

*Unity in Diversity: A Glance at the Predicaments and Heterogeneity of the  
European Union*

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In a survey conducted in the first two months of 2009, a relative majority of Europeans did not approve of the overall political, economic and social trajectory of the European Union (39%), while a mere 29% gave a positive assessment.<sup>1</sup> While this dismal rating is considered to have slightly improved over the past year, their sentiment is mirrored in many sociological and political phenomena, which suggest that the present course of the EU has left many people disgruntled and dissatisfied. It is then important to take a look at the reasons behind these overwhelming statistics and what they may indicate the future holds.

In this paper, I will first look at the origins of this supranational mechanism with a reflection on its aims and goals, as well as how it has evolved over time. Then, I will look at the present-day structure of the EU, as well as criticisms which have arisen out of its dealings. I will also try to address issues pertaining to potential hazards contained within its structure and ultimately its sustainability and capacity to maintain structural stabilization. Finally, I will take a look at the issue of immigration within a specific Member Country of the EU – Italy – in order to analyze this problem in detail.

## 1.1 Origins of the European Union

The roots of the European Union can be traced back to the destruction caused by the Second World War and a desire to prevent such a catastrophe from ever occurring again on European soil. A speech made by Sir Winston Churchill in Zurich on September 19, 1946 demonstrates the belief that a structure such as this could help prevent a similar fate on such a

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, “Eurobarometer 71: Public Opinion in the European Union,” TNS Opinion and Social, Spring 2009  
[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb71/eb71\\_std\\_part1.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb71/eb71_std_part1.pdf) (accessed April 2, 2010).

large scale. In his speech, Churchill prescribes a “sovereign remedy” which he envisages would “transform the whole scene and would in a few years make all Europe, or the greater part of it, as free and happy as Switzerland is today.”<sup>2</sup> He expresses his belief in the need for a structure in which “the European fabric” will dwell in “peace, safety and freedom.”<sup>3</sup> He saw this structure, a so-called United States of Europe, as capable of providing the “salvation of the common people of every race and every land from war and servitude,” by establishing common values such as justice, mercy and freedom.<sup>4</sup>

Churchill further sees this organization as capable of complementing existing institutions, like the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations, because of its inherent drive to “give a sense of enlarged patriotism and common citizenship to the distracted peoples of this mighty continent.”<sup>5</sup> Churchill sees cultural and linguistic plurality tied by a common sense of belonging to the European continent as a means of averting the fascism and nationalistic differentiation that provoked the death and destruction of WWII. He calls for the creation of a Council of Europe as a basis to “re-create the European family in a regional structure.”<sup>6</sup>

Word about Churchill’s address traveled fast, and throughout the European continent, there was much talk about this newly proposed European spirit. The *Corriere della Sera*, an eminent Italian newspaper, reported the day following Churchill’s speech, that “it is still too early to understand and evaluate precisely the consequences that this address will have on the development of foreign policy in Great Britain and therefore in Europe,” but had much faith in

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<sup>2</sup> Winston Churchill’s Speech to the Academic Youth in Zurich, September 9, 1946, <http://www.europa-web.de/europa/02wwwswww/202histo/churchil.htm> (accessed April 27, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

the contents of his speech because “Mr Churchill has essentially remained true to the promises he already made in previous speeches.”<sup>7</sup>

However, many other parts of Europe remained skeptical to the so-called “unification” of Europe. In France, for instance, there was much commotion about Churchill’s poor evaluation of the existing situation and his inadequate comparison of Europe to the United States. One of the criticisms was based on the opinion that Churchill’s intention to make Europe an economically and culturally open society – akin to the United States – would encounter numerous obstacles.

For example, America is compared to an “empty vessel in which the molecules present are left to develop freely, with only the best coming through,” whereas the situation in post-war Europe was significantly different.<sup>8</sup> Freedom could not be “given” to individual European states, as they already possessed it within their own boundaries. Therefore, to create a United States of Europe would involve much “choosing, pruning and eliminating.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, *Le Monde* points out another stark contrast between the two unions, “while America employed a very isolationist economic doctrine in order to match its industrial growth to that of its competitors, European countries are instructed to do the exact opposite: expand.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, “it is looking to expand its internal potential while opening up substantially to the United States. So the historical analogy is more than just misguided, it is deliberately misleading.”<sup>11</sup>

In spite of the validity and the resounding persistence of these arguments, the development of a European community took the course of Churchill’s proposal. A mere four years later, a watershed step was taken towards the establishment of a European economic

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<sup>7</sup> Piero Treves, “The United States of Europe as the Sole Guarantee for Peace,” *Il nuovo Corriere della Sera*, September 20, 1946.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Jacques Servan Schreiber, “Phoney Europe,” *Le Monde*, September 24, 1949.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

community. This step, also known as the Schumann plan, created a common High Authority over the combined coal and steel production of France and Germany with the intention of creating “de-facto solidarity” between the different European communities.<sup>12</sup> This plan created the famous European Steel and Coal Community (ESCS), which is today considered the original, founding organization of the EU. In addition, the Schumann plan set the standard for the way in which the process of European integration was to take place in the future. Namely, it stressed the importance of gradual integration and joint decision-making with an underlying desire to foster peace on the continent.

One of the main engineers behind the Schumann plan, Jean Monnet, drafted a discussion paper six days before the collaboration plan was signed.<sup>13</sup> The paper focused on the necessities of such an agreement, contextualizing it within the needs of contemporary Europe and the importance of preventing any further warfare. He called for immediate measures, stressing that the present course of events presented an imminent threat. He called the “German situation” a “cancer” and predicted that it might once again endanger peace on the continent.<sup>14</sup>

The next crucial step in Monnet’s mind was the organization of a common defense organization that would protect the joint interests of the member states and ensure that scenarios from the past never be repeated. Negotiations began at the start of 1951, and as soon as May 1952, members of the European Coal and Steel Community officially established the European Defense Community (EDC).<sup>15</sup> However, while all six states had initially agreed to the

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<sup>12</sup> Raquel Valls, “The European Communities,” *European Navigator*, March 24, 2010 [http://www.ena.lu/european\\_communities-2-16399](http://www.ena.lu/european_communities-2-16399) (accessed April 7, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Jean Monnet, “Discussion Paper,” *European Navigator*, May 3, 1950, [http://www.ena.lu/discussion\\_paper\\_jean\\_monnet\\_1950-2-950.pdf](http://www.ena.lu/discussion_paper_jean_monnet_1950-2-950.pdf) (accessed April 2, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Etienne Deschamps, “The Refusal to Ratify the EDC Treaty,” *European Navigator*, [http://www.ena.lu/refusal\\_ratify\\_edc\\_treaty-2-340](http://www.ena.lu/refusal_ratify_edc_treaty-2-340) (accessed March 29, 2010).

establishment of this organization, when it came to the ratification of the treaty, France was unable to overcome its internal political divisions. This caused outrage among France's partners, as well as the United States, and the European integration process came to a halt.<sup>16</sup>

After this point, many endeavors in the fields of chemicals, electricity, fisheries, transport, etc., continued on a supranational level.<sup>17</sup> However, it wasn't until early 1955 that Jean Monnet contacted the Belgian foreign minister in order to coordinate the establishment of a European Atomic Energy Community. This move was joined by the governments of Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Germany, and soon enough the European integration process was back on its way.

The creation of what we today call the European Union gives us a good picture of its foundations. Indeed, we cannot question that the early ideals of the EU – maintaining a lasting peace on the continent through solidarity in practical and viable economic efforts – remain noble, yet the voices of the early skeptics continue to resound in our ears. With the noble intention to create a culturally and linguistically diverse yet fundamentally untied Europe, the member nations wished for their progeny to have the necessary tools to overcome the destruction of two world wars. The political reality, however, gives us a different scenario: the EU remains a highly precarious and fluid institution whose behavior remains unpredictable. A good example of this is the political landscape of the EU in 2000 contrasted with the reciprocal landscape present today. Namely, ten years ago, out of the fifteen member states of the European Union, thirteen were

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

governed by social democracies; today on the other hand, there exist twenty-seven member states and right or center-right parties or coalitions lead twenty-two of them.<sup>18</sup>

## 1.2 The Present-day EU

Even though a dramatic political makeover does not occur without reason, one might think that a dual political sphere argument is completely futile unless one clarifies the implications behind these orientations. For example, both France and Germany, two of the most arguably influential countries within the EU throughout its history, have seen great shifts from liberal, social-democratic parties to conservative center-right ones. Namely, Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy is the leader of the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*, a center-right political party that was founded by Jacques Chirac in 2002. Chirac's predecessor, François Mitterand, on the other hand, led the Socialist Party from 1981 to 1995. This shift is best observed in the rhetoric employed by Sarkozy on immigration, as well as the routes he has taken since 2002 to toughen immigration in France. Sarkozy has been known to promote the so called "France, love it or leave it" motto, suggesting that the French expect nothing less but complete assimilation from her newcomers, or a one-way ticket outside of her borders.<sup>19</sup>

As far as legislation is concerned, the latest law – passed on March 31, 2010 – is the sixth law to date from 2002 that was passed with the purpose of hardening immigration in France.<sup>20</sup> It was instituted with the aim of imposing stricter penalties on anyone employing workers without

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<sup>18</sup> Svetlana Lukic and Svetlana Vukovic, "Maskare," Pescanik, <http://www.pescanik.net/content/view/4422/207/> (accessed February 2, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Katrin Bennhold, "Sarkozy Turns France to Talk of Immigration," *New York Times*, April 27, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> News Wires, "Government Moves to Further Tighten Immigration Laws," France 24 International News, <http://www.france24.com/en/20100401-government-moves-further-tighten-immigration-laws> (accessed April 15, 2010).

valid documentation. These recent laws not only close up France as a destination country for immigrants but also leave existing immigrants at the mercy of highly precarious immigration reform. Since 2002, immigrants have lost many rights, including the ability to have their family members join them in their new place of residence, as well as the right to receive residency permits after 10 years on French territory.<sup>21</sup> All of this was seen as necessary by Premier Sarkozy, who announced in 2006: “If I don’t adopt this policy, you can be sure that xenophobia and racism will increase.”<sup>22</sup>

In Germany, a similar trend can be observed. The current chancellor, Angela Merkel, is also the leader of the German Christian Democratic Union, a center-right political party with the platform of “Christian understanding of humans and their right toward God.”<sup>23</sup> Preceding her, Gerhard Schröder held office, leading the Social Democratic Party of Germany, known for espousing basic human values like freedom, justice and social solidarity. Coincidentally, on January 1, 2005, immigration to Germany was significantly toughened, and migration for workers without expertise in a certain field or adequate financial support in their home country, found themselves scrambling to renew their work and residence permits.

In 2007, Merkel instituted an integration plan along with a set of rules by which immigrants had to adhere, as a mechanism to cope with the increasing immigrant population.<sup>24</sup> This plan, met with heavy criticism among the large Turkish communities in particular, requires spouses of immigrants residing in Germany to prove they know at least 200 to 300 words of

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<sup>21</sup> Bennhold.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “Christian Democratic Union,” Freebase, [http://www.freebase.com/view/en/christian\\_democratic\\_union](http://www.freebase.com/view/en/christian_democratic_union) (accessed April 20, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> “Merkel Defends Immigrant Regulations,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2007. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/12/world/europe/12iht-germany.4.6634303.html> (accessed March 24, 2010).



German before they move to the country. The plan, in spite of a few progressive schemes designed to assist the immigrant population, was largely considered as a response to growing fears of “the radicalization of young, disillusioned Muslims.”<sup>25</sup>

The same pattern can be observed in Belgium and Sweden, as well as many other Member States, which along with a shift from social democratic to center-right politics have observed a tightening in most aspects, but especially in terms of problematic issues such as immigration, common to many societies in Europe. The orientation of political parties in Europe is merely an end result of much deeper and more serious trends. These trends speak for themselves; while the EU is still doing a good job of holding itself together, in the near future, the political and social threads will threaten to burst.

While there exists opposition to every (democratic) political mechanism in the world, it is important to point out the vast array of so-called “eurosceptics” that, for any number of reasons, disagree with the *modus operandi* of the European institution. These critics come from political orientations – liberal, conservative, or in between – and are citizens of established EU countries, as much as of newly acceded ones. In this section I will give a few examples of the diverse criticisms laid against the EU and then explain the way in which it has coped with these criticisms.

The British camp, for instance, is very well known for showing a strong resistance to the EU from the beginning. In a November 2007 article in the *Telegraph*, Daniel Hannan, an award-winning journalist and frequent critic of the structure of the European Union, calls it corrupt and accuses it of “irregularly” allocating funds, citing the example of misallocation of millions of

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

euros intended for farmers.<sup>26</sup> Britain's contribution to the EU bank account – at the time the article was written, a significant £12 billion a year – justifies its concern of how money is to be distributed. Hannan argues that “we have come to understand that corruption, in so large a bureaucracy, is institutional: a product of how the EU is structured.”<sup>27</sup> He believes that “the EU is making its constituent nations poorer, less democratic and less free” and consistently criticizes the overall political, economic and social structure of the European Union.<sup>28</sup>

However, this criticism introduces nothing new. Opposition to the anatomy of the EU has a long tradition in Britain. As early as 1968, both the Labor and Tory camps had their respective opposition – led by Enoch Powell and Tony Benn – who advocated different rationales against integration to the European Community. Powell in particular based his resistance on the overall threat upon the British identity that an increasing number of immigrants would cause in the years to come. In his infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech, delivered to a Conservative Association meeting in Birmingham in 1968, Powell calls for fast action arresting the influx of foreign peoples and advocates the re-emigration of existing immigrants.<sup>29</sup> He condemns the application of non-discrimination laws, arguing that the “discrimination and the deprivation, the sense of alarm and of resentment, lies not with the immigrant population but with those among whom they have come and are still coming.”<sup>30</sup> He claims that, while the immigrant acquires a set of new, eagerly welcomed privileges and rights, the British citizen is increasingly made a stranger in his own country of birth.

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel Hannan, “Why Aren’t We Shocked by a Corrupt EU?,” *Telegraph*, November 14, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Enoch Powell, “Rivers of Blood Speech,” *Telegraph*, November 6, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

“Euroscepticism” is a phenomenon not only present within comparatively more developed and senior members of the EU like Britain, but also in countries that have had a brief membership. The Czech Republic, not otherwise considered disapproving of the EU, has had a firm “eurosceptic” camp within the Civic Democratic Party and the Communist Party – center-right, conservative and extreme leftist camps respectively – even before the 2003 accession referendum. In spite of their purported lack of political leverage and decline in strength, Czech “eurosceptics” managed to delay the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty – aimed at “enhancing the efficiency and democratic legitimacy of the Union and to improving the coherence of its action” – and startle a large number of the European political elite.<sup>31</sup> This unexpected turn of events poses many questions related to the change in orientation and growing strength of EU-critics throughout the member states, but especially in ones not outwardly eurosceptic.

In a November 2009 paper, a research fellow of the Institute of International Relations in Prague, Mats Braun, proposes several reasons for the persistence of the Czech “eurosceptic” ideology:

“the Czech political elite had great confidence in their own transformation process in the 1990s, manifested by their disregard for the Visegrád Cooperation and their frustration over the unnecessarily long accession period. Second, they viewed the Czech Republic as a historically natural part of the more prosperous ‘West European’ region, not only because during the interwar period Czechoslovakia was the only lasting democracy in Central Europe, but also because of its relative wealth during this period. The Czechs themselves therefore perceived their state as being relatively strong compared to the other new post-communist member states and in a relational sense vis-à-vis the old member states, so some parts of the elite found it hard to accept the asymmetrical relationship between the EU and the candidate states. The negative experiences of the accession period are still the main reason for the persistence of Czech euroscepticism.”<sup>32</sup>

We thus notice that “euroscepticism” has many different origins, depending on the nature of the country’s relationship with the European Union and its own internal politics.

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<sup>31</sup> Treaty of Lisbon Preamble, <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-the-functioning-of-the-european-union-and-comments/preamble.html> (accessed March 26, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> Mats Braun, “Understanding Klaus: The Story of Czech Eurorealism,” EPIN Working Papers 26 (November 2009).

In a 2008 article titled “Euroscepticism as a political label: The use of European Union issues in political competition in the new Member States,” Laure Neumayer argues that “euroscepticism,” a highly problematic term in itself, is essentially a tool used by political parties as a means of leverage against their political opponents.<sup>33</sup> In other words, purporting a “eurosceptic” versus a “eurorealist” attitude comes down to just another power struggle within the internal political sphere of a country. Even so, the increasing need for political parties to distinguish themselves within their own countries in terms of opposition to values upheld by the EU should strike us as momentous.

The European Union has been very curt and surprisingly oppressive towards all critics of its organizations and practices. In March 2001, the European Court of Justice ruled that the EU can “lawfully suppress political criticism of its institutions and of leading figures, sweeping aside English Common Law and 50 years of European precedents on civil liberties.”<sup>34</sup> The commission was given the power to restrict dissent with the purpose of “protecting the rights of others” and legally reprimanding individuals who have “damaged the institution’s image and reputation.”<sup>35</sup> As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard points out in his article, this raises important issues about free speech and personal rights in the EU and elsewhere. While the EU strives to set an example to budding democracies worldwide, it explicitly imposes limitations on democratic values, for the sake of protection from political “blasphemy.”<sup>36</sup>

As the EU struggles to maintain cohesion amongst its existing members, in all likelihood it faces the perennial problem of expansion and will need to address the problems of emerging

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<sup>33</sup> Laure Neumayer, “Euroscepticism as a Political Label: The use of European Union Issues in Political Competition in the New Member States,” *European Journal of Political Research* 47, no.2 (2008): 135-160.

<sup>34</sup> Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, “Euro-court Outlaws Criticism of EU,” *Telegraph*, March 7, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

countries with entirely different needs and ideologies. It seems as if the EU has failed to create a reputable enough image throughout the European continent among member states as well as among those that have yet to join.

### 1.3 Immigration in Italy

Italy can be the focal country for the study of EU immigration for three important reasons. Italy's geography – that is, its proximity to eastern and southeastern non-EU and recently joined EU countries, as well as its largely open and unprotected coast – renders it a lucrative destination for foreigners seeking better lives. In other words, its strategic position in the Mediterranean makes it an arguably open country that is in many ways forced to address immigration issues on an *ad hoc* basis. Italy's economic landscape shows an increasing need for migrant workers – poorly paid wage laborers prepared to perform menial jobs. In contrast, this feature renders it a voluntarily open country, especially in terms of the renowned openness of the European labor market. Italy can be viewed as a relatively new destination of immigration, and thus a consequential model for other to-be-EU countries that choose to open up their borders to immigrant populations.

Italy is a very interesting country to study in the field of European immigration, but it should not in any way be considered an exception or counterexample to overarching tendencies visible on the wider EU plane. Rather, most phenomena that will be discussed in this section can be observed in the vast arena of the European Community, as well as in numerous developed countries in the rest of the world. Therefore, one should consider Italy as an example of sweeping 21st century trends.

To begin with, it is important to note that the existence of immigrant groups and their organization in Italy has been studied on a very marginal and unsubstantial level in the past few decades. These studies have either limited their focus on a specific immigrant group, or have provided a very superficial analysis of the situation with an overall look at how it affects the Italian population, rather than the immigrant population itself.

However, a recent multi-year study published this year was conducted on the formation of various associations in different immigrant communities.<sup>37</sup> The study argues that the formation of associations – or, rather, “associationism” – constitutes a crucial part in the functioning of immigrant societies. These associations provide immigrants with a cultural and linguistic safe house where other members are willing and able to assist them in creating a sustainable life for themselves and their families. Looking at the structure and formation of immigrant associations in Italy provides not only a good way of analyzing the coping ability of the Italian community with the burden of immigrant assimilation, but also establishes a necessary tool for determining a sustainable strategy for the future.

One of the many findings of this and previous studies indicates that immigrant groups in Italy are relatively unstructured and insignificant in Italian political life overall.<sup>38</sup> In this respect, it is important to note that Italy differs from other EU countries, such as Holland and Belgium, which have been known to delegate the implementation of certain policies to immigrant associations. In spite of this, however, “associationism” as a phenomenon has dramatically increased in the past few decades. Research has shown that most associations existing today

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<sup>37</sup> Marco Caselli, “Integration, Participation, Identity: Immigrant Associations in the Province of Milan,” *International Migration* 48, no.2 (2010): 58-78.

<sup>38</sup> Maurizio Ambrozini, *The Sociology of Migration*, (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2005).

were formed in the past ten years and that many are short-lived and rarely survive beyond five to ten years.<sup>39</sup>

Another important aspect of this study looks at the reasons which the associations have provided for coming into existence and what they consider their main aim in daily operations. The top three motivations given were the following: (a) promoting the integration and social inclusion of immigrants; (b) promoting a solidarity network among immigrants; and (c) increasing the knowledge about languages and cultures of immigrants.<sup>40</sup> While the study itself concludes that the formation of associations in Italian society ameliorates the functioning of the respective immigrant communities, I will argue that there is no better indicator of a country's inability to cope with the integration of new members that are linguistically and culturally diverse.

Along these lines, it is necessary to look at the features of Italian society, which hinder the efficiency of immigrant subsocieties. The two main levels on which any country can be argued to operate are the political and individual ones. The political level refers to the set of governmental norms and laws which frame the lives of citizens, and is based on dominant ideologies. The individual level, based on personal beliefs and ideas, affects the behavior individuals have toward each other. While these two are very closely linked, it is important to consider both separately in order to be able to form a complete picture. However, we must also take a step back and consider the situation from a different angle. An interesting aspect of the immigration situation in Italy relates back to the country's long history of emigration during the period when it was experiencing serious economic ills. This aspect is what renders Italy's

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<sup>39</sup> Valls.

<sup>40</sup> Caselli, 66.

incoherently discriminatory attitude toward immigrants within its own borders today so contradictory.

Namely, in the late nineteenth century, the United States was the largest single recipient of Italian immigrants – the largest immigrant group from the European continent in the 20th century.<sup>41</sup> By 1900, there were a reported 484,027 Italian immigrants in the US alone; by 1924, over 4.5 million immigrants were reported to have arrived in the US, out of approximately 14 million in Italy.<sup>42</sup> Like many immigrants in Italy today do, Italians initially lived like second-class citizens. They inhabited crowded and filthy areas, worked for minimal pay, suffered by and large from malnutrition and seldom succeeded to send their children to school.<sup>43</sup> Over time, however, these conditions improved, and they were allowed to rise significantly in many fields. They were given religious freedom, allowed to form aid societies in order to assist the newly arrived, and soon enough, Italian culture was almost completely absorbed within the American dynamic.

To be fair, however, comparing Italian emigration then and immigration now is inherently problematic. To begin with, the United States was geographically much more capable of adequately handling the influx of a large number of peoples, compared to the way Europe is equipped today. The influx of immigrants in large cities in the US was absorbed with much more care and ease, especially when contrasted with the difficulty with which overpopulated cities of the EU struggle to contain their existing citizens, let alone complete newcomers. Second of all, at the time of the arrival of Italian immigrants, the US was a more willing host country that readily

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<sup>41</sup> Adam Chao and Dan Spencer, “Immigration: The Journey to America,” <http://library.thinkquest.org/20619/Italian.html> (accessed April 2, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> American Immigration Law Foundation, “The Story of Italian Immigration,” <http://www.aifl.org/awards/benefit2004/ahp04essay.asp> (accessed April 3, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Chao and Spencer.



welcomed individuals from all parts of the world. In line with this was the notion that people living in the US at that time arguably lacked the national identity that we can say most peoples of Europe did. American cultural and linguistic tendencies were, and still are today, much more flexible and open to new influences than those firmly grounded in European soil. However open the European Union may purport itself to be towards people of other ethnicities, races and nationalities, the US was much more willing to adapt itself to the arrival of these newcomers. In spite of this problematic comparison, it is important to keep in mind the part played by a difference in attitudes towards the immigrant populations then and now.

Also of significance is the political state of affairs, that is, the deportment of the Italian government in policymaking pertaining to immigrants. Conservative Italian center-right politics bear an important influence on all aspects of Italian society today, and are not limited to the influx of immigrants. In order to trace the development of immigration policies during the past 20 years, it is necessary to look at the changing landscape of political parties at the head of Italian politics. The period from 2001-06, focused on by Andrew Geddes in his paper titled “*Il rombo dei cannoni? Immigration and the center-right in Italy*,” is crucial because it encompasses both a drastic increase in the influx of immigrants and a hardening tone towards all non-Italian born peoples and their place in Italian society.<sup>44</sup>

In the aforementioned five-year-period, from October 2001 to January 2006, the immigrant population grew from 1.3 to 2.67 million – the largest growth in the legal resident immigrant population observed in Italian history.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, however, the center-right was strengthening its clout, and a government led by the newly elected Silvio Berlusconi

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<sup>44</sup> Andrew Geddes, “*Il rombo dei cannoni? Immigration and the Center-right in Italy*,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 3 (April 2008): 349-366.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

introduced an entirely new rhetoric in the field of immigration politics. This was seen as early as the first year of the existence of the new government with the passing of the highly controversial Bossi-Fini law – an amendment and expansion of the 1998 immigration law.<sup>46</sup> In many circles, the Bossi-Fini law was seen as explicitly and relentlessly driving towards incapacitating foreigners, unless they were highly educated, qualified, and financially stable.<sup>47</sup>

These two incredibly contradicting circumstances beg the question: what conditions facilitated this dramatic increase in the legal immigrant population? Geddes, for instance, acknowledges the illiberal harshness of the Bossi-Fini legislation, but argues that the gap between immigration figures and political rhetoric on this topic can be bridged only by the failings of center-right talk in practice.<sup>48</sup> He argues that other important factors in reality (e.g. the unaccounted leverage of leftist parties or businesses who see a profit in immigrant labor) contribute to the loosening of intolerant, exceptionalistic center-right politics.<sup>49</sup> This argument implies that policy failings alone are the reason behind civilized treatment of immigrants in Italy. This harsh truth not only confirms the arguably racist motivation behind all Berlusconi-led rhetoric – and as exemplified in the Bossi-Fini law – but also demonstrates the Italian government's inability to adequately deliver its guarantees.

On an individual level, many similar trends can be observed. However, before we begin, it is important to define the term “individual.” While in many senses it implies a personal level, I will use it as representing a culture-wide sentiment, observable in the behavior of a multitude of individuals throughout the Italian peninsula. While this usage of the term can justifiably be

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<sup>46</sup> Domenico Paparella and Vilma Rinolfi, “New legislation regulates immigration,” EIRO Online, September 26, 2002

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2002/09/feature/it0209103f.htm> (accessed April 10, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Geddes, 363.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

viewed as falling into stereotypes (especially considering the diversity of Italian culture itself) it is merely meant to refer to tangible trends that are traceable on a cultural level and that might assist us in our analysis of the treatment of immigrants by non-immigrants on a daily level.

On an individual level, let us consider the Albanian community in Italy. The importance of the Albanian immigrant population cannot be stressed enough – in 2005, 255,704 Albanian immigrants were legally residing in Italy.<sup>50</sup> While this number might suggest that the Albano-Italian community has strong roots and a long presence in its host country, the opposite is true. The community's size can be attributed to its rapid growth from 3.1% of immigrants with a *permesso di soggiorno* (permit to stay) in 1991 to 11.3% of immigrants in 2005.<sup>51</sup> While we have already remarked that the immigrant population in general has grown exponentially in the past 10 years, the Albanian community's growth is far larger. However, besides the sheer size of the community, it is necessary to make note of the nature of assimilation of the Albanian people into Italian life. Russell King and Nicola Mai argue that “asymmetric assimilation” is the best way to describe the phenomenon of simultaneous assimilation and rejection of the Albanian community in Italy today.<sup>52</sup> In other words, while Albanian immigrants continue to demonstrate a desire to learn the ways, customs and language of Italians, and are in many ways “the most similar” to their host society, they are met with a basic hatred whereby they are in many ways also “the most rejected” migrant group.<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, the explanation behind such a strong anti-immigrant sentiment on an interpersonal scale lies on the question why a group of individuals would reject a people that are so ready and able to conform to every norm that they themselves do. In other

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<sup>50</sup> Russell King and Nicola Mai, “Italophilia Meets Albanophobia: Paradoxes of Asymmetric Assimilation and Identity Processes Among Albanian Immigrants in Italy,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no.1 (January 2009): 121.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 118.

words, what has been the cause for the invariable portrayal of Albanians as “criminals, prostitutes and uncivilized people” when more than a quarter of a million of these immigrants succeeded in earning their living through perfectly legal means in 2005?<sup>54</sup>

The answer to this question can be obtained only if the history of relations between the two countries is traced back to before the existing *status quo*. Let us begin for instance with the landing of Albanian migrants in March 1991, who were welcomed as “Adriatic brothers” and praised for escaping the “darkness of communism.”<sup>55</sup> At this time, a welcome greeting of all newly arrived peoples characterized the behavior of most Italian coastal communities. However, the situation changed dramatically by August 1991, when a media campaign changed the vocabulary from a warm-hearted welcoming one, to one promoting the rejection and marginalization of this new community. By mid-1995, there were well-established “albanophobia” sentiments among the Italian populace.

In a series of interviews of Albanian immigrants performed by King and Mai, there is a very strong sense of awareness of the power of mass media over the Italian population at that time. A typical interview conducted with a young woman went like this:

*“How do you think Albanian migrants are treated here?”*

Very badly... the mass media have given us a very bad press.

*Is this an important factor? Does it influence the way Italians behave towards Albanians?*

Yes, very important. Because if something bad happens, the first thing everybody says is that Albanians did it. And of course they don't bother to rectify the information when it turns out that it's not true...

*Since you have direct knowledge of Albanians' involvement in criminality, what do you think of the relationship between the extent of the phenomenon and how it's portrayed?*

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>55</sup> Dorothy Louise Zinn, “Adriatic Brethren or Black Sheep? Migration in Italy and the Albanian Crisis, 1991,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 3, no.3 (1996).

It's true, I see Albanians getting involved in drugs, refugee smuggling and prostitution... But it's only a small minority of people, who destroy the work and sacrifice of honest people who are the overwhelming majority.”<sup>56</sup>

While it may seem that too much emphasis is being put on the image of immigrants in the Italian community, the prejudices formed by these images are significant. Soon after the media onslaught commenced, a dramatic increase in discrimination in the workplace, schools and universities was reported.

One of the best indicators of the mounting tensions between the local population and the immigrants is the phenomenon of increasing street riots, especially in the region of southern Italy. In this area, the tension between the two factions is so significant that it has on multiple occasions escalated to major aggression and violence. It must be kept in mind, however, that social dynamics in southern Italy in many ways differ from those in the north and center. To begin with, the region of Calabria in which the city of Rosarno is located, is laden with disturbances and acts of crime performed by the ‘Ndrangheta, one of the largest mafia organizations in the country.<sup>57</sup> This complicates the relationship between the locals themselves, let alone aliens over whom the ‘Ndrangheta essentially possesses no control. In many ways, it can be argued that this organization sees illegal immigrants as a threat to their own prosperity and stronghold. These people, working for a wage of twenty to twenty-five euros a day, and living in unsanitary makeshift housing, have very little to lose. As such, they are immune to the conditioning and threats through which mafia organizations generally acquire influence and power. In many ways, this puts a question mark on their fate in the years to come.

Tensions such as these, caused by the sheer intolerance on the part of the locals, escalated

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<sup>56</sup> King and Mai, 124.

<sup>57</sup> The ‘Ndrangheta is a criminal organization in Italy, situated in the region of Calabria. It was the most powerful crime syndicate of Italy in the late 1990s and the early 2000s.

on several occasions and caused an incredible amount of concern for both the authorities and the Rosarno residents. The latest riot in January 2010 began as a “protest against the insecure conditions in which the immigrants find themselves.”<sup>58</sup> The riot manifested itself as a violent clash between the people of Rosarno and the immigrant farm workers, originally from Sub-Saharan Africa or the Maghreb. Much destruction took place; cars were demolished and store windows broken. Thirty-seven people total were injured – eighteen police officers, fourteen residents and five immigrant rioters.<sup>59</sup>

To make matters worse, this was not the first attack in the city of Rosarno. In December 2008, several young African immigrants were assaulted in their sleep by angered townspeople.<sup>60</sup> Unlike the more recent incident, in this case, the immigrants were completely innocent as they slept in their makeshift barrack, while an “Ndrangheta-style raid” resulted in their violent beating and shooting.<sup>61</sup> This in turn caused an even larger revolt against the local population and, as we can see from later events, the underlying tension never declined in strength.

Reactions from the authorities were varied, yet expected. A former councilor of Rosarno, Domenico Ventre claimed that the “immigrants in Rosarno are helped and assisted. Their reaction to the isolated incident on Thursday was disproportionate. We cannot allow them to

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<sup>58</sup> John Hooper, “Racial Violence Continues in Italy as Four Migrant Workers Wounded in Shootings,” *The Guardian*, January 9, 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Ariel David and Adriana Sapone, “Immigrants Riot in Rosarno, Italy,” *The Huffington Post*, Jan 8, 2010. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/08/immigrants-riot-in-rosarno\\_n\\_416482.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/08/immigrants-riot-in-rosarno_n_416482.html) (accessed April 10, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> “Rivolta degli immigrati a Rosarno anche nel 2008 dopo gli spari del caporalato,” *Il Messaggero*, January 7, 2010. [http://www.ilmessaggero.it/articolo\\_app.php?id=25406&sez=HOME\\_INITALIA&npl=&desc\\_s ez=](http://www.ilmessaggero.it/articolo_app.php?id=25406&sez=HOME_INITALIA&npl=&desc_s ez=) (accessed April 7, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

devastate our town, spreading fear among the inhabitants.”<sup>62</sup> The parish priest of Rosarno, Carmelo Ascone, on the other hand, expressed his outrage at the conditions that the immigrant population lives in. He went so far as to compare their living conditions to the circles of hell in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, stating they “live in inhuman and desperate conditions.”<sup>63</sup> Berlusconi’s interior minister addressed the issue by reprimanding the governments preceding the present one, declaring that for “all these years clandestine immigration has been tolerated, which feeds crime.”<sup>64</sup> Indeed, no statement points to an active desire to resolve the deep-seated problems of these immigrants. Rather, all parties pursue and perpetuate their own ideological and political interest, without much practical regard for the issue at hand.

In order to complete our picture of the attitude Italians have developed towards the growing immigrant population, it is necessary to look at the Italian word for “immigrant.” This word – “extracomunitario” – literally means “outside of the community,” a significance with many social, political and economic undertones.<sup>65</sup> The term was only introduced into Italian dictionaries in the early 1980s, essentially defining individuals based on their belonging to the European Economic Community.<sup>66</sup> It is immediately clear why this type of definition is inherently problematic. To begin with, if immigrants were defined as individuals who came from countries that did not belong to the European Economic Community, these would include, for instance, Swiss citizens who voted against membership to the ECC in December 1992, as well as United States citizens, who are not in any sense members of the European community. It is sufficient to look at Italian news headlines to understand how inaccurate this is. While it is

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<sup>62</sup> David and Sapone.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Francesco Bruni, “Storia della lingua italiana: Extracomunitario,” Rai Italica, <http://www.italica.rai.it/principali/lingua/bruni/schede/extra.htm> (accessed April 10, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

common to see news stories such as “Building Falls in Naples, Immigrant Dies”<sup>67</sup> and “Drunk Immigrant Attempts Suicide Last Night During the April Fair,”<sup>68</sup> about immigrants from Albania and Romania, one seldom sees nationals from the United States referred to in such a way. The overarching implication of being on the outside, of not belonging to society, condemns the person to a life of exclusion from the community to which Italy or other EU countries belong. This fatalistic approach significantly debilitates immigrants in their modest attempts to create lives in which they are able to adapt, succeed and progress. “Belonging” in the Italian community is then defined on the basis of the immigrant’s host country’s membership to a supranational economic structure, and assimilation becomes even more problematic.

#### 1.4 Overarching Trends and EU Immigration Theory

While arguing against the cultural intolerance of Italians (and other nations of the European Union) seems like an easy task, one should keep in mind that a large percentage of EU citizens resist immigration because they see no personal obligation to provide for foreigners in a way that the home country could not for its own citizens. Their cultural intolerance is by and large not based on a fascist nationalist ideology, but is rather a manifestation of the opinion that they are entitled to a say in who settles into their community. In this respect, it is clear that accommodating immigrants who are educated, financially stable, and qualified in their field is an entirely different matter than supporting those in precarious circumstances. Sarkozy defended this attitude when he said: “It's not a question of only choosing Nobel Prize winners ... [w]e

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<sup>67</sup> “Crolla un edificio a Napoli, muore un extracomunitario,” *Giornale di Sicilia*, <http://www.gds.it/gds/sezioni/notizie-brevi/dettaglio/articolo/gdsid/107026/> (accessed April 24, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> “Extracomunitario ubriaco, tenta il suicidio ieri sera durante la Fiera d'Aprile,” *Andria Live*, <http://www.andrialive.it/News/news.aspx?idnews=13993> (accessed May 2, 2010).



can't offer housing and jobs to all those who think France is an El Dorado."<sup>69</sup>

However, this attitude rests on the assumption that immigrants in poor financial conditions are incapable of making a contribution to their host society, if given the opportunity. It is sufficient to consider a few cases in recent EU history to demonstrate the falsity of this assumption. One such example is the now retired French soccer player, Zinedine Zidane. Zidane, a member of the French national team, is the son of Algerian immigrants who had moved to Marseille from Algeria in 1953. Zidane had grown up in "La Castellane, a crime-ridden housing development in Marseille" where unemployment and suicide rates are alarmingly high.<sup>70</sup> He was one of five children and his father worked as an overnight department store watchman, earning so little that the Zidane family could not afford housing in which all seven members could sit down and eat at the same time.<sup>71</sup> Considering his Algerian heritage and devout Muslim religious orientation, by all definitions Zidane would have found himself today on the outskirts of French society. Instead, in the 1980s, he triumphed in it through soccer. At 13, he had already signed with a soccer club at the junior level. By the late 1990s, he was already considered one of the best French soccer players, earning the Top Player Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) title in 1998, 2000 and 2003. As a result of his efforts in combating poverty throughout the world, in 2001 Zidane was appointed to serve as the United Nations Development Program Goodwill Ambassador.<sup>72</sup> He was praised for being an ethnic unifier, bringing many individuals of North African descent to soccer games played by the French national team.

Regarding the French World Cup victory in 1998, Nick Fraser wrote in *The Guardian*: "I have

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<sup>69</sup> Bennhold.

<sup>70</sup> "Zinedine Zidane," Encyclopedia of World Biography, <http://www.notablebiographies.com/supp/Supplement-Sp-Z/Zidane-Zin-dine.html> (accessed April 15).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

never seen French people so happy with each other... as I walked around the crowds, however, I noticed something else. There were many Arabs and blacks in the crowd, and many of them were carrying tricolor flags."<sup>73</sup>

Even though Sarkozy's statement rings true with respect to France's entitlement to choose whom she is going to host, it is also important to consider the predicament of many immigrants. In the sphere of budding immigration laws, they are arguably situated neither inside nor outside of the community. They have made new homes for themselves, found new employment, yet in a sense they live as complete outsiders, entirely at the mercy of new immigration legislation. It is then clear that the extent of cultural intolerance of EU citizens manifests itself not in the acceptance or rejection of individuals who intend to emigrate, but in the overall attitude towards existing immigrants – the ones with a desire and ability to adapt.

If this is the key to understanding the capabilities and capacities of the EU, the projections are dismal. According to an extensive survey done in 2007 throughout the EU, discrimination on ethnic grounds is seen as the most widespread reason for discrimination."<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, a significant percentage of individuals expressed the belief that discrimination was more widespread in 2007 than it was five years before, and as many as one in two respondents felt that discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin had become more widespread.<sup>75</sup> All of these figures give us a sense of the inherent resistance against, not solely immigrants, but rather all individuals of different ethnic backgrounds.

The existing situation is to a great extent not only a product of a gradual build-up of

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> European Commission, "Special Eurobarometer: Discrimination in the European Union," TNS Opinion and Social, January 2009.

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_263\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_263_en.pdf) (accessed April 12, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

resistance against all things foreign among Europeans, but also the incapacity of various governments to provide reasonable legislation that could regulate the influx of foreigners.

While some may argue that the negative atmosphere regarding the immigrant situation in the EU is a product of illiberal trends ingrained in the EU mechanism, others claim that much effort has been put into resolving issues imposed by cultural barriers, caused by the aforementioned expansionist tendencies. In some ways, the EU has demonstrated a basic awareness of the cultural and ideological problems that arise due to expansion. Over time, it can be argued that EU integration theory developed to accommodate the cultural, ethnic, and religious differences between the inhabitants of the EU community. Three different principles have governed the way in which the EU has sought to expand its borders: the realist, rational-liberal, and reflectivist-liberal theory.<sup>76</sup> While the realist theory based its expansion on the commonality of interests of member governments and the rational-liberal theory focused on the importance of supranational structures in the expansion process, such as the European Commission, the new reflectivist-liberal behavior seems to show a much more coherent approach.<sup>77</sup> It claims to take into consideration “historical and sociological factors by emphasizing the role of inert ‘path-dependence’ or of a common cultural identity in European societies.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, the latter approach favors expansion that is based on shared European values and historical similarities, rather than looking towards governments and supranational organizations for guidance. It is much less focused on preconditioning new states to conform to desired standards and norms of the EU, but rather gives priority to promoting a shared European identity.

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<sup>76</sup> Fabio Fossati, “Italy and European Union Enlargement: A Comparative Analysis of Left and Right Governments,” *Modern Italy* 13, no.2 (May 2008): 188.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 188.

This in turn creates a problem whose consequences we have already seen. Namely, by focusing on cohesion through European identity politics, many short-term interests are ignored, including the fear of increased migration flows, especially of individuals of a lower social standing. Priority is given to an ideology promoting an overarching European character, while practical and consequential matters take the back seat. However, one might say that an argument pertaining to EU expansion is an entirely different process to accepting foreigners who do not have a European background, and could find it more difficult to assimilate. Nevertheless, tolerance and respect must not be culture-specific. All citizens – both ones from newly joined EU Member States and ones from outside the EU borders – if given the opportunity, have the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the society in which they live. Rather than focusing on an ideology centered around European ideals and peoples, in times of increasing immigration the European Union should take a more comprehensive approach towards the inclusion people currently inhabiting the European continent.

## 1.5 Conclusion

Multinational unity, as represented in the cohesion and collaboration of different member states and their nationals throughout the European Union, presents a model of a substantial peace endeavor in the 20th and 21st centuries. Its deliberate drive to dispel the trivial differences between individuals of different nationalities and stress a common, unifying factor among all people is one of the most valiant efforts at creating political and economic stability in any supranational structure. The cultural enrichment and economic benefit gained from this institution is extraordinary – it provides many opportunities for intellectual exchange and cooperation between individuals, while striving to furnish them with a level economic playing

field in their respective home countries.

At the same time, the insufficiencies of the European Union are exceptional. The openness that it promotes among the various nations halts at its borders. Here, individuals are denigrated to a lower social standing based on their economic position and ethnic belonging, rather than gauged by their personal abilities and desire to assimilate. In many ways, they are ostracized and deprived of basic human dignities. The inability of the European Union to form a consistent attitude regarding the situation generated by a large influx of foreign nationals is the very issue that threatens to destabilize it and put into question the peace and security that it so ardently seeks. Immigrants are subject to actions – both on a political and an individual level – that are oftentimes inhuman and racist. There is a deep-seated resentment toward them, varying in strength and prominence from country to country, yet essentially of the same nature, which governing bodies consider only once the problem becomes conspicuous and dissatisfaction is no longer negligible. For a geopolitical structure that is based on the promotion of humanity, collaboration, and openness, it demonstrates a prominent incapacity to extend these values to other human beings who are in a dire and uncertain position. Over time, as the EU expands to accommodate the remaining European nations and as the influx of immigrants continues, there is a great chance that these insufficiencies will create insurmountable problems, along with a wide dissatisfaction among a majority of its citizenry.

In order to survive these challenges, the various governments within the EU must demonstrate a willingness and desire to extend opportunities to all of its existing citizens. It must celebrate the merits of a multicultural and multilingual society as one that can enrich all people equally. In this regard, Winston Churchill's desire for a "United States of Europe" is significant; the United States can be taken as an adequate model for the creation of sustainable assimilated

immigrant communities. This should be done not only for the sake of the citizens themselves, but also for the sake of the institution and the values which it claims to uphold. Just like every European nation has much to gain culturally from the heterogeneous European fabric, it also has at its disposal a diverse network of cultures from outside of the Union. Instead of pushing “outside” cultures to the side, the EU must strive not only to incorporate, but also celebrate the diversity created by them. However, this does not imply that all immigrants should and can be accommodated in the European Union. The promise of a new life with new opportunities draws many people who go to desperate means, often illegal, to emigrate. In this case, there should be corresponding legislation that would coherently and competently govern the influx of foreign nationals.

As the philosopher Immanuel Kant argued: “We are speaking here, not of philanthropy, but of right; and in this sphere hospitality signifies the claim of a stranger entering foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility... so long as he conducts himself peaceably, he must not be treated as an enemy... The right to present themselves to society belongs to all mankind in virtue of our common right of possession on the surface of the earth on which, as it is a globe, we cannot be infinitely scattered, and must in the end reconcile ourselves to existence side by side.”<sup>79</sup> Rather than being a model for European unity, the EU should strive to become an example that all peoples of the world, irrespective of religious orientation and ethnic belonging, can coexist in a peaceful way. The individuals intent on settling “peaceably,” that is with good intentions, while conforming to all laws and customs of the host country, should be treated with respect and given the dignity to thrive in their new environment. This effort would not only comply with demands created by 21<sup>st</sup> century trends, but it would also generate a sustainable

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<sup>79</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, trans. M. Campbell Smith (New York & London, Garland Publishing, Inc., 1972): 137-138.

institution demonstrating that people of various ethnicities, backgrounds and religions can coexist in a meaningful way.

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