

Group 3.

The Search for a New European Narrative

The Europaeum workshop in Krakow opened with an introductory panel on ‘European integration in era of multiple crises – will the project survive?’ The panel was composed of Professor Hartmut Meyer (Oxford), Ms Natalie Welfens (Amsterdam) and Dr Pieter de Wilde (NTNU). As the rather provocative title suggests, the panel dealt with the current challenges facing Europe and their potential impact on the future existence of the European Union.

Hartmut Meyer, who has worked extensively on international relations, diplomatic history, and EU politics, opened with the controversial statement that ours is both the most privileged generation and that which carries most responsibility for the future of the EU. He outlined the multiple crises we are facing: economic, humanitarian, security, political, and displayed skepticism towards achieving progress within the EU in the near future. Faced with the erosion of a “permissive consensus” regarding European integration, the rise of populism and increasing distrust in public institutions, he stressed the importance of situating Europe in both its local and global contexts.

The next speaker, Natalie Welfens, offered a more personal account of changing opinions in our generation towards the EU, drawing on her work on migration and the EU-Turkey Agreement. She highlighted a sense of disillusionment towards EU migration and humanitarian policy, stating that “this is not my Europe anymore.” She disagreed with the pragmatism of Hartmut Meyer regarding the future of Europe, stressing the importance of value-guided political action.

Finally, Pieter de Wilde, an expert on Euroscepticism, offered a more optimistic account of the current situation. He suggested we move away from a rhetoric of “crisis” towards one of addressing “challenges.” For him, Brexit does not represent an existential crisis for Europe, but he was more worried about the situation in Italy. He highlighted how news media have a tendency to sensationalize current events and to focus on the negative. Moreover, he pointed out that a significant minority of European citizens supporting ‘populist’ parties should also be heard and engaged.

What we most enjoyed about this panel was the range of perspectives offered, with arguments ranging from more pragmatic approaches to value-driven, optimistic approaches with a touch of humor. We agree that it is all of our responsibility to take action in the face of these crises, and that times are dire. However, we also agreed with Pieter de Wilde that a sense of optimism and confidence is needed as well. In this sense, Hartmut Meyer’s argument that “this is your responsibility” might also be framed in a more positive and empowering way, for instance “this is your chance to make a difference.” Finally, while we agree with his argument that Europe must always be examined as part of a bigger picture, we felt that discussion on environmental governance and the global challenge of climate change was notably absent.

Despite different approaches between the speakers, what united their arguments was the necessity of finding a new narrative, or narratives, for Europe in these challenging times. Indeed, the series of crises we face today represent a serious challenge to European identity and our sense of European values. We share Natalie Welfens’s feeling that “this is not our Europe anymore,” which is why the time has come to have a serious discussion concerning what exactly “our Europe” means, and what unites us in the face of these centrifugal forces. In this regard, there is a tension between the urgency of these problems, and the need for long-term reflection on the answers to these questions, which we are currently unable to answer. The way forward must be one of inclusive discussion and debate, not only regarding the immediate challenges we face, but also the underlying values that should guide our action and provide the basis for a new European narrative.

Group 6.

European Integration in an era of multiple crises – will the project survive?

On Thursday, 22nd November 2018, we had the pleasure to attend the introductory lecture of the “External and internal challenges to European integration” workshop. This lecture was presented by Prof. Mach, with Prof. Mayer as the main speaker and Dr. de Wilde and Ms. Welfens as discussants.

Numerous topics were tackled, among which were European integration, Brexit, German domestic politics, rise of populism, EU enlargement.

One of the main points regarding the role of young people and academics in the construction of the European project. Since the future is very uncertain (Brexit, populism, migration crisis, etc.), nothing should be taken for granted and the outcome of the current challenges that we are facing are in our hands. Moreover, academics must strive to provide a global vision of the situation, in a world where the information is scattered, incomplete and often biased.

The speakers also discussed the questioning of the traditional world order. Indeed, there is a general decrease of interest for international structures, and Brexit may be understood through this phenomenon. We can observe in contemporary politics a rise of populist parties, and an erosion of the tradition party system. While Ms. Welfens thought that political arguments should be based on facts, Prof. Mayer argued that politics is before all about efficiency and communication.

We agreed with a lot of points. First, we too believe that politics is a “dirty game”. However, this does not mean that we should stop arguing based on facts and reason. The real challenge is to present them in an accessible way. Moreover, in an era of crisis within the European Union, a relevant topic worth discussing more would be stability. Stability is an important issue for European integration because what starts out as a regional issue can quickly adversely affect the who economic union. Stability is absolutely essential to cohesion within the European union. Maintaining cohesion, cooperation to accomplish the European integration. It is not necessarily a crisis, maybe more challenges that we have to face together. We have come back to a more grass-roots approach to European integration.

We liked all the topics that we found extremely relevant and topical, and we appreciated the call for making a change to happen. We too believe that we are the people who can be stronger together.

Group 4.

Brexit and Security: Between Risk, Challenge and Opportunity

Whilst Brexit has been heavily discussed in the public and academic spheres since the UK referendum of June 2016, its relation with security in Europe has not always been clearly expressed. However, the relevance of addressing Brexit from a security perspective is of timely importance, especially taking into account the fact that the draft Brexit withdrawal agreement is soon to be presented to the UK and European parliaments.

The three panellists discussed Brexit and security from various approaches in order to assess the extent to which Brexit will impact the EU in regards to security. Security has therefore been understood in its broad definition, including security policy and constructed threat perception.

When considering the security and defence dimensions of the EU per se – i.e. Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) – it seems to be quite unlikely that Brexit will crucially impact these policies in regards to their functioning, as both of them rely more on intergovernmentalism. Nonetheless, according to Dr. Maurer, the substantial leadership role of the UK is to be acknowledged in the establishment and development of CFSP and CSDP. Indeed, since the 1990s with the French-UK joint declaration of Saint Malo in 1998, the UK has been a significant actor for the security in Europe. This role can be noted from both diplomatic and military perspectives, with for instance the importance of the cooperation between the UK and the US for the security on the European soil, and also the fact that the UK is one of the two European countries possessing nuclear weapons. Brexit can thus be considered as a major risk for the EU's position in the international arena, but it can also be perceived as an opportunity to develop the security dimension of the EU. In this respect, the recent developments of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Joint European Union Intelligence School (JEIS) seem to be a step towards a closer cooperation of EU member states in the security area. It can also be noted that so far the solidarity between the remaining 27 EU member states is quite strong in Brexit negotiations.

Moving to a constructivist perspective on security – based on the securitisation theory developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations – Dr. de Wilde presented two scenarios regarding security discussions and Brexit: Either security is not perceived as an issue in Brexit negotiations, therefore the UK and the EU will most probably collaborate on a level below high politics; or security is securitised and the EU-UK relations will become too disturbed to collaborate in this field.

These two scenarios are yet to be verified, which underlines the uncertainty of the Brexit situation, even couple of months before the officially scheduled Brexit day in March 2019.

Brexit also poses certain questions when it comes the security in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and this point has been addressed by Dr. Pomorska. The UK has been for many years a fundamental actor for the security in the CEE region, and its divorce from the Union will require the EU member states to find – or re-define – a new champion in this area.

Brexit has not only implications for the future trade relations between the UK and the EU; but also impacts the European Union in terms of its security, its international standing and the values it seeks to promote. Finally, we believe that Brexit leads us to assess what European project we want to develop for Europe, and it will be crucial to define it for the years to come.

Group 5.

Brexit and Security

The main topic of the panel was Brexit and its implications for European Security. The relevance of a discussion on this topic can be mainly related to the European Integration process and European Security as a whole, undeniably being the UK one of the main actors in global and European security. Moreover, Brexit represents an unprecedented challenge to Europe, and from that the importance a discussion on the unpredictable consequences of the process.

While all the discussants provided different scenarios, underlining the unpredictability of the current situation, Dr. Heidi Maurer (Oxford University) put the accent on the common foreign policy of the EU, being skeptical about any big change in the European Security framework, if not on the financing side. Departing from the Copenhagen School approach, Dr. Pieter de Wilde (NTNU Norway) theorized two different possible scenarios that may derive from the securitization of Brexit, the decisive factor being whether or not security will be “securitized” by the Brexit process.

Dr. Karolina Pomorska (Leiden University) discussed about the future role of UK in the European Foreign and Defense policy, and about the extent to which they would be able to still influence the decision-making processes.

One of the recurring themes was the common understanding of what we call European values, and Brexit being example of lack of solidarity and consistent perception of political reality. A point to which all of the discussants agreed was also the damage brought to the reputation of the European Union, as a strong and compact international body, and its ability to influence international politics as a whole.

All things considered, especially with reference to the damage of the European external reputation, and the problems in the common understanding of so-called European values, opportunities can also be found in the chaos following Brexit, both for member states willing to push their own view of the future of the European Integration and for the European Union as a whole, also in relation from the Defense and Security policy, which could further move away from an Atlanticist point of view towards a more integrated view focused on Europe and its neighborhood.

However, the discussants seem to miss the point of the internal national forces and oppositions, and their impact in building and shaping the crisis itself in the UK. We think that the challenge of Brexit and security should also be addressed by the competition of diverse national stakeholders, interests, discourses and resources.

Group 1.

Are control and care mutually exclusive in the management of migration?

In the public debate in European countries, migration towards the EU is often framed as a security issue. A panel on security and mobility offered a timely opportunity to discuss the topic and the relation between security and migration. Coming from different professional backgrounds and parts of Europe, the three speakers on the panel provided a variety of perspectives on the topic. The panel discussion brought up the contradictions and inefficiencies at the heart of security measures in the context of the migrant crisis in Europe.

Discourses and policies on migration are characterized by a dual logic combining humanitarianism and security, as Ms Welfens argued. These concepts are supposed to be complementary and therefore not necessarily mutually exclusive. Contrasting different understandings of migration management (humanitarianism *versus* securitarianism, control *versus* care) is inaccurate, as it is possible and *should* be possible to implement humanitarian securitization and humanitarian border work.

This idea was supported by the concept of ‘dualist information technology’ which was brought up by Prof. Gruszczak. Migration policy can be understood as a tool used (and misused) by governments and non-governmental actors with two seemingly contradictory but complementary natures: exclusionary on the one side (states securitize their interests by framing migration as a crisis, through border fencing, criminalization of migrants, international cooperation to deter migration) and inclusionary on the other side (incentives for other types of migrants, inclusion schemes, search and rescue operations). In this debate, the contrast between the view of Lt. Prof. Garcia – who considered EU control of border security as a paramount priority – clearly contrasted with the more human rights-focused outlook of Ms. Welfens.

Additionally, the panelists repeatedly asked “whose security” we actually refer to in the debates on migration. Are we providing security to European citizens at the expense of that of the migrants landing on Europe’s shores? Indeed, migration policies contain an inherent distinction between an insider and outsider group, between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This results in the inclusion of some and exclusion of others, and in a contrast between legal and irregular migration. This insider-outsider distinction, however, is not always obvious and can in some cases be perceived as arbitrary or inconsistent. For instance, the EU-Turkey Statement attempts to simplify, govern and order mobility of people through the use of resettlement criteria. In the context of the implementation of the deal in Germany, a medical cap of 3% has been established for the severely ill. Yet, no one knows who qualifies as ‘severely ill’ apart from German authorities. To what extent then are European governments fulfilling their obligations to care for the migrants’ human rights and security?

However, some important questions did remain unanswered and points raised by the speakers were not always fully articulated. Namely, *how* do some political elites manipulate fear of the electorate and why does a significant portion of European citizens consider migration a security issue in the first place? How and for what aim is the perception of migration shaped as being a ‘them’ versus ‘us’ contrast? The EU’s view on security seems to be more and more focused on protecting its citizens, but is protectionism really making us “safer”?

To sum up, the panel clearly highlighted the extent to which our understanding of migration as a security issue is very much a changing construct, and one that contributes to portraying migrants as a ‘security threat’ and as clear outsiders in this ‘us’ versus ‘them’ narrative.

Group 2.

The Narrative on Security

Nowadays the topic of migration is based on the narrative on security. The polarization of the debate on migration between the logic of humanitarianism and security prevents a constructive analysis of the phenomenon. This article argues that policy making on migration is not based on scientific evidence.

Events such as the management of migration inflows in Libya and Turkey show that the logic and narrative of security place emphasis on the protection of European citizens at the expense of the outsiders, the migrants. Hence, the confinement of migrants in refugee camps and detention centers, as well as the outsourcing of rescue operations, violates the provisions of International Law, i.e. the Geneva Convention. So whose security are we talking about?

There is an explicit criminalization of migrants in Europe. Even before they cross the border, they are forced to break the law in several ways, e.g. paying smugglers to reach Europe. This reinforces the narrative that wants to criminalize migrants in the eyes of the public opinion. Migrants are, therefore, portrayed as security threats to the cultural, welfare inner security in Europe.

Security is in the heart of contemporary European politics. European policymakers use the narrative on security to justify actions that would otherwise not have been acceptable for the public opinion. The dilemma between security and humanitarianism should not be framed as such. Instead of excluding the Other from its society, Europe should aim for a reconciliation of both points of view.