2009) talks about the complexity of several current issues, such as the energy issue, the environment issue etc., which claim there is a medium- and long-term vision, as well as suitable financial support. In all these directions the state is irreplaceable.

Another area that makes China's evolution very special is its clear choice for manufacturing. At a time when outsourcing seemed to be a new way of development, China understood that production is not a relic, but the source of wealth and the driving force of modernization. Its development strategy has the merit of having understood one ultimate truth: production means not only manufacturing a certain product, but also everything that precedes and follows this process. That is why when production declines, jobs also decline, along with training, brands, innovation, competition, and everything that yields wealth and accelerates modernization. Following such a direction, China has become the "factory" of the world – the third world's factory, after this essential role was played by Great Britain (in the 19th century) and by the USA (in the 20th century).

In President Obama's State of the Union speech at the beginning of 2012, he pled for profound changes to American economic policy, for a stimulation of production to ensure that

USA would once again become competitive and create jobs. He proposed economic and financial mechanisms in order to boost production and innovation and to increase competitiveness: “No, we will not go back to an economy weakened by outsourcing, bad debts, and phony financial profits. Tonight, I want to speak about how we move forward, and lay out a blueprint for an economy that’s built to last – an economy built on American manufacturing, American energy, skills for American workers, and a renewal of American values. This blueprint begins with American manufacturing” (State of the Union 2012).

The analysis posed by Kissinger is, to a great extent, an effort to define China’s cultural uniqueness and to emphasize practical conclusions deriving from this often neglected reality. “A culture is not only a collection of intellectual or imaginary products, but essentially a real way of life”, said Raymond Williams (1958, p. 325) in a very instructive manner. In each country we deal with a mixture of culture and everyday life. In China, it is more than that. A real osmosis was created. Everywhere in the world, culture influences and shapes behavior, everyday life, the universe of values people have; with China, due to a long historical existence and to a particular respect for tradition – each generation does not highlight itself, but tries to “render life to its predecessors”, to preserve their work and their memory, to prove their “up-to-dateness” – the mixture between culture and daily life is much more dominant and culture turns into what the British writer called “a real way of life”. It is an exceptional historic achievement, without which we shall not be able to understand China’s current successes.

For the people today, for those who witness the rise of the Chinese power, the urgent question is how to understand this rising power and what to expect from this phenomenon. “The meeting” in the Pacific of the two superpowers – which is the subject of the fourth area of issues – triggers the highest interest of the reader, as it answers a question of many citizens: how will things evolve in the region?

The method of analysis proposed by the American writer is somehow surprising. The starting point is the situation created in Europe at the turn of the 20th century by the rise of Germany. In 1907, Eyre Crowe, a senior official in the British Foreign Office, wrote “a brilliant analysis of the European political structure and Germany’s rise”, which has an “acute relevance today” (p. 518). According to Crowe’s analysis, the question “What is Germany’s goal?” was not so important. Because irrespective of its goal, Germany intended “to build as powerful a navy as she can afford”. When this goal would be achieved, “this *in itself* – regardless of German intentions – would be an objective threat to Britain, and ‘incompatible with the existence of the British Empire’” (p. 519).

In Crowe’s analysis, the conflict was anticipated by the structural elements that defined the relationships between the European powers. According to his memorandum, the war was almost inevitable. Even in 1907 there was no room for diplomacy, because even German moderate statesmen operated with a “conscious scheme for hegemony”. In this new context, “formal assurances were meaningless” (p. 519). Since war would start anyway, the interest of Great Britain was that it would start right away, before Germany could build its fleet. When asked “Was the crisis caused by German capabilities or German conduct?” (p. 518), Crowe’s answer was clear: the crisis was endemic; it could only be accelerated or aggravated by the reaction of a moment or another; sooner or later, the conflict would break out.

The crucial issue is whether or not the rise of a new power leads to similar results every time. In other words, the question is whether or not a Crowe-type analysis can be applied to the situation in the Pacific, where China is in full process of ascent. And if so, according to Crowe’s reasoning, “America should act now”. Kissinger warns us that his interpretation “dif-

fers substantially” from that of the British official; that “historical parallels are by nature inexact” (p. 522) and that today “the picture is far more complicated” (p. 524). There are several arguments in the author’s demonstration worth remembering. For instance, the fact that this time we deal with two powers which have proven quasi-constant consideration for the regional, continental or global interest in relation to their national interest. Or the fact that a potential conflict – or even a situation similar to the Cold War – would be devastating through its consequences not only for the countries directly involved, but for the regions they belong to and for the whole world as well (consequently, such an ample effect would exert a sort of inhibitory pressure over what caused it). Or that the world today and consequently the great powers are confronted with pre-eminently global issues. As Kissinger outlines, even if “consensus may prove difficult, confrontation on these issues is self-defeating” (p. 523). These are all arguments in favor of mutual adjustment, even in favor of a “Pacific Community”.

This would be the reasonable perspective, well-calculated by the two superpowers. Yet, more often than not, history does not operate with such perspectives. A possible indication is the increasing number of certain approaches that point at the imminence of a conflict between the two superpowers. For instance, Aaron Friedberg, a professor at Princeton University’s Wilson School and a Former Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs in the Office of the Vice President Dick Cheney, recently published a study that promotes a different interpretation, quite opposite to that posed by Kissinger: “The emerging Sino-American rivalry is not the result of easily erased misperceptions or readily correctible policy errors; it is driven instead by forces that are deeply rooted in the shifting structure of the international system and in the very different domestic political regimes of the two Pacific powers. Throughout history, relations between dominant states and rising ones have been uneasy and often violent. Established powers tend to regard themselves as defenders of an international order that they helped to create and from which they continue to benefit; rising powers feel constrained, even cheated, by the status quo and struggle against it to take what they think is rightfully theirs. These age-old patterns are clearly visible today in the behavior of the United States and China” (Friedberg, 2011, p. 1).

There is another aspect worth discussing. Why is it so important for the US to maintain its position in the Pacific, especially in the East Pacific? Because it is the region with the highest economic development rate in the world. A superpower that is not present where the future developments are shaped loses its superpower status. This truth is captured in a remark of the former Prime-Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew: “The 21st century will be a contest for supremacy in the Pacific because that’s where the growth will be... If you do not hold your ground in the Pacific you cannot be a world leader” (*apud* Friedberg, 2011, p. 8). This does not reduce but augments the risks of the race, adding those related to prestige, pride, even ego.

Such positions are common – and increasingly visible – in the Chinese case, as well. For instance, Mark Leonard (2008) tells about what he calls “assertive nationalists” who criticized the “Peaceful Rise” theory. The “Peaceful Rise is wrong because it gives Taiwan a message that they can declare independence and we will not attack them” (Leonard, 2008, p. 90), remarks professor Yan Xuetong, Director of the Institute of International Studies at Tsinghua University.

Kissinger also refers to what he calls Chinese “triumphalists”, who resort to the same reasoning as Crowe. However, while the British official defended an existing power, therefore a position that had already been won over, Chinese strategists deal with it from the angle of an emerging power or a position that has to be earned. In this case, the target of the critical

assessment is the Peaceful Rise theory. However honest the commitment to a Peaceful Rise may be, “conflict is inherent in U.S.-China relations”, consider the Chinese triumphalists. That is why the Sino-American relations are compared to a “marathon contest” or to the “duel of the century” (p. 521).

The ascent of the Chinese power has led to a reconfiguration of the commercial relations in the region. For instance, Australia was traditionally associated with Europe and America. Today, Australia’s main trading partner is China. The evolution of Australia raises another crucial issue. Australia’s economic pattern is Asian, whereas its security pattern is American. We are dealing with a sort of competition between two fundamental patterns. Which one will emerge victorious? Australia is not the only geopolitically relevant state coping with this. Japan is in a similar situation. It, too, has increasingly robust economic connections with Asia and its economic pattern is becoming increasingly Asian, while, strategically speaking, Japan is a US ally. There is a rivalry that cannot be overlooked between Japan and China. Yet Japan is more and more attracted to the Chinese colossus, while the Chinese market has come to represent the main destination for Japanese exports. The clash between the two patterns is, in this case, stronger and deeper. Which one will prevail? Things are similar in the case of South Korea.

A new move was made by America in order to consolidate the security structure in the region. In November 2011, the US and Australia signed an agreement concerning the establishment of a new American military base in the North of this country. In Lionel Barber’s opinion, this agreement represents “the first long-term expansion of America’s military presence in the Pacific since the Vietnam war” (Barber, 2011). In his address to the Australian Parliament occasioned by this event, President Obama said: “With the ‘tide of war’ in the Middle East now receding, America’s focus would shift firmly to the Asia-Pacific. Let there be no doubt. In the Asia Pacific in the 21st century, the United States of America is all-in.” When the new structure of economic cooperation, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) – a group of nine Asian-Pacific countries, which specifically excludes China – was launched, the American President made an additional remark: “The United States is a Pacific power and we are here to stay” (Pilling, 2011).

One of Kissinger’s allegations that we fully support claims that “the crucial competition between the United States and China is more likely to be economic and social than military” (p. 525). The result of the competition in the Pacific is directly connected to the economic situation in those national perimeters. So far, the conflicts created by a new superpower have broken out following a certain pattern: the new power “rises against the existing powers or order”. The American initiative presented above aims at strengthening the existing order in order to discourage the rising power. It is a precautionary measure easy to understand. But it is not enough. The rising power may have justified demands, or demands that it considers justified. Consequently, things have to be considered from this perspective, too. Otherwise, the source of conflict is maintained. In this debate, our attention was drawn by the point of view expressed by Clyde Prestowitz, president of the Washington-based Economic Strategy Institute: “America spends too much time worrying about grand strategic goals and not enough about making its economy stronger” (Pilling, 2011). Even if it seems to be an international issue – which, in many respects, it is –, the competition in the Pacific is nourished by the domestic economic achievements of the two competitors. Eventually, these achievements will decide the actual evolution.

The US will continue to consolidate their strategic power in the region, but their domination will no longer be as clear as it used to be throughout the last years. At least for the next ten years, the American strategic prevalence will be hard to deny. What will happen afterwards? Probably a kind of division in regional domination between America and China will appear, alongside a possible rise of other powers. Australia, Japan, South Korea, as well as many other countries in the region will support such an evolution in order to avoid major tensions and to satisfy their own interests. A country however powerful can never overlook its economic interest. Therefore, the evolution in the Pacific will be determined not only by the relations between the two superpowers, but also by the position and the interests of the neighboring countries. According to as much as can be predicted, these countries will play a very important role: that of being a kind of special powers, interested in maintaining the balance of power in the region and in sanctioning the excess, irrespective of where this excess comes from. In other terms, they will be counter weight powers.

As Kissinger remarks, in the Pacific there are two superpowers representing two different versions of exceptionalism: "American exceptionalism is missionary. It holds that the United States has an obligation to spread its values to every part of the world. China's exceptionalism is cultural. China does not proselytize; it does not claim that its contemporary institutions are relevant outside China" (p. XVI). Reading this characterization, we recalled the writings of Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan's spiritual father. The Canadian thinker conducts a historical analysis of civilizations and describes the role of the means of communication in the rise and fall of civilizations throughout history. In this context, Innis talks about two main means of communications: time-biased and space-biased (Innis, 1951/1999). The space-biased means of communication promote expansion and extension. The time-biased ones promote tradition, identity, and continuity. It is clear that exceptionalism represents a cultural outcome that describes how a nation is created and perceived and how it views its future. If we analyse the two types of exceptionalism from the point of view of the distinction proposed by Innis, it is clear that American exceptionalism is space-biased, whereas the Chinese is time-biased. Our question is: does the confrontation between the two versions of exceptionalism favor or, on the contrary, further hinder cooperation in the Pacific?

We should mention that, according to Innis, there are no *better* means of communication (be they time or space-biased). Additionally, in our opinion, there is no *better* type of exceptionalism. Where does the danger come from, according to the Canadian writer? The answer is: whenever one of the types of means of communication (one of the two types of exceptionalism we have discussed) "sets up a monopoly", thus depriving the system of the abundance of information and feelings it should convey, of the efforts it should guide, even of the ability to understand reality. When a category of means of communication (we can understand by that a type of exceptionalism) is no longer open to the benefits (or the distinctive characteristics) of the other, the "monopoly" sets in, causing impoverishment and decline. Virtue consists in the quality and value of the synthesis. By examining the facts more closely we shall discover that the developments in the Pacific are determined mainly by the cultural patterns present here. If the competing parties choose to go deeper into their own patterns, in the – obviously false – belief of their superiority, then the premises for a conflict are already created. The concept of "co-evolution" discussed by Kissinger includes this cultural openness, doubled by the effort to incorporate durable assets acquired from the other type of exceptionalism.

This is not an ordinary book that analyses China and its progress according to the usual patterns practiced by the authors of many volumes dedicated to Chinese power. Kissinger

avoids such approaches. The book is written in order to provide a theoretic frame and the instruments for an analysis which should enable us to understand what China represents economically, strategically and culturally, what transformation it could undergo. Although written for the reader of today, the book has a dimension that addresses the reader of tomorrow and the next generations as well.

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