

TRUEXIT BEFORE BREXIT

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ABSTRACT:

CONTRARY TO MANY POPULAR BELIEFS, BREXIT ISN'T A STARTING POINT BUT A FAIR RESULT. THE EVENTS LEADING TO BRITAIN'S RETREAT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION SHOULD BE OVERLOOKED TO PROPERLY UNDERSTAND HOW AND WHY THE BRITONS OPTED OUT. FAILING TO CONSIDER THE DANGERS THAT CONSTANTLY KNOCK ON EUROPE'S DOOR, THE EUROPEAN UNION SEEMED TO HAVE DONE LITTLE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY AND CONTINUITY OF ITS COMMUNITARIAN PROJECT. BEFORE THE BRITISH MEMBERSHIP REFERENDUM, EUROPE HAS SUFFERED A SEVERE DECLINE IN BOTH TRUTH AND EQUALITY. DUE TO CONSTANTLY MANIPULATED PRESS SPEECH, FAKE NEWS PROPAGANDA AND LACK OF CELERITY, I BELIEVE THAT THE FIRST LOSS FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION WAS THE LOST OF TRUTH, THUS THE TRUEXIT CAN BE PUT EITHER IN TERMS OF TRUTH EXIT OR TRUE EXIT.

KEY WORDS: BREXIT, EUROPEAN UNION, FAKE NEWS, INEQUALITY, POST-TRUTH

THE BEGINNING OF A DESCEND

Fostering economic cooperation at first, the European Union (EU) wasn't a purely economic construct meant only to promote trade inside the union, but a distraction from social conflicts and most important, a barrier in front of a new world conflagration.¹

Although it has grown rather quickly, inviting many states which were insufficiently prepared to join the single market, the EU is considered today, to be one of the most important economic and political partnerships in the world, involving 28 states before the Brexit.²

It is undeniably that the EU played an important part in Europe's rebuilt, in both economic and social sections, promoting important values and supporting other countries to pursue the democratic trajectory that the western world has developed successfully.

Moreover, the importance of its existence is strictly linked to the development of ex-communist countries, and other flawed democracies all over Europe.

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¹ See Hazel Smith, *European Union Foreign Policy: What It Is and What It Does*, Pluto Books, 2002, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18fs34h>. pp. 224-266 (Accessed March 3, 2017)

² See https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries_en. (Accessed on March 3, 2017).

Nevertheless, the motor-states: Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain, had their share of interests reached, having to do with a wider approach on markets, work force and of course strategic placements.

Putting aside the non-combat arguments that lead to a broad economic cooperation and even to a joint security plan between its members, the EU brought to the table new measurements of progress.³ Along with a wide set of rules, a European citizenship, its own currency and a wealthy budget, the EU increased transparency within states and has motivated local governments to assure improvements in areas of transportation, social tolerance and diversity, environment protection, human rights and much more.⁴

Many of the member states had developed constantly and reached a blooming economy that allowed better incomes and a decrease in poverty among their citizens. What consolidated the European Union's plan was the tendency for globalization that forces nation-states to focus more on acting as an economic growth promoter for their national economies than as a protector of the national identity or a nationalist project.⁵

Due to its success, globalization represents nowadays a constant wave that carries progress, development, well-being and safety, around the world.⁶

It is without any doubt that we have to thank globalization for many of our present accomplishments, such as increased security, cooperation between states and other economic entities, and of course the free movement of people and information, into every corner of the planet. Finally, it brought peace⁷, due to the increased interdependence between states, which are constantly seeking bargains and new economic opportunities.⁸

Nevertheless, in the past few years, having to do with inequality and lack of proper representation, most of the European citizens, have been unhappy towards European policy-makers and their ideas. Thus, extremist views and nationalism, as well as a constant negative attitude towards politics and politicians had increased substantially.

What Brexit highlighted so well, was in fact, an incommensurable change in how different societies perceive their leaders and the policies which they support. The fact that Britain shake up overnight, waking the next day without a Prime Minister and taking upon the article 50 from the Lisbon Treaty,⁹ represents only a signal that is now visible from and within many countries around the world.

³ See https://ec.europa.eu/info/statistics_en. (Accessed March 3, 2017).

⁴ See <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/browse-statistics-by-theme>. (Accessed March 3, 2017).

⁵ See Martin Carnoy and Diana Rhoten, "What Does Globalization Mean for Educational Change? A Comparative Approach," in *Comparative Education Review* 46, no. 1, 2002, (Accessed March 4, 2017), 3.

⁶ Duță Paul, "The free movement of persons and the borders of the European Union", *Research and Science Today* No. 2(6)/2013, Academica Brâncuși Publishing, Tîrgu Jiu, 2013, 96-108.

⁷ See <http://www.economist.com/node/3194365>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

⁸ See Mărcău Flavius Cristian, "Security as a determining factor of quality of life in a state from an insecure regional area," *Analele Universității „Constantin Brâncuși” din Târgu-Jiu*, nr. 4/2015, Seria Litere și Științe Sociale, Editura „Academica Brâncuși”, 77-85.

⁹ See <http://www.lisbon-treaty.org/wcm/the-lisbon-treaty/treaty-on-European-union-and-comments/title-6-final-provisions/137-article-50.html>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

FAKING TRUTH, FAILING CONFIDENCE AND GLOBALIZATION

The increase in popularity of Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán,¹⁰ along with the imminent threat of leaving the EU from the Polish governors,¹¹ are two examples of embraced Euroscepticism.

In France, Marine Le Pen has become the leading candidate of the soon to come presidential elections (May, 2017).¹² Across the ocean, the success that Donald J. Trump has had during last year's presidential elections,¹³ clearly stated that a change was imminent.

The corruption protests held in Romania¹⁴ and France¹⁵ at the very beginning of 2017, closely suggest the same popular discontent towards present leaders and their failure of misunderstanding the actual social and economic context.

What most of the politicians refuse to acknowledge is that the social movements all over Europe, and across the Ocean in the United States of America,¹⁶ come as a response to their actions. Our societies' contemporary issues, go far beyond the unfair prices and wages, inconclusive laws, health care issues, poor administration reforms, and reach down to a point in which all these fade away, leaving the main stage for growing inequality, scarce representation and constant manipulation throughout media and press (both written and online)¹⁷ This allows people of modest means and people of higher income to lead almost separate lives.¹⁸ They shop, eat and go to different schools and social activities, striving in inequality and soon to be the actors of social conflict and condescending discourse.

Going back to the Brexit case, studies have shown that regarding the question of leaving the EU, the British society was divided by age, between those elderly and those which are young; by income, between the poor and the wealthy; by education, between those that are barely educated or even uneducated, and those with tertiary education.¹⁹ Every representative of a category presented above, was subject to a YES or NO answer when asked how they feel about leaving the EU.

It seems that the polarization of the British society is more important than we might think.²⁰ Soon after the results of membership polls have been shown to the population, the split between the groups mentioned, transformed into racist abuse, xenophobia, extreme nationalism and

¹⁰ See <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-orban-idUSKCN0SV1J020151106>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹¹ See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/poland/12115486/What-Union-does-Poland-want.html>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹² See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/marine-le-pen-latest-french-presidential-election-polls-emmanuel-macron-francois-fillon-fn-a7595386.html>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹³ See <http://www.nytimes.com/elections/results/president>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹⁴ See <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/02/romania-protests-corruption-170207100017012.html>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹⁵ See <http://www.euronews.com/2017/02/20/from-romania-to-france-protests-against-corrupt-politicians>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹⁶ See <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/04/politics/us-protests-trump/>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹⁷ See <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20170301-lies-propaganda-and-fake-news-a-grand-challenge-of-our-age>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

¹⁸ See Michael J. Sandel, *What money can't buy. The moral limits of markets*, London: Penguin, 2012, 5-8.

¹⁹ See <http://blogs.ft.com/ftdata/2016/06/24/brexit-demographic-divide-eu-referendum-results/>. (Accessed March 3, 2017).

²⁰ See <http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21701257-results-paint-picture-angry-country-divided-class-age-and-region-country-divided>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

hatred.²¹ As shown, politics isn't just about who's rightist or leftist. It can now be put in terms of who is with or against something that is inflicted upon those with modest means of informing themselves, ignorant, or maybe with a low level of education.

The fight against the system, against EU or the present policy-makers is in fact a fight against globalization as a concept. Studies had shown that in the Brexit case, leave vote was strongest in regions that benefit the most, economically, from the EU.²²

This obviously suggests that among those who benefit directly from the EU free market and policy, lives a majority of people that doesn't feel like they are earning anything on the social contract that the EU membership implies.

The fact that people need their borders back,²³ or even feel the need to build new ones, in spite any nationalistic theory, represents a serious challenge towards democracy and even safety.²⁴ The new channels of communication and the ease of accessing news, that globalization has brought us, has also a downside. "While immigration control was traditionally an exercise of state sovereignty, globalization challenged this assumption by facilitating the movement of people around the world."²⁵

Newly fake news propaganda and manipulation methods reveal a weakening side of democracy. Democratic redistribution methods aren't the only problem that democracy is facing nowadays.²⁶

Closely after the 2008 world crisis, people's perception towards democratization has changed. A European Union study of quality of life published in 2015 reports that almost 38% of Europeans have low satisfaction with their material living condition.²⁷

Although it didn't happen overnight, there was a decrease in democratization and promotion of democratic values that leaves us today with large areas being covered by new extremist political movements.²⁸ These new movements that encourage a change of perspective and have a populist approach on citizens tend to easily grow and alter civic education and public perception on reality.

The fact that reality and truth are no longer associated and the gap between public perception and empirical evidence has enlarged, we move towards a post-factual society where truth and lies have equal status.

²¹ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/brexit-eu-referendum-racial-racism-abuse-hate-crime-reported-latest-leave-immigration-a7104191.html>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

²² <http://blogs.ft.com/ftdata/2016/06/24/brexit-demographic-divide-eu-referendum-results/>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

²³ See Valsamis Mitsilegas, "Immigration Control in an Era of Globalization: Deflecting Foreigners, Weakening Citizens, and Strengthening the State," in *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 19, no. 1, 2012, 3-4, (Accessed March 4, 2017).

²⁴ Duță Paul, "The migration policies and multiculturalism of the European Union", *Research and Science Today* No. 1(7)/2014, Academica Brâncuși Publishing, Tîrgu Jiu, 2014, 61-81.

²⁵ Duta, *The migration policies and multiculturalism of the European Union...*, 4.

²⁶ Mărcău Flaviu Cristian, Ina Raluca Tomescu, "Coordinates of NATO-EU cooperation", in proceedings *Strategic changes in Security and International Relations*, (UNAp, Bucuresti, 2014), 258-265.

²⁷ See Pelz, William A., "Europe Falls into the Twenty-First Century," in *A People's History of Modern Europe*, London, Pluto Press, 2016, p. 216. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c2crfj.20>. (Accessed March 3, 2017).

²⁸ See <https://infographics.economist.com/2017/DemocracyIndex/>. (Accessed March 4, 2017).

LIVING IN A POST-TRUTH SOCIETY

The concept of post-truth²⁹ was awarded by the Oxford Dictionaries³⁰, the distinction of Word of the Year 2016.

Unlike any other model known by us today, the post-truth society derives from the ability of those that lead, to persuade those that are led, into believing that what they think is right, unequivocally, ignoring clear evidence by falsifying the truth.³¹

By appealing to emotions, a common enemy reinforced social conflicts and long forgotten animosities, more and more people find themselves manipulated into thinking and doing something, later to discover that it wasn't their made.

Of course, in some cases those that are manipulated don't even find out as they are blinded by their naivety or in some cases, lack of education.

What Tocqueville discovered in the nineteenth century was valid then as it is now.³² The tyranny of majority, which settles the best in the countries with high degrees of confidence in their government, is now trying to find stable ground in various hosts.

The danger it assumes is tremendous. As extremist movements coil around Europe's neck, and new type of 'exits' prepare to get attention and fill everyone's mind, we should ask ourselves if there is still hope and space for maneuvers.

Being economic with the truth and spreading deceiving information may represent two challenges that we all must face today, regardless of our social backgrounds, wealth, ethnicity or religion. Sadly, those vulnerable in front of manipulation have minimum chance of avoiding misleading truths, while those with sufficient knowledge don't usually fell into these traps.

This represents an intellectual terrorism, which alters reality and uses people, to reach certain results. Undermining the truth sometimes leads to political gain and access to power. Moreover, it corrupts institutions meant to be moral and honest, covering the entire spectrum from law to economic entities.

CONCLUSIONS - WHY IS TRUTH IMPORTANT?

Throughout the Romanian culture, travels a short yet very popular proverb stating that there is a piece of truth in everything. Although it is considered folklore, what is interesting is the fact that it had gone unnoticed, being used in many daily contexts.

Used frequently during elections, post-truths are decisive, especially in rural communities where people are easily manipulated due to their validation system which is strictly influenced by feelings and faith rather than clear facts.

But why is truth so important? Firstly, is because lying is wrong and immoral. Lies are corrosive towards our souls and mislead us into believing something that is untrue and meant for others to corrupt their way in one sense or another.

²⁹ See Ralph Keyes, *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary life*, St. Martin Press, 2004, 5-9.

³⁰ See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016>. (Accessed March 5, 2017).

³¹ See <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21706525-politicians-have-always-lied-does-it-matter-if-they-leave-truth-behind-entirely-art?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/ed/artofthelie>. (Accessed March 5, 2017).

³² See Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume I, 2006, The Project Gutenberg EBook #815, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/815/815-h/815-h.htm>. (Accessed February 10, 2017). See also Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II, 2006, The Project Gutenberg EBook #816, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/816/816-h/816-h.htm>. (Accessed February 10, 2017).

In politics, we frequently hear how lying and corruption are fundamental. If so, the moment we give our vote and trust, whenever facing an election polls, we are confident that those elected will mislead us. Of course, nowadays we strive in mechanisms that struggle against corruption and braking the law, but we ourselves fail when needed to take act against promoting such deceiving behavior. We shouldn't grant from the start any vote towards those of which we aren't well informed of.

Taking things for granted, usually on sympathy or other manipulative incentives, is wrong. It is insufficient when choosing our representatives to act impulsively and irrational. Competing against soft-despotic mechanisms is certainly challenging, yet with a short amount of attention and fact-checking, we can protect ourselves from being deceived.³³

Clearly, there are many societies in which insufficient education and lack of modern meaning of communications make fighting against this phenomenon almost impossible. Before we can move forward and feed on globalization's fruits, we mustn't leave behind anyone, regardless of their level of education, naivety or the simple fact that they maybe are naïve or unprepared to face modern technology.

In conclusion, Brexit wasn't a starting point but a mere a result. Endangering moral aspects and being dishonest towards society represents a dangerous threat when addressing democracy and fair representation. Although its birth is not contemporary, post-truths harness disappointment that may soon result in conflicts, radical behavior and social change.

³³ See http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/dr-andrew-crines/the-fight-against-the-pos_b_14763806.html. (Accessed March 6, 2017).

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