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THE CRISIS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE THEORIES OF ARNOLD TOYNBEE

INTRODUCTION

The theories of Arnold Toynbee comprise an attempt to analyse the growth and collapse of different civilisations. They may serve as a source of inspiration for scholars studying the crises related to European integration dating from the great recession that began in 2008. Toynbee's vision is itself pessimistic as it supposes that just as the processes of growth and development at a certain point become exhausted, the processes of civilisational disintegration are also unavoidable and lead to collapse. He refers to the earlier work of Oswald Spengler, who dealt with the problem of the twilight of the West.[1] He also understands Western civilisation (European and American) as similar to a living being. Thus, it is born, matures, then ages and finally dies. Toynbee, similar to Spengler, dealt with the evaluation of different phenomena, systematic in nature, which to him are indications of processes of disintegration although in an orderly fashion. In Toynbee's view, they occur over a long historical horizon, but gain momentum in crisis situations. The attempt to point out these phenomena would seem to be his single greatest achievement.[2] In his model, the final success preceding the twilight of a civilisation is the construction of a universal state. This is an attempt to overcome internal tensions and the forces of disintegration as well as an attempt by the ruling elite to prevent the loss of their power. But, in essence, the universal state is the final stage leading to an unavoidable end. What makes the current situation similar to that described by Toynbee is above all the creation of the European Union, which possesses many characteristics of a universal state.

Of course it is difficult to foresee whether, in accordance with Toynbee's theories, unavoidable collapse awaits European civilisation. Critics of Western civilisation draw attention to the end of one epoch when the old order is dying and the new can-

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[1] O. Spengler, *Zmierzch Zachodu. Zarys morfologii historii uniwersalnej*, Warsaw 2001 [in English: *The Decline of the West*, New York, Oxford 1991].

[2] A. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, London 1972.

not yet be born.[3] A similar idea is that the EU as a project of integration has reached its end and has exhausted its current possibilities for development.[4] Toynbee's historiosophical theory draws attention to the factors or most important phenomena that indicate the process of disintegration and collapse. Thus, it creates the opportunity to work out the assumptions for a theory of regional disintegration which may have relevance beyond the current situation in Europe.[5] Essential in Toynbee's theory is the idea that disintegration does not depend upon crises alone and their frequency but rather on deeper social and political phenomena which make the development or even the survival of a given civilisation impossible. The goal of this article is to grasp those phenomena that lead to disintegration and also to reflect upon the question of whether similar factors can be identified in the European crises at the beginning of the 21st century. First, however, it is necessary to present readers with Toynbee's model of the universal state and its similarities with the European Union.

THE CONCEPT OF THE UNIVERSAL STATE

According to Toynbee, every universal state is characterised by the development of a communication network,[6] an example of which in the case of the EU are cohesion policy investments. In addition, the universal state establishes official languages although one of them clearly dominates. For the EU, English has become such a lingua franca. The state has one or more political and administrative capitals and for the EU these are Brussels and Strasbourg. Finally, a universal state builds its own administration and civil service, an example of which can also be found in the EU (the corps of officials in Brussels as well as the more recent European External Action Service). A universal state assures peace, as is the case in Europe which has been almost free of armed conflict since the end of WWII,[7] although troops from European countries and the EU itself have participated in local external conflicts. In this way, a universal state favours economic development and a spirit of pacifism.

A universal state is an attempt to construct an entity with the features of a state and with political structures that function above existing divisions over the maximal area of a given civilisation's influence. In the case of European civilisation its centre was created in Western Europe and that is where the European Economic Community was first formed in 1957. Later, the EU expanded into Central Europe, which was a characteristic territorial expansion for the project as it sought to broaden the influence of

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[3] As an example of this position compare A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London 1971.

[4] L. Tsoukalis, *In Defence of Europe. Can the European Project Be Saved*? Oxford – New York 2016, pp. 150, 175, 206.

[5] T. G. Grosse, *Assumptions of the theory of regional disintegration – suggestions for further research*, "Przegląd Europejski" no 4 (42), 2016, pp.11-22.

[6] A. Toynbee, *op. cit*., pp. 288-318.

[7] With the exception of war in the Balkans after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the years 1992-1995.

its institutions, laws and values. In Toynbee's model, all these features characterise a universal state with its ambitions to expand territorially and promote its values and modes of operation, which are treated as universal for the external environment. In the case of the EU, there has often been mention of its "normative power", which indicates that its means of international influence are based primarily on the export of norms and ideas and less on economic or military pressure.[8]

On the one hand, the features mentioned are symptoms of excessive ambitions which cannot be satisfied in reality and thus accelerate collapse. They are then a reflection of hubris, or too great ambitions (or simply excessive pride) which are not aligned to the real possibilities of the universal state. It is no accident that for the promoters of European integration it is a project set on eternal development and successive phases of deepening cooperation with no return and thus not allowing any possibility of disintegration. The divergence of these ambitions from reality during successive crises makes further expansion impossible and may even help bring about internal collapse. In the case of the EU, an example of excessive ambition that was not supported by appropriate institutional actions was the introduction of a common currency. This project was not only intended to cement the internal market but also compete with the American dollar as an international currency and so assure Europe economic and geopolitical advantage on a global scale. It was supposed to clear the way for the political union of a future European federation. As it happened, however, the EU's monetary union was not sufficiently institutionalised in the event of a serious crisis which brought the project to the brink of bankruptcy in 2012 and many problems were not resolved even after this.[9] Further evidence of European expansionism beyond the institutional possibilities was the eastward expansion of the EU.[10] Here the greatest problem was the lack of organisational adjustment for such a large expansion and especially the fact that the EU refrained from introducing bold reforms that would improve the mechanisms of managing and increasing the Union's finances. In addition, the EU's policy with neighbouring states, meant to build a friendly and Europeanised regional environment, was introduced in a conservative manner without the appropriate financial scale or dynamic geopolitical strategy. When further crises occurred, such as in Ukraine beginning in 2014 on the Eastern borders of the EU or the destabilisation of Northern Africa as a result of the Arab Spring (2010-2014) and the resultant migration crisis, the EU was not appropriately prepared in order to effectively react. Previous policy turned out to be insufficient in the face of growing crises and in an indirect way helped destabilise both regions. An example is the support given by some EU member states for toppling the regime of Muammar Qaddafi (2011), which become a source of destabilisation in Libya, a problem that Europe was

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[8] I. Manners, *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms*? "Journal of Common Market Studies", vol. 40, no. 2, 2002, pp. 235-258.

[9] H. Zimmermann, *The euro trilemma, or: how the Eurozone fell into a neofunctionalist legitimacy trap*, "Journal of European Integration", vol. 38, no. 4, 2016, pp. 425-439.

[10] W. Münchau, *Enlargement and the euro are two big mistakes that ruined Europe*, "Financial Times", 1 November 2015, p. 9; L. Tsoukalis, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

subsequently unable to deal with. Also, European ambitions in the area of promoting their own regulations and institutions can sometimes be treated as a symptom of hypocrisy, especially when the standards and values being promoted are treated in a goal-oriented manner.[11] From this perspective, integration is a type of illusion which must not come into contact with hard realities. Toynbee looked upon the universal state in exactly the same way.[12]

On the other hand, the phenomena described are characteristic of universalism. European values and law were not only intended to integrate the community from the inside but also spread them as the optimal model on an international scale. In a similar way, the universal state opens up to the outside becoming a home for all nations (coming from both within its territory and from areas outside it).[13] In the case of the EU, an example of this tendency has been the emphasis placed on universal human rights, which comprise the foundation for the acceptance of mass immigration from outside Europe.

A universal state is a response to crises and "cracks" in the heart of a civilisation which can lead directly to its destruction. It is also an answer by the elite, which would otherwise face losing their power and international significance.[14] This is how Alan Milward interprets European integration.[15] He regards this as a way for the elite of nation states, exhausted by bloody armed conflicts and full of anxiety regarding the economic challenges of the second half of the 20th century, to save themselves. The European Economic Community was a response to the nightmares of the first and second world wars, which can be regarded as a time culminating in the destruction of European civilisation.

According to Fernand Braudel, the foundation of the civilisation is the tradition of the nation state as the leading form of political order. Simultaneously two main tendencies can be seen in history. The first is the maximisation of power by the larger European countries, which in some historical times led to aspirations for establishing continent-wide hegemony. The country most often aspiring to such power was Germany, which was large enough to have such ambitions but too small to actually carry them out.[16] The second tendency characterising European civilisation was, according to Braudel, restraining the country aspiring to hegemonic status by the other great powers, which can also be described as seeking a "balance of powers".[17]

Braudel recognised that peaceful attempts at securing the unity of the continent were always weak and unsuccessful. The success of integration in the second half

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[11] Compare S.T. Hansen, N. Marsh, *Normative power and organized hypocrisy: European Union member states' arms export to Libya*, "European Security", vol. 24, no. 2, 2015, pp. 264-286.

[12] A. Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

[14] A. Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-276.

[15] A. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation State*, New York 1992.

[16] Compare B. Simms, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy, from 1453 to the Present*, New York 2013.

[17] F. Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, London 1994, pp. 416-421.

of the 20th century was forced by the external hegemon that the United States of America was for Europe after wartime defeats.[18] At the same time a stimulating factor was an external threat, more precisely the risk posed by the Eastern Bloc and the USSR.[19] Its power in strengthening integration was assured by the order imposed by the cold war. However, as soon as this broke down (1989-1990), there was a revival of the old buried tendencies within Europe for maximising power by the largest countries on the one hand and restraining them on the other. The framework of the EU not only ceased to stifle those tendencies, it became a tool used within this game. During the crisis, protests by many social groups were organised against the non-democratic powers of Brussels, but also against the ever greater power within the EU exercised by Germany or the "new alliance of powers", above all the domination by the team of France and Germany in European politics.[20] If the project of a universal state in Europe was supposed to prevent the cataclysms of nationalism and rivalry between the largest countries, then the end of the project might be signified by the rebirth of these tendencies. German Chancellor Angela Merkel became famous for her support of the "union method", which she was convinced was meant to concentrate power in the hands of member states (and at the same time weaken the role of supranational institutions such as the European Commission or the European Parliament).[21] Experts stress the increase of the intergovernmental factor in European politics under the influence of the crisis in the euro area.[22]

Toynbee saw yet another problem with the universal state.[23] Each of the historical incarnations of such a state attempted to create a universal moral authority that was supposed to bind the population together and simultaneously serve as an arbiter of the highest order, which could subdue internal disagreements. One example of this was the papacy during the Holy Roman Empire. Problems appeared when that institution, moral in nature, became a political actor which itself aspired to become the highest political authority within the framework of the universal state or became an instrument in games between other actors. This accelerated internal divisions and became the beginning of the process of disintegration. A similar problem affects modern Europe. Earlier, the institution which held moral authority and which mediated disputes

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

[19] USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

[20] For a broader take on the subject, see: T. G. Grosse, *Overcoming the crisis in the Economic and Monetary Union*, "Przegląd Europejski", no. 1, 2016, pp. 28-50.

[21] *Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the opening ceremony of the 61st academic year of the College of Europe*, Bruges, 2 November 2010, http://www.bruessel.diplo.de/contentblob/2959854/Daten/ [accessed: 27.12.2016].

[22] S. Fabbrini, *The Euro Crisis and Its Constitutional Implications*, in: S. Champeau, C. Closa, D. Innerarity, M. Poiares Maduro (ed.): *The Future of Europe. Democracy, Legitimacy and Justice After the Euro Crisis*, London 2015, pp. 19–36; S. Fabbrini, *Which European Union. Europe After the Euro Crisis*, Cambridge 2015; V.A. Schmidt, *The Forgotten Problem of Democratic Legitimacy*, in: M. Matthijs, M. Blyth (ed.): *The Future of the Euro,* Oxford – New York 2015, pp. 91, 111; M. Brunnermeier, H. James, J.-P. Landau, *The Euro and the Battle of Ideas*, Princeton 2016.

[23] A. Toynbee, *op. cit*., pp. 199-201.

between member states was the European Commission, but in the time of the most recent crises, it has become more and more politicised.[24] According to its president, this was originally intended to improve governance in a time of crises as well as to make its functioning more elastic depending on the current political situation.[25] Nonetheless, this has led to an arbitrariness of decisions by EU executive powers, which has damaged its authority as an impartial institution directed above all by legal norms. In this way the Commission has also lost its autonomy vis-à-vis the most powerful countries and has even taken part in the rivalry between them. This was brought about by the rebirth of the tendency toward intergovernmental relations and with it the domination of national governments in EU politics as well as the use of "power politics" by the largest countries against the weaker states. Thus, during the years of crisis there was a rebirth in Europe of the historical tendencies which had previously led European civilisation almost to destruction, such as national particularism, the rivalry between powers and the search for a "balance of powers".

THE PROBLEM OF A LACK OF CREATIVITY

One of the most serious symptoms of disintegration of any given civilisation, according to Toynbee, is the weakness of the elite as manifested above all by a loss of creativity and intellectual laziness.[26] More than once, this has been accompanied by a feeling of self-satisfaction in the face of obvious signs of the current order breaking up. The result is mimicry of old institutions without taking into account changing circumstances and new challenges. The elite fruitlessly seeks to return to the old status quo, most often treated as an ideal time. The disappearance of creativity is especially dangerous in conjunction with an expansive universal state which requires meeting challenges that result from widening the scale of operation.[27] In such a situation, *nemesis*, understood as a kind of historical justice, is inevitable. Poor management and insufficient institutional creativity lead to problems which accelerate disintegration.

These patterns were also visible during European crises, especially when problems hit the euro area. Academics accuse European decision makers of a lack of creativity and excessive attachment to earlier ideas and models of behaviour, above all the German idea of ordoliberalism.[28] That is why their solutions depended most of all on forcing fiscal savings in the countries that were most indebted and affected by the crisis. This was a very difficult policy to enact, with high social and political costs and

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[24] Cf. discussion on this topic: T. G. Grosse, *Introduction*, in: T. G. Grosse, *European Union Policies at a Time of Crisis,* Scholar Publishing House, Warsaw 2016, pp. 9-32.

[25] *Juncker elected: promises more social EU, more political commission*, EUobserver, Brussels, 15. July 2014, https://euobserver.com/political/124980 [accessed: 29.12.2016].

[26] A. Toynbee, *op. cit*., pp. 141, 161-166.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[28] M. Matthijs, *Powerful rules governing the euro: the perverse logic of German ideas*, "Journal of European Public Policy", vol. 23, no. 3, 2016, pp. 375-391.

only to a small degree addressed the fundamental problem of the common currency. Other commentators add that the goal of the anti-crisis policy was to rebuild the previous status quo, that is to stabilise financial markets by maintaining previous trade imbalances.[29] These primarily benefitted the euro area's largest economy, namely Germany, which saw a noticeable increase in exports relative to the remaining member states, especially the less competitive ones from the south. As a result of the anti-crisis measures taken, this basic economic imbalance has not changed in the euro area and the most that was done was an attempt to lessen the level of debt of some countries so that they could regain financial equilibrium (neither of which was achieved).

According to Lawrence Summers, the problem of Europe, similar to that of the West as a whole, is one of decreasing investments and productivity occurring at the same time as weakening internal demand, low growth rates and low employment over a longer time frame (which he terms "secular stagnation").[30] Increased fiscal savings in such a situation cannot be any kind of effective solution. According to economists, when an economy is mired in depression, it is not possible to rebuild growth only by intervening in monetary policy.[31] In this way the passivity of the elite brought about social dissatisfaction and a series of political problems for the EU.

THE PROBLEMS OF PARTICULARISM AND INDIVIDUALISM

For Toynbee an important sign of civilisational disintegration is the process of growing individualism accompanied by a weakening of communal attitudes. This occurs at the cost of caring about the entirety of a community. Another signal is the "schism of the soul" with rising pessimism and apathy understood both in a societal sense (as lack of faith in the universal state) and from an individual perspective as a feeling of losing life opportunities.[32]

It would appear that these symptoms can be found in modern Europe. Various crises have not only brought about worsening standards of living to European societies but also growing feelings of losing out on life opportunities. Economic research shows that almost 70% of households in 25 highly developed Western countries (mostly from the EU) had the same or lower income in 2014 as in 2005[33]. For example in Italy almost the entire country (97% of households) is struggling with stagnation or decreasing income. Before the crises, stagnating or lowering income affected only 2% of the population. The euro area has also been affected for years by high youth

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[29] H. J. Bieling, J. Jäger, M. Ryner, *Regulation Theory and the Political Economy of the European Union*, "Journal of Common Market Studies", vol. 54, no. 1, 2016, pp. 53-69.

[30] L. H. Summers, *The Age of Secular Stagnation. What It Is and What to Do About It*, "Foreign Affairs", March/April 2016, pp. 2-9.

[31] Cf. the statement by the principle strategist of JP Morgan Asset Management on European markets: S. Flanders, *Tear up the rule book to secure Europe's future*, "Financial Times", 9 January 2017, p. 9.

[32] A. Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-254.

[33] *Poorer than their parents? Flat or falling incomes in advanced economies*, McKinsey & Company, London 2016.

unemployment rates.[34] All this together increases pessimism and lowers individual evaluations of life opportunities, especially in the younger generation.

Analyses of the euro area crisis draw attention to the domination of national particularism over thinking in terms of the common good or the long-term success of the currency union as a whole.[35] This is especially true of German decision makers who transferred the costs of macroeconomic adjustments to the peripheral countries in the zone, which was not only a very heavy burden for these societies but also brought about a slowing of the rate of growth in Germany itself.[36] This was created by what can be called "asymmetrical rationality", within which the rationale (and interests) of the dominant political actors outweighed the rationale of the need for the stable and long-term development of the entire euro area.[37]

Scholars also point out that in the conditions of an extended crisis, and especially against the backdrop of the low effectiveness of European institutions, European societies turned for help to their own governments and focused on national political communities. This led to the strengthening of national democratic structures as a tool of influencing political decision makers to introduce policies in line with voter expectations.[38] If such measures were not taken at the time by the elite that supported integration then the electorate was inclined to support less experienced Eurosceptic politicians. This raised the temperature of political disagreements and created conditions that supported disintegration. Explanations can be found in the literature for why anti-system movements, even if they initially recalled cosmopolitan ideas, repeatedly ended up dressing in the robes of nationalism.[39] The first reason for this is that national identification has always been stronger than universalism or cosmopolitanism. The second reason is that revolutionaries need the apparatus of a state in order to bring their agenda to fruition. In addition, at present anti-system movements, that is those directed against the political system of an integrating Europe, evoke national patriotism and democracy in member states as the basic mechanism for carrying out the political will of their societies.[40]

The phenomena described favoured the awakening of national identity and cooled enthusiasm for a European identity, which had already been lukewarm. According to

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[34] According to Eurostat data the level of youth unemployment since the outbreak of the European debt crisis has exceeded 20%, according to data from 2016 it was over 21%. Compare http://www.trading-economics.com/euro-area/unemployment-rate [accessed: 29.12.2016].

[35] G. Falkner, *The EU's problem-solving capacity and legitimacy in a crisis context: a virtuous or vicious circle*? "West European Politics", vol. 39, no. 5, pp. 953-970.

[36] M. Matthijs, *op. cit.,* pp. 378, 384-387.

[37] T. G. Grosse, *The Eurozone Crisis*, in: M.A. Cichocki, T.G. Grosse (ed.), *The aspects of crisis. An analysis of crisis management from an economic and political perspective,* Natolin European Centre, Warsaw 2016, pp. 11-56.

[38] H. Zimmermann, *op. cit*.

[39] Compare. G. Arrighi, T. K. Hopkins, I. Wallerstein, *Antisystemic Movements*, London – New York 1989, pp. 27-31.

[40] Cf. T.G. Grosse, *A Potential for Revolution in Europe*? in: B.J. Góralczyk (ed.), *European Union on The Global Scene: United or Irrelevant*? Warsaw 2015, pp. 203-223.

sociological research, the feeling of community with Europe had always been rather weak. Less than 3% of the population of the EU thought of it as their primary identity in 2005. For the remaining majority of the population it was only a secondary affiliation after national identity. During the crisis after 2008, these tendencies strengthened. European identity weakened and was mostly treated as a secondary form of identification after national identity. At the same time there was an increase in those claiming exclusively national identification (that is, those who had no attachment to even a secondary European identity). By 2010, such people accounted for almost 50% of the population across the entire EU.[41] Research has shown that ever more residents of the EU do not want further European integration and expect at least partial renationalisation of EU competencies.[42] The same research also indicates that dislike of the EU primarily results from the ineffective management of the euro area and migration crises.

It is worth pointing out two more general phenomena which are the cause of the weakness of European communal feeling. The first is the specific system of values and historic traditions which are the foundation of European identity propagated in the EU. The second is the increasing influence of individualism on European culture. In reference to the first question, it should be stated that in deciding that Christianity was not compatible with the idea of secular public authorities in the EU, a major European historical legacy reaching back to the times of ancient Rome was rejected. By the end of the 18th century, such an approach initiated by Enlightenment thinkers was criticised.[43] It was thought that this deprives Europe of a part of its civilisational content and cultural base, which is a necessary social adhesive. In this line of thinking, without Christianity, respect for the law and human dignity as well as maintaining social morality and mutual trust is only a propaganda slogan. The decisions by the elite of the EU on the question of European identity also avoided appeals to the multi-century history of nation states since that could strengthen national instead of European identity. If reference was made, it was to the negative consequences of competition between countries for Europeans. Finally, the shameful history of colonialism was rejected. It had been used by the European powers to build up their strength by the conquest and exploitation of non-European lands. Instead, the decision makers of the EU attempted to build a European identity and community around Enlightenment values including the secularism of public authorities, human rights, the rule of law and the quest for material well-being and economic development.[44]

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[41] A. Polyakova, N. Fligstein, *Is European integration causing Europe to become more nationalist? Evidence from the 2007-9 financial crisis*, "Journal of European Public Policy", vol. 23, no. 1, 2016, pp. 60-83; A.M. Messina, *Introduction: Identifying with Europe*? in: A.C. Gould, A.M. Messina (ed.), *Europe's Contending Identities. Supranationalism, Ethnoregionalism, Religion, and New Nationalism*, Cambridge 2014, p. 11.

[42] Among the residents of 10 member states making up 80% of the EU's population, 42% of those surveyed were in favour of transferring the power of EU institutions to national governments and only 19% for further integration. Compare *Euroscepticism Beyond Brexit*, Pew Research Center, June 2016, p. 2.

[43] E. Burke, *Rozważania o rewolucji we Francji*, Kraków – Warsaw 1994, pp. 106-107 (English edition: *Reflections of the Revolution in France,* Oxford University Press, Reissue edition, 2009).

[44] M. Guibernau, *The Identity of Nations*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 115-116.

This type of cultural base is relatively shallow as it rejects a huge part of the common European past while treating the remainder in a selective manner. In addition, it accepts many values of a universal nature, whose geographical and cultural frame of reference far exceeds the boundaries of Europe.[45] That is, in particular, the case of human rights and the assumptions of multiculturalism, which is open to non-European traditions. Spreading values that are universal in nature cannot be based on a mechanism creating a strong identity, namely distinguishing "others" from the members of one's own community. This is one reason for the weakness of the idea of EU citizenship and identification with the EU and, simultaneously, an explanation for the significantly stronger feelings for national identity in Europe.[46] As one researcher put it, European identification is an abstract idea and does not evoke the same social emotions that national identification does.[47] In addition, since one of the fundamental values which was supposed to build a feeling of union in the EU was increasing prosperity, a situation of prolonged crises leads almost immediately to a loss of European identification. For the same reasons, economic immigrants coming to the EU, if they fail to fulfil their aspirations for improved material status, may very quickly become disappointed with Europe and its inhabitants.

European culture has steadily become more individualistic, which is reflected in feelings of responsibility for the common good. In an indirect way this weakens the possibility of building a strong community at the continental level. Individualism is derived from English ideas of liberalism, but to a great degree, it was also promoted by the French Enlightenment. In this second case, it is derived from the 18th century approach to individuals and the world of politics which should free itself from religious restrictions and also earlier values regarded as natural.[48] Emphasising the rights of individuals led to economic development and democratisation in Western Europe but ever more frequently made individual self-realisation more important than concern for the common good. European integration also strengthened this tendency by emphasizing universal human rights in order to weaken attachment to national communities while simultaneously rather ineffectively attempting to construct a feeling of community among all Europeans.

DIVISIONS AS A MANIFESTATION OF DECOMPOSITION

An important element of the decomposition of a given civilisation in Toynbee's model is that of increasing divisions or a loss of harmony between particular elements of the political and social system. The most significant is the alienation of the elite

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[46] C. Colliot-Thélène, *What Europe does to citizenship*, in: D. Chalmers, M. Jachtenfuchs, C. Joerges (ed.), *The End of the Eurocrats' Dream*, Cambridge 2016, p. 129.
[47] M. Guibernau, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
[48] Cf. T. Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions. Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*, New York 2007.

(that is the dominant minority) from the internal and external proletariats.[49] A symptom of this is the tendency for the elite to "cut themselves off" from the real problems with which the rest of society struggles. Thus, there is a failure to understand these difficulties combined with lessened feelings of responsibility for solving them. Instead, the elite are more concerned with safeguarding their own interests. The internal proletariat, that is the native inhabitants of the universal state, have a feeling of growing impoverishment since the consequences of successive crises are methodically transferred to that part of society in particular. Therefore, they turn away from the ideas and political narratives propagated by the elite and instead turn toward anti-system views. This results in rebellion and other political turbulence. Another category in Toynbee's model is the external proletariat, that is an immigrant population from outside the borders of the universal state. They are drawn both by the wealth of the state, its relative stability and peace and also its cultural attractiveness. Immigrants are, however, the object of the greatest exploitation and also pauperisation in times of crisis. Over time, they begin to reject the dominant culture and even adopt hostile attitudes toward its values, which becomes one of the direct causes of the civilisation's disintegration.

Many intellectuals accuse European civilisation of excessive exclusivity. A particular turning point here was the Age of the Enlightenment, the legacy of which became one of the foundations of European integration. Research suggests[50] that the Enlightenment and the French revolution led to weakening the role of Christianity and the Church while simultaneously transferring responsibility for controlling society and individuals onto the state apparatus. In the modern states of Europe authority over society is described by Foucault as "pastoral" since it took over the former powers of parish priests simply expanding the scale to cover the entire country. It is also called total and manipulative power because it aimed to completely shape individual thoughts and public opinion, subordinating them to the policies of the governing elite. Foucault recognised that secular government after the French revolution created a "new man" and "new society" much more strongly controlled and manipulated than in previous historical periods.[51] Burke was of the same opinion; yet he added that this "new man" would be suited to slavery as well as to a new form of government which is most often called oligarchy.[52] Sowell also recognised,[53] that the vision of politics unrestrained by previous religious and moral norms that was formed by the Enlightenment was a thoroughly exclusionary project that would accumulate power in the hands of the enlightened avant-garde, directing the masses and forming them in accordance with new, secular rules.

Looking at the EU in this context, the accusation has been raised many times that it is excessively exclusive and only superficially and for its own ends encourages

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[49] A. Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-240.
[50] D. Outram, *The Enlightenment*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 114-115.
[51] M. Foucault, *Power*, New York 2000, pp. 332-334.
[52] E. Burke, *op. cit.*, pp. 103, 139, 208.
[53] T. Sowell, *op. cit.*

broader social engagement.[54] Some claim that it primarily serves the economic elite at the expense of less well-off social groups.[55] The system of political management in the EU privileges the interests of big business and simultaneously limits the influence of national democracies and therefore lessens the importance of the interests of labour as well as those of poorer social classes. In a democratic form of government, these have a certain influence in defending their interests relative to other social classes, namely those who are richer, better educated and, as a rule, more strongly represented in the media. It is worth noting that at the beginning of the 20th century, a similar accusation was formulated against European civilisation by Spengler. In his opinion, Europe was governed by a plutocracy with media and politicians promoting their interests and simultaneously manipulating the masses in order to maintain societal peace.[56] During the crises after 2008, the criticism appeared that the pro-European elite increasingly "alienated themselves" from the masses primarily by insufficiently softening the consequences of the economic problems of some societies.[57] This criticism was also related to the tendency to transfer the costs of macroeconomic adjustments during the economic crisis onto the societies that were already the most adversely affected. Research showed an increase in economic and social inequality between the richest and poorest countries of the EU,[58] as well as between the "winners" and "losers" of European integration.[59] Among the latter were primarily the middle and lower classes in the countries of Southern Europe. Other research showed that even before the outbreak of the crisis, integration had helped deepen inequality in member states, primarily serving the interests of the elite and helping other classes far less.[60]

On the basis of recognising universal human rights, the EU levelled a large number of the privileges resulting from EU citizenship (that is the prerogatives of the internal proletariat to use Toynbee's terminology) with those of immigrants and refugees (the external proletariat in his model).[61] As mentioned earlier, this deprived the idea of citizenship in the EU of expressiveness and content. It was impossible to build social emotions connected with strong European identification around it. As specialists put it,[62] EU citizenship was left without substance and reduced to technical functions.

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[54] One of many examples: J. Habermas, *The Crisis of the European Union*, Cambridge 2013, pp. vii-xii.

[55] B. Van Apeldoorn, *Transnational Capitalism and the Struggle Over European Integration*, Abingdon 2002; C. Crouch, *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*, Cambridge 2011.

[56] O. Spengler, *op. cit.*, pp. 404, 416-425.

[57] J.E. Stiglitz, *The Euro and its Threat to the Future of Europe*, New York 2016.

[58] W. Streeck, L. Elsässer, *Monetary disunion: the domestic politics of Euroland*, "Journal of European Public Policy", vol. 23, no. 1, 2016, pp. 1-24.

[59] L. Tsoukalis, *op.cit.*, pp. 152.

[60] In the years 1999-2010 inequality deepened most severely in Spain, Portugal, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Greece and Italy. Cf. M.R. Busemeyer, T. Tober, *European integration and the political economy of inequality*, "European Union Politics", vol. 16, no. 4, 2015, pp. 536-557.

[61] More on this: H. Ballin, *Citizens' Rights and the Right to Be a Citizen*, Leiden 2014.

[62] K. Krūma, *EU Citizenship, Nationality and Migrant Status. An Ongoing Challenge*, Leiden 2014, p. 418.

Opening up to the outside was partly intended to be repayment for past wrongs to the descendants of the residents of former European colonies. European integration was supposed to be redemption for past sins and also overcome them by a new formula of political organisation in Europe.[63] In addition, such a policy was intended to make it possible for European economies to fill gaps in the labour market. In practice, it made further exploitation of non-Europeans possible. This is because they were most often used to fill unskilled or low-skilled positions that the native population did not wish to do for relatively low wages. Opening up to the outside became an example of the growing divide between the ideals promoted by the European elite and the expectations of a growing part of society. The flow of millions of immigrants to Europe brought about dissatisfaction among the native population, especially in the face of limited social spending and growing problems in the labour market due to the crisis. This was one of the reasons for dislike not only of immigrants but also of the political elite, who, in accordance with the rules of political correctness, defended universal human rights and multicultural values. After a time, this spurred part of the European public to support anti-system movements that questioned the values of the elite.

The external proletariat or immigrants from outside the EU were to a large degree attracted by a vision of prosperity in Europe by the former colonial metropoles.[64] Their assimilation into the spirit of European values to a large extent was not successful,[65] and multicultural policies failed as a mechanism of assimilation.[66]

Those from Muslim cultures, for example, even in the second generation in Europe, to a significant degree rejected the principle of the secular state and the separation of the religious and public spheres.[67] According to researchers,[68] Muslims living in Europe find it difficult to accept liberalism, secularism and democracy, that is the values upon which the EU was built. They accept the ideas of the rights of women and sexual minorities to a much lesser degree than does the rest of the population. They have trouble succeeding in the labour market and live in neighbourhoods that are similar to ghettos with unemployment and crime rates that are much high than in other places.

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[63] E. Buetter, *Europe after Empire. Decolonization, Society, and Culture*, Cambridge 2016, pp. 13, 502.

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] A.M. Messina, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16; M.L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*, Durham 2014; T. Huizinga, *The New Totalitarian Temptation. Global Governance and the Crisis of Democracy in Europe*, New York – London, pp. 175-177.

[66] C.L. Adida, D.D. Laitin, M.-A. Valfort, *Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies*, Cambridge 2016, pp. 177-179.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 79-92. According to research in 2016, almost 30% of French Muslims reject the principle of secularism and believe that Islamic law is more important to them than French federal law. Compare *French secular laws rejected by three in 10 Muslims*, "Financial Times", 18 September 2016, p. 3.

[68] S. Sayyid, *Recalling the caliphate: decolonization and world order*, London 2014.

In some opinions, the attitude of Europeans toward immigrants is ambivalent.[69] On the one hand, part of EU society feels guilt for the colonial past and is open to other cultures. On the other hand, a large part of society, even those with liberal attitudes, have feelings of superiority and wish to maintain the old hierarchies and economic order. Apart from that, there is an increasing group of people hostile to arrivals from outside the EU.[70] In this situation, many immigrants feel alienated and in material terms exiled to the margins of society. Hostile attitudes toward Europe and its inhabitants are growing and with it a search for non-European values which could help them regain feelings of worth and dignity.[71] Some turn to ethnic pride or religion, such as Islam. According to research,[72] the radicalism of European Muslims is closely tied to their religiosity and pauperisation. At the same time, an increase in the intensity of mutual dislike and radicalisation can be seen both among native Europeans and immigrants. This is a source of serious social and political turbulence, which destabilises European integration.

SUMMARY

The EU has many features in common with Arnold Toynbee's theoretical model of a universal state. In his model, the universal state is an attempt to build a state-like entity with a political structure above existing divisions and over the maximal territory in which a given civilisation functioned. A universal state is, as a rule, an attempt to respond to crises and "cracks" at the heart of a civilisation which had so far led to its destruction. In the case of the European Economic Community, and later the EU, this was a project which was supposed to save Europe after wartime catastrophes and to protect it from the ruinous influence of nationalism and national rivalries between the European powers. It was also supposed to be a chance for the local elites, especially economic elites, to stabilise the political situation and rebuild their economies.

Toynbee proposed that characteristic of a universal state is to attempt to create a utopia, which cannot be realised in practice and which increasingly diverges from social expectations.[73] He recognised that although attempts to create such a state are praiseworthy and intended to save civilisations, many features make realising these plans impossible and over the course of time the real results differ from those expected. An example is excessive ambition, including attempts at outward expansion,

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[69] C. Kinnvall, *The Postcolonial Has Moved into Europe: Bordering, Security and Ethno-Cultural Belonging*, "Journal of Common Market Studies", vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 152-168.

[70] Most residents of Europe fear the influx of refugees feeling that this means an increase in the threat of terrorism, limitations on public services and fewer jobs. Compare *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism*, Fewer Jobs, Pew Research Center, July 2016.

[71] E. Buetter, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

[72] L. Berger, *Local, National and Global Islam: Religious Guidance and European Muslim Public Opinion on Political Radicalism and Social Conservatism*, "West European Politics" vol. 39, no. 2, 2016, pp. 205-228.

[73] A. Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-249.

which are not adequate in relation to the resources at the disposal of the universal state. In the case of the EU, this type of expansion included its acceptance of countries in the East, which was carried out without the appropriate adjustment of governance or the financial resources necessary for such a large-scale undertaking. This is why, under the influence of various crises, part of the Western European elites sought to return to lesser forms of integration concentrated on the south-western part of the continent. Another example of ambition which was not sufficiently backed by institutional reforms or insured by financial instruments might be the creation of a common currency. The crisis made these missteps clear but at the same time did not lead to fundamental reform in the currency union. Eight years after the outbreak of the crisis, reforms were still a subject of lively debate among specialists and politicians.

Ambitions which were too high and not supported by the appropriate financial or organisational preparations are reminiscent of *hubris*, which, according to Toynbee, is a characteristic of the decline of a universal state. This inevitably brings about crises and internal shocks since there is too large a gap between the ambitions and the expansionist actions taken and the reality of available resources and method of governance.

Toynbee also pointed out other elements of decline in a universal state, such as: a lack of creativity by the elite, an increase in particularism over communal approaches to problems, and finally deepening internal divisions. An effort has been made in this article to point out that the EU is struggling with all of these. Limited creativity can best be seen during successive crises and the application by the elite of very conservative methods to overcome them. For this reason, the crises brought with them tremendous social and political costs including an increase in activity by individual member states, revived nationalism and deepening divisions within the EU. Particularism or a weak sense of community has been a characteristic of EU integration almost from the beginning but various crises strengthened these tendencies. It is no accident that many observers accuse the Europe of this period of an increasing loss of solidarity.[74] There were no appropriate political institutions connecting society with authorities at the level of the EU in any kind of permanent or deep way. Another type of problem was the construction of European values based upon universal human rights and a very selective approach to Europe's historical legacy. This made it more difficult to create attachments to the idea of EU citizenship, to build a strong European identity and at the same a feeling of communal politics above the national level. Finally, numerous and ever more visible divisions can be seen within the EU, including some close to the model outlined by Toynbee, that is between the elite and the proletariat and also between internal and external proletariats. This last division became especially visible during the migration crisis.

The crises freed old demons, from which integration was supposed to save the European public. There was a turn toward national egoism, rivalry between the great

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[74] T. G. Grosse, J. Hetnarowicz, *The Discourse of Solidarity and the European Migrant Crisis*, „Yearbook of Polish European Studies", Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw, vol. 19/2016, pp. 35-62.

powers and the political domination of strong countries over weaker ones. This is an attempt to "return to the past" (and thus a form of archaism in Toynbee's terminology). The question arises whether the tendencies described are a harbinger of the disintegration of the EU and the twilight of European civilisation. This civilisation over centuries has had many ups and downs, but managed to rebuild itself in successive political forms, more than once drawing upon its earlier experiences and cultural models. This is the hope for Europe even if integration in its current form is undergoing a period of profound crisis. This does not rule out opportunities for the future and a rebirth of European civilisation. The historical model of Toynbee should be treated as one of the intellectual tools that can serve to analyse the current processes of integration and disintegration in Europe. But by no means does it foretell the end of the EU or European civilisation itself.

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ABSTRACT

Arnold Toynbee's theoretical framework assumes that disintegration does not depend on crises and their frequency, but rather on deeper social and political phenomena that prevent the development or even continuation of a civilisation. This article aims to capture the phenomena of disintegration, as well as to reflect on whether similar phenomena can be identified during the European crises at the beginning of the 21st century. The starting point of the analysis is the assumptions of Toynbee's universal state and their reference to the construction of the European Union.