Europe's *Raison d'être*

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Abstract

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What is the *raison d'être* of the European Union? Does it still make sense to ask this question today, at a time of social and economic crisis in Europe? Launched in 1952 as a kind of pilot project of limited economic integration with a view to securing greater peace and prosperity for its Member States, the EU has evolved into something much larger, more complex and more ambitious. This paper argues, contrary to the recent suggestion of an influential commentator, that the EU needs to abandon its 'messianic' origins and turn to ordinary process democracy, and that the EU's mission or *raison d'être* still matters to its legitimacy today. I argue that while the European Union at its origin was primarily inwardly focused on repairing and strengthening a damaged continent so as to deliver internal peace and prosperity, it has over the past decade become equally concerned with its external dimension. The importance of having a relatively unified European economic and political system to counterbalance the influence of existing and rising powers has become a significant part of the EU's *raison d'être* today.

Keywords

EUROPE'S RAISON D'ETRE

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1. Introduction

What is the *raison d'être* of the European Union? Does it still make sense to ask this question today? Launched in 1952 as a kind of pilot project of limited economic integration with a view to securing greater peace and prosperity for its Member States, the EU has evolved into something much larger, more complex and more ambitious. This chapter argues, contrary to the recent suggestion of an influential commentator,[1] that the question of the EU's mission or *raison d'être* still matters today, and not only because of the serious economic crisis in which it has been mired since 2007. I argue that while the European Union at its origin was primarily inwardly focused on repairing and strengthening a damaged continent so as to deliver internal peace and prosperity, it has become as much or more concerned today with its external dimension, namely with enhancing Europe's global economic and political influence and role. That is not to say either that the external dimension of European integration was unimportant at the time the Community was first created, nor that internal peace and prosperity has ceased to be a central concern in the present day. Far from it. Nevertheless, the last two decades in particular have brought a more sustained focus on the external and global significance of European integration, and when the question of Europe's *raison d'être* is raised today, the importance of having a relatively unified European political system to counterbalance the influence of other existing and rising powers has become a more significant part of the answer than was ever previously the case.

2. After the Economic Crisis

It is just over sixty years since the coming into being of the European Coal and Steel Community when the first foundation stones of the European Union were laid. During that time the EU has enjoyed periods of success as well as periods of stagnation or decline, and an uneven if always dynamic process of transnational integration. The term crisis has been applied at many points in time to describe the state of affairs in the EU, including the 'empty chair' policy of 1965 when France abandoned its seat in the Council of Ministers for six months, the severe economic impact of the Arab oil embargo on European states in 1973, the first Danish 'no' vote in a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, and the rejection by the French and Dutch populations of the Constitutional Treaty in referenda in 2005. Yet few would disagree that the crisis which began to unfold in the European Union from 2007 on has been of a different scale and severity than any previous crisis.

The economic maelstrom convulsing the EU since that time has unquestionably been the most severe and profound crisis which the European integration project has confronted in its 60 years of existence. It has even been framed at various stages as an existential crisis: a question of whether not only Europe's currency, the Euro, but even the EU itself could survive the wrenching economic

[1] Weiler, '60 Years since the First European Community: Reflections on Messianism', 22 *European Journal of International Law* (2011) 303.

circumstances brought about by a banking crisis followed by a sovereign debt crisis. And the unfolding of the crisis with all the uncertainty it has brought about the viability of the single currency and the future of the European Union, and all the economic pain and hardship it has brought, has focused attention again on the original question of what the EU is for.

For many decades before that, the European Union experiment, despite its various challenges, was widely considered to represent a significant achievement on many levels. In Joseph Weiler's terms, it had delivered on its most important foundational goals: primarily those of bringing peace and prosperity to the European continent.[2] In terms of peace, not only had it bound the states of Europe post World War 2 into a close political compact which made war between them virtually impossible, but it had also by the end of the century achieved another of its early goals, namely the reuniting of Eastern and Western Europe after the fall of the iron curtain. In terms of prosperity it had, through the single European market and greater mobility of labor, goods and capital, as well as its cohesion funds, improved the standard of living for many Europeans and strengthened the economies of EU member states.[3] It had also challenged the unbridled European nationalism of the first half of the 20th century by introducing a novel form of transnational cooperation - something which was neither as thin as traditional international cooperation and diplomacy, nor as demanding as a unified federal state, which would encourage the development of political trust, common interests and the habits of constant close cooperation between European states even while not subduing their individual national identities.[4]

The path of European integration was far from smooth, although it has been suggested that it was precisely the kinds of ongoing crises mentioned above – the empty chair policy, the political stagnation of the 1970s, the failure of the Constitutional Treaty and so on – that galvanized other important reforms. Thus the political crisis and the empty chair policy of the 1960s may have encouraged the ECJ to continue promoting the ideas of direct effect and primacy which have been central to the European legal construction[5]; the period of legislative and policy stagnation of the 1970s arguably galvanised plans for the Single European Act and later Economic and Monetary Union; the coming to power of Jörg Haider and his extremely right-wing Freedom Party in Austria in 1999 helped to catalyze the beginnings of a real EU human rights policy; the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 led to stronger political resolve on the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and so on. But the past decade and a half has seen more fundamental and more persistent challenges, particularly the spread of Euroscepticism, the emergence of anti-European parties, and the marked rise of the extreme right across Europe.

But it has been the severity of Europe's current economic crisis which has particularly focused attention again on the underlying question of what the European Union and the European integration

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[2] Weiler, 'Europe after Maastricht: Do the New Clothes Have an Emperor?, *Jean Monnet Working Paper* (1995). Weiler also referred to 'supranationality' as the third of the EU's foundational ideals, by which he meant a notion of community rather than 'unity', a novel transnational arrangement that is neither state nor international organization, and that avoids many of the vices of statehood.

[3] For an influential argument that real motivating factor behind the process of European integration was its 'rescue' of economically damaged nation states, see A. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation State* (1994).

[4] This was what Weiler referred to, see *supra* note 2, as the European ideal of supranationality. Philip Allott, in turn, described the real achievement of the European Community as its 'democratizing of the international relations of Western Europe' whereby 'international relations would be transcended, surpassed, and replaced with a new kind of democratic process. The essence of the European Community is not a federalizing of the Member States, still less a confederalizing. The essence is the democratizing, that is to say the communalizing, of the *inter se* relations of the peoples of Europe.' See 'The European Community is not the True European Community', 100 *Yale Law Journal* (1991) 2485.

[5] P. Craig, 'Once Upon a Time in the West: Direct Effect and the Federalization of EC Law', 12 *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* (1992) 453, at 456-470.

project is for today. If it was clear in the post-war period that the goals of economic revival and peaceful cooperation underpinned the project, it seems much less evident, 60 years on, how *the raison d'être* of the EU today should be articulated. And that seems particularly stark in the present circumstances, given that the complex and painful task of pulling the EU and the Member States out of the present crisis will be an even more difficult one to accomplish if the various peoples of Europe and the citizens of EU member states lack a sense of what the EU and the process of integration is for.[6] Instead of a focus on what kinds of policies and changes are needed to move the EU forward and out of its present economic distress and instability, the question which many of Europe's citizens have been asking during the last three years of hardship, austerity and political conflict has been: why should those changes be made? Why should people suffer unemployment, economic hardship and austerity in order to 'save' the Euro and the European Union? In this way, the economic crisis has brought the question of the EU's *raison d'être* into focus.

When the Schuman Declaration was signed in 1950 and when the European Coal and Steel Treaty was drafted, the project of European integration had a conventionally understood political, economic and security dimension. The political dimension, the idea of having a more united European continent was in part a response to the wars which had divided and shattered Europe – the idea of binding France and Germany together into a close and irreversible political community; the *economic* impetus was to stimulate and reinvigorate the damaged postwar economies of Europe, to bring about the benefits of closer trade and shared markets and to benefit from the economies of scale of a single market; and there was a *security* (and hence at least partly external) dimension too, including the construction of a united Europe in the face of the perceived threat of the Soviet Union at the time. The benefit of each of these three dimensions was felt to varying degrees over the 60 years since the ECSC treaty was signed. Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal and other states enjoyed some of these benefits for many years before their economic woes of recent years erupted. Europe, for all its troubles and challenges, became a more prosperous, peaceful and politically integrated continent than it had been for many centuries.

3. Questioning the *Raison d'être* of the EU

There are three related reasons why the EU's *raison d'être*, which seemed relatively clear and uncontroversial for much of its early history – even if it did not spark great enthusiasm amongst the European population – seems to be in question again today. **(a)** The first concerns the relative success of the EU in delivering peace and prosperity for some years. It seems that some of these achievements of European integration – and particularly the 'peace dividend' – came to be taken for granted, perhaps not even really associated any longer with the existence of the EU. Consequently, the EU may no longer be seen as important for ensuring peaceful relations between European states. **(b)** The second and related reason is that this taken-for-grantedness of the EU and what it has achieved has not sufficed to give the EU the kind of legitimacy that states (whose achievements are arguably also taken for granted) enjoy. There are times when the people are angry with conditions within their nation state, but the anger is generally directed at the government of the day, and not at the existence of the state itself. States as political entities generally enjoy a basic degree of popular support and legitimacy. The reason for their existence is normally taken for granted in the absence of some major

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[6] K. Nicolaidis and J. Lacroix in the 'Introduction' to their book *European Stories* (2012) have pointed out that Europe as a continent and an idea has quite distinct meanings for the various peoples of Europe, and that the intellectual debates on the European Union take a very different shape in different Member States. Yet despite this undeniable and rich diversity of narratives about the meaning and significance of Europe and the EU within different states and among different communities, it is nonetheless the case that there has been a general broadly shared understanding across much of Europe that the political purpose of the post-war project of integration was about securing a degree of peace and economic prosperity for the continent.

calamity, or a call for secession or independence, as for example in the case of Scotland, Quebec, or Kosovo. States are political communities whose legitimacy and *raison d'être* is not generally called into question. The attachment felt by citizens to their national political communities does not however seem to apply to their relationship as citizens of the EU, perhaps in part because of the recently created and rather formal legal status of EU citizenship. For all that Europe integration may have delivered in the past on various dimensions of peace and prosperity, its existence and its desirability as a political entity has not been accepted or internalized by the peoples of Europe. On the contrary, the question of what it is for, why it exists, why states should adopt European policies or citizens should follow EU laws, remains very much alive. The EU's legitimacy seems to remain a kind of performance-based legitimacy, deriving from its ability to 'deliver the goods'. Rather than gaining political legitimacy and acceptance as an entity which has helped to create a peaceful and united continent, it has remained a political entity always in question; always required to justify its existence and value-added. **(c)** The third and related reason for the EU's *raison d'être* being in question again today is that which has been outlined above: namely the nature and severity of the crisis in which the EU finds itself at present. The situation today is one in which the 'prosperity' enjoyed for some decades by many EU member states has been severely undermined. More specifically, it is not just that the EU is failing to deliver prosperity, but on the contrary it is seen to be actively imposing austerity and hardship. The EU is perceived today as one of the agents of socio-economic distress, and a significant causal factor in the nature and degree of economic and social pain being felt in many European states, including Spain, Greece, Ireland and others. By iron-casting the requirements of balanced budgets and debt-reduction, and in the absence of deflationary options, EU policies strictly limit the options of states facing growing unemployment and low or no growth, and the EU is seen to be worsening the social and economic conditions of its citizens.

In other words, the EU has moved from its founding period during which the *raison d'être* question could be clearly and relatively uncontroversially answered (the delivery of peace and prosperity), to one in which it is considerably less clear. Not being a nation state, and lacking the common bonds of culture, history and language enjoyed by many states, the EU has also not evolved into the kind of cohesive political community whose polity-legitimacy has been put beyond question. And finally, the current economic crisis has put the process of European integration in question again in a different and more acute way. At the current time, European integration is to have become the problem or at least a part of the problem, both for those who are suffering from the social and economic effects of austerity policies, and for those in more prosperous states who are concerned that they will be expected to bail out indebted countries. To quote the words of Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb, who pointed out that the crisis has certainly brought the EU closer to its citizens, but not in the way it had always hoped to do: 'when [the Euro crisis] hits your wallet and when you're going to have to bail out other countries, then suddenly the EU becomes a hell of a lot more interesting!'[7]

It might be argued in response that although the German, IMF and ECB-driven austerity policy adopted to respond to the banking and sovereign debt crises in various EU member states has exacerbated significant social and economic pain, this is not the same thing as identifying the EU or European integration itself as the primary cause of the current crisis. The causes of the crisis are complex and multiple, and they include inadequate regulation of the banking sector, excessive speculation, in some cases significant public sector overspending and a lack of trust in relation to the compliance by some states with the stability pact rules underlying the Euro. Yet even if the root causes of the economic crisis lie in part elsewhere, it is incontrovertible that the EU has now significantly limited the remedial measures (such as deflation which is impossible due to Euro

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[7] See The Brookings Institution, 'Will Europe Survive the Crisis?', 12 March 2012, available at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/events/2012/3/12%20stubb/20120312_stubb (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

membership) that the hardest hit states can take to improve their economic situation, and that it is the EU which is imposing significant fiscal austerity.

We seem to be confronted with at least two different possible directions ahead. One is the path of closer integration, and at the other end of the spectrum is the possibility of gradual disintegration. The disintegration option includes the default scenario where the conditions imposed by the EU or the IMF would become impossible or unacceptable to a state and it leaves the Euro, with all the consequences that that would have for the state in question and for the rest of the EU (and beyond). Greece has certainly hovered for many months during 2011-12 on the brink of this option, and the political and social reaction within Greece to the extreme consequences of the austerity policy may even now still push towards exit. The closer integration option, on the other hand, which is the path which has so far been tentatively pursued by the EU, is to move further in the direction of fiscal and political union with the declared aim of building common safeguards against the occurrence of the kinds of situation which gave rise to the crisis in the first place. Thus the Fiscal Treaty was adopted to give the Commission a stronger monitoring and supervisory role in relation to national fiscal policies,[8] and the European Stability Mechanism was established as a lender-of-last-resort for EU member states in financial trouble,[9] and steps towards banking union have been taken with the decision on the creation of a single banking supervision mechanism in December 2012. So far they have been incremental rather than dramatic steps, with significant opposition remaining to the idea of a stronger political union or a fiscal transfer union.

Yet even as the starkest disintegration/default option has become less of an immediate prospect, the likelihood of fragmentation and further weakening of the European project remains a very real one despite these gradual moves towards closer forms of integration. It may be true that for many Europeans, the disintegration option would be an unwelcome one, not only because of the likely undoing of the whole project of European integration and the good that it brought, but also because of the immediate and medium term economic upheaval and pain that the break-up of the EU would bring. Yet on the other hand, the proposal to move instead towards closer integration, the idea of strengthening the EU by establishing a genuine fiscal and political union, brings us back to the question of the EU's legitimacy and its *raison d'être* . The desire to avoid short- or medium-term economic pain does not furnish a good enough reason in itself to create a permanently closer European political and fiscal union, with all the compromise of national and local autonomy which that would involve. There may be degrees of economic desperation within several European states at present, but that does not provide a compelling enough reason for people to choose deeper and closer European integration. There must be something more to the project of European integration than the avoidance of short-term economic pain if the requisite public support and political justification for closer union is to exist. Yet the growth of Euroscepticism and disaffection with the process of European integration even before the economic crisis arose suggests that there is little popular or public consensus on the value of European integration or the *raison d'être* of the EU today.

So let me here identify two different albeit related issues. The first relates to the immediate steps being taken to move forward out of the current crisis. The second concerns the deeper challenge of articulating a broadly shared conception of what the purposes and goals of European integration are in the present day. These are related for the reasons discussed above, namely that it is difficult in the context of the current crisis to contemplate steps towards closer European integration when there is little public acceptance or agreement on what the EU is actually for. As far as the immediate steps out of the crisis are concerned, however, it seems clear that it is damaging for the EU to be associated only

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[8] Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, 31 January 2012, available at http://www.european-council.europa.eu/media/579087/treaty.pdf (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

[9] Treaty Establishing the European Stability Mechanism, available at http://www.european-council.europa.eu/media/582311/05-tesm2.en12.pdf (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

or mainly with policies which bring intolerable economic and social hardship for domestic populations, even if these policies are supposedly intended to right some of the wrongs and the mistakes which gave rise to the crisis.[10] It seems very likely that the path of unrelenting austerity which has been pursued so far will continue to undermine the prospects for the EU's future as a legitimate political system. Not only does this strategy risk accelerating the process of alienating voters and citizens from the EU, but it also arguably undermines the global perception and reputation of Europe as offering a distinctive and alternative model of welfare capitalism to the variety of deregulated capitalism represented by the US and the other rising model of state capitalism in China and other parts of Asia.[11] In that sense, the current program of closer European fiscal and political integration, even if incremental as at present, is unlikely to gain public and hence political support if there is not a move away from an unrelieved focus on austerity, and there is not a greater focus on growth, investment and welfare.

Yet even if there is some softening the strict fiscal discipline pursued by the EU at present, and a greater focus on growth, investment and welfare is introduced, with the EU setting itself on a more publicly supported path out of the crisis, the position remains as described above. In other words, at best the EU finds itself in a situation where it is not on the brink of disintegration or collapse, but where the reason for its existence remains significantly in question. The rise of Euroscepticism and anti-European parties is not the only manifestation of the lack of social support for the EU: also voter apathy, the lack of interest in EU policies and institutions and the ever-decreasing turn-out for European Parliament elections testify to the same phenomenon.[12]

4. The Sources of Polity Legitimacy: Input, Output and Mission Legitimacy

Let us move, then, from the immediacy of the current crisis to this longer-term, more continuous and underlying malaise of the EU: its weak legitimacy and the lack of a clear *raison d'être*.

In an editorial comment in the European Journal of International Law in 2011, Joseph Weiler presented the EU's three major failings as the lack of strong democracy, the lack of capacity and resolve, and the slide in the legitimacy and mobilizing force of the EU and its institutions.[13] He argued that the European Community's founding tendency was to legitimate itself by 'political messianism'. He explained political messianism as the pursuit of a mission (in this case, the Community's three ideals of peace, prosperity and supranationalism) articulated by an elite but not originating in popular consent or ordinary political processes. He compared this founding tendency of the EU to legitimate itself by the pursuit of a mission with the ordinary democratic constitutionalism of modern nation states. The gist of his argument is that this kind of political messianism, however necessary it may have seemed at the outset of the European integration project, is always doomed to collapse, and that if Europe cannot shift the foundations of its legitimacy from the pursuit of ideals to regular process-democracy then it, too, will continue its downward slide. Thus the contrast he draws is between the ordinary democratic constitutionalism of modern states, and the elite ideal-driven project of the European Union polity. His conclusion is that the European Union is doomed to fail if it does not

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[10] See for a recent report into the socio-economic effects of the crisis in five of the hardest-hit Member States: Caritas Europa. *The Impact of the European Crisis* (2013), available at http://www.caritas-europa.org/code/EN/soci.asp?Page=1505 (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

[11] For a recent analysis of the prospects for European welfare capitalism, see C. Hay and D. Wincott, *The Political Economy of European Welfare Capitalism* (2012).

[12] For a recent analysis, see the special issue edited by Usherwood, Startin and Guerra, 'Confronting Euroscepticism', 51 *Journal of Common Market Studies* (2013) 1.

[13] Weiler, '60 Years since the First European Community: Reflections on Messianism', *supra* note 1.

transform itself – or rather, if it doesn't transform its mode of legitimation – into that of modern democratic constitutional states.

The part of Weiler's argument that is unquestionable is that the EU lacks the robust democratic legitimacy of a nation state and indeed that its popular and social legitimacy has continued to slide over the last two decades. It is also unquestionable, despite the inevitable complications that greater politicization would bring,[14] that the EU needs to strengthen its democratic foundations and processes. What is mistaken, however, in my view, is the idea that the EU's legitimacy should and could be based today simply or primarily on democratic-process legitimacy.

Let me explain why. I suggest that there are three main sources of polity legitimacy on which political systems generally draw.[15] The primary source is input legitimacy (democratic processes), the second is output legitimacy (effective delivery of outcomes) and the third is mission legitimacy. The balance between these three sources varies at different points in time and depending on the characteristics and circumstances of the political system in question. In the case of established democratic states, input legitimacy generally dominates, and the legitimacy of the state rests largely on its democratic political system. Output legitimacy is not, however, irrelevant: it remains in the background mainly because it is generally taken for granted that an effectively functioning democratic political system will deliver the basic security and welfare needs of its members. If this ceases to be the case, however, and a political system's capacity to ensure these basic needs no longer exists or is severely undermined (as for example in Weimar Germany), input legitimacy is unlikely to suffice and the overall legitimacy of the polity will suffer. In other words, states draw on both input and output legitimacy, even if input legitimacy (ordinary process democracy, in Weiler's terms) is generally the dominant source. But there is also a third source of legitimacy on which political systems implicitly draw, and that is what Weiler terms mission legitimacy. Mission legitimacy refers to the foundational commitments of a particular state or political system, or the ideals for which it stands. While mission legitimacy is normally even less evident than output legitimacy as an everyday source of polity legitimacy, it nevertheless comes to the fore at times of crisis or celebration in the life of states, for example during war-time when sacrifices are called for, or at certain ceremonial moments such as presidential elections and inaugurations. It may refer to a commitment to certain substantive values or objectives, and it may be more abstractly or more concretely defined. Think for example of the United States' foundational commitment to the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and to limited government under law; of France's founding ideals of 'liberty, equality fraternity'; or of Canada's ideal of multicultural confederation. Founding commitments, ideals or missions often endure, but they do not necessarily remain unchanged. Indeed they are regularly invented and re-invented as history unfolds, and as states undergo upheaval and change. In the case of many modern democratic states, their missions or founding ideals do not play a significant everyday role in establishing the ongoing legitimacy of the polity, and ordinary process democracy is the most prominent source of their legitimacy. Nevertheless, the founding ideals or mission supply a further implicit source of polity legitimacy which can play a important role, from time to time, in enhancing the legitimacy even of long-established democratic states.

The EU, however, is not in the same position as most modern democratic states, and the distribution of its reliance on the three sources of polity legitimacy is correspondingly different from that of most states. Despite six decades of existence, the EU remains significantly different from a nation state in

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[14] For a discussion of the pros and cons of greater politicization of the EU, see the exchange between .Hix and Bartolini, 'Politics: the Right or the Wrong Sort of Medicine for the EU?' and 'Should the European Union Be Politicised? Prospects and Risks', *Notre Europe* (2006), available at http://personal.lse.ac.uk/hix/Working_Papers/NotreEurope_Hix%20_Bartolini.pdf (last accessed on 1 August 2013).

[15] The relationship between input and output legitimacy in the EU context is the subject of F. Scharpf's excellent book, *Governing in Europe* (1999).

many important respects. It remains composed of 27 separate states, with their distinct identities, histories and languages. It has evolved a complex process of transnational politics and transnational governance with various democratic elements, but it has not developed a thick democratic process, a strong collective identity, or a cohesive political unity. Contrary to Weiler, I suggest that the EU cannot, in its present state of development, seek to rely primarily on ordinary democratic processes to ground its legitimacy as a polity. Whether the EU does eventually evolve into a more closely integrated federal system which could base its primary source legitimacy on the ordinary processes of constitutional democracy remains to be seen, although there are currently many challenges to that deeper vision of political integration. For the moment, however, the EU is very far from being able to do so. Instead, the EU continues to draw its legitimacy as much from its performance and output (effective delivery of policy) and from its perceived mission (*raison d'être*), as it does from its everyday political processes (or ordinary process democracy).

In short, I suggest that at its current stage of evolution, the EU still needs to articulate a convincing *raison d'être* if it is to generate the kind of popular support and legitimacy which a powerful transnational economic and political system of this kind requires for its survival, and which captures why this regional system of transnational governance actually matters. The peace dividend seems no longer sufficient for younger generations to whom the virtues of European integration are not evident, who have no memory of war, and who today confront a bleak economic future. And while the democratic character of the EU clearly needs to be significantly strengthened, the EU cannot rely primarily on the kind of thick social solidarity and deep democratic consent for its legitimacy that states can. Mission legitimacy, along with democratic legitimacy and output legitimacy, continues to play an important role.

5. The EU's *Raison d'être* Today

While the term 'political messianism' used by Weiler may have unattractive connotations, the same idea – namely that the EU's founding ideals and mission continue to play an important role today – has been expressed more positively by others. Martin Wolf in 2012 argued in the Financial Times that the fact that the EU is based on an ideal helps to explain its survival and resilience in the face of such strong economic and political centrifugal forces. In trying to explain what forces account for the political commitment to the survival of the Euro, despite the enormous economic struggle that it currently entails for all countries of the Eurozone, he said:

The principal political force is the commitment to the ideal of an integrated Europe, along with the huge investment of the elite in that project. This enormously important motivation is often underestimated by outsiders. While the Eurozone is not a country, it is much more than a currency union. Also for Germany, much the most important member, the Eurozone is the capstone of a process of integration with its neighbours that has helped bring stability and prosperity after the disasters of the first half of the 20th century.[16]

Wolf's argument is that this underlying political commitment (what Weiler calls the messianic) is what fundamentally and most powerfully continues to drive the European integration process. He then elaborates further on the EU's original mission of bringing peace and prosperity to the continent, asserting that 'the big idea that brings the members of the EU together is that of their place within Europe and the world'.

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[16] Wolf, 'Why the Eurozone May yet Survive: Members Remain Absolutely Committed to the Idea of an Integrated Europe', *Financial Times*, 17 April 2012.

There are two important insights in this brief commentary. The first is the emphasis on the continued salience of the EU's founding ideal, or mission. But the second is the reframing of the EU's founding ideal (bringing a degree of peace and prosperity to the continent) in a way that emphasizes the external as well as the internal relevance of European integration. In the remainder of this chapter, I will elaborate on this idea, namely that what explains the continuing commitment to European integration in the face of such powerful centripetal economic and political forces is both the relationship of states and their citizens within the EU political system, *and* the place of the European Union in the world. I suggest that this dual-facing mission – the development of a novel transnational relationship between the member states, their citizens, and the EU on the one hand, and the development of the EU's situation and role within the broader global context, provides a better articulation of the EU's *raison d'être* today.[17]

While the founding ideas of integration as a way of bringing stability and prosperity to the European continent had at least an implicit external dimension –which asserted itself over time not only through repeated enlargements but also through the development of EU external policies – nevertheless the first four decades of the European project were to a great extent inwardly focused on matters such as the establishment of the internal market and the creation of an effective regulatory and political system. With time, however, the external dimension of integration became more prominent, and a major focus of the EU since the time of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 has been with Europe's global role. The Lisbon Treaty most recently and notably contained many high-profile reforms aimed at strengthening the values, institutions and actors shaping EU international relations.[18]

While it may seem implausible to suggest that what might generate stronger citizen support for the EU is its global role, rather than its internal capacity to deliver social and economic welfare, my argument is that these two dimensions are increasingly connected. The internal and external dimensions of EU action are connected in a range of relevant ways. In the first place, the EU increasingly claims to act (and is expected by Europeans to act) so as to manage the effects of globalization.[19] Secondly, many of the ways in which the EU has projected itself as an international actor reflect the modes of transnational governance it has developed in its internal domain. A third way in which the internal and external dimensions of European integration are related is in the potential capacity of the EU to represent an alternative geo-political model to that of other major powers, whether the US on the one hand, or China and other emerging economies on the other. For all its current woes, the EU remains the largest market in the world, and a major exporter of regulatory standards as well as a major trade partner.[20] A particularly powerful critique of the EU's primary focus on austerity throughout the economic crisis has been that: 'it bears negative consequences for Europe and the world… [T]he politics of austerity prevents Europe from offering an alternative vision of capitalism and globalization to that put forward by the United States. Gone is the idea of Europe leading a global third way between *laissez-faire* capitalism and managed socialism.'[21] This EU capacity to offer a third-way model of social democracy as an alternative means of managing economic globalization is relevant both internally and externally.

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[17] For an argument that the EU's foreign policy mode mirrors in various respects the 'governance mode' of transnational relations that it has developed internally, see de Búrca, 'EU External Relations: The Governance Mode of Foreign Policy', in B. Van Vooren, S. Blockmans and J. Wouters (eds), *The EU's Role in Global Governance: The Legal Dimension* (2012) 39.

[18] See Koutrakos (ed.), 'The European Union's External Relations a Year after Lisbon', TMC Asser Institute, Cleer Working Paper 2011/3.

[19] See the special issue edited by Meunier and Jacoby, 'Europe and the Management of Globalization', 17 *Journal of European Public Policy* (2010) 299. For a discussion of apparent public expectations that the EU should fulfill this role, see *ibid*., at 302.

[20] See Bradford, 'The Brussels Effect', 107 *Northwestern University Law Review* (2012) 1.

[21] Newman, 'Austerity and the End of the European Model', *Foreign Affairs*, May 2012.

In an increasingly interdependent world, the EU's potential to exercise global leadership on a range of crucial matters which states cannot address alone, including climate change, migration, internet governance, financial regulation and terrorism, to mention just a few, is just as relevant to the lives of EU citizens as the EU's internal social and economic policies. Writing in 2011 in the *Financial Times*, Giuliano Amato and Federico Ghizzoni drew on Ian Morris's magisterial historical work to suggest that the need to tackle Morris's 'five horsemen of the apocalypse' (climate change, famine, migration, disease and state failure)[22] provides a powerful reason for the EU's continued existence.[23] All of these challenges will affect the lives of both European citizens and others, are not merely the remote foreign policy concerns of elites. The EU has experience, internally, of coordinating the different interests of sovereign states with a view to addressing common problems, and this experience equips it well to promote and support similar collective problem-solving processes internationally. [24] Further, the EU has sought to develop and project a distinctive character as a global actor in fields such as climate change, development, human rights and democracy-promotion, and as an actor which is committed to pursuing collective, coordinated as well as multilateral solutions to global problems.[25]

In conclusion, while agreeing that the EU unquestionably needs continued democratic reform and strengthening, this chapter has set out to refute the argument that the EU must henceforth seek to legitimate itself only by the ordinary processes of democracy and must abandon its 'messianic' origins. I have argued that EU in its current state of evolution remains significantly dependent not just on input and output legitimacy, but also on its mission legitimacy. This means that the question of the EU's *raison d'être* remains salient today, and not only because of the deep economic crisis in which it has been mired. And what then is the EU's *raison d'être*? I have argued that the EU's founding mission of delivering peace and prosperity is no longer only or mainly internally focused, as the external dimension of European integration has become increasingly prominent. In other words, the EU's capacity to manage globalization and its potential to exercise international leadership on a range of crucial global challenges are an important aspect of its *raison d'être* today. The EU's capacity to provide its Member States and citizens with collective power and coordinated problem-solving capability on the one hand, to offer an alternative socio-economic and geo-political model to those of other existing and rising powers, and to offer global leadership on some of the most pressing transnational challenges, provide a powerful rationale for the EU's existence today.

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[22] I. Morris, *Why the West Rules – For Now* (2010).

[23] Amato and Ghizzoni, 'Why It's Worth Keeping the EU Dream Alive', *Financial Times*, 31 October 2011.

[24] See de Búrca, *supra* note17.

[25] The European Council on Foreign Relations in its annual scorecards on European foreign policy has indicated that even where it is weak in bilateral relations with powerful states such as China and Russia, the EU has scored well on a broad range of important multilateral and global issues, notably climate change, crisis management, Bretton Woods reform, non-proliferation, human rights at the UN, international criminal court policy, development aid and global health. See http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/european_foreign_policy_scorecard_2012 and http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/european_foreign_policy_scorecard_2013 (last accessed on 1 August 2013).