

A Renewed Project for Europe: Brexit and the Future of EU Enlargement Policy

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Abstract

Time and time again, the European Union (EU) has moved forward in breadth and depth of integration after times of crisis. Most recently, however, the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2016 and the ongoing populist crisis in many EU countries have called into question the very identity of the EU and the institutions designed to safeguard and promote the European project. In this paper, I examine how the foreign policy of enlargement will change as a result of the ongoing Brexit negotiations.

Enlargement has been called the most successful foreign policy of the EU by scholars and policymakers alike for its ability to promote institutional reform in both candidate countries and current member states (Rehn 2007; Scalera 2017). However, when the UK leaves the EU, so will one of the loudest voices in favor of enlargement. While the Leave Campaign leaned heavily on fears over immigration from the Western Balkans and Turkey, the official UK position on enlargement has historically been more favorable toward these countries and toward enlargement in general.

In this paper, I use original archival analysis and Eurobarometer public opinion data to consider the changing rhetoric of enlargement within the EU and the UK in the face of Brexit. The goal of this analysis is to reveal that the rhetoric of enlargement remains a powerful tool among elites to highlight the positive attributes of the EU and encourage real institutional reform in areas like migration, respect for minority rights, and internal security within current and prospective members.

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Time and time again, the European Union (EU) has moved forward in breadth and depth of cooperation after times of crisis. In the early days of the Union, this sentiment certainly seemed true. First, the entire basis of the Union—the Treaty of Rome—was signed after the tragic events of World War Two. Then, after a period of intense stagflation in the early 1970s, the institutions of the European Council and the European Parliament were created. Next, after democratic transitions in southern Europe, the Single European Act was signed. Finally, after the fall of the Soviet Union came the Treaty on the European Union.

In more recent decades, however, the EU seems to have been plagued by crisis rather than encouraged by it. First, foreign policy was tested by the events of September 11, 2001 and the Iraq War in 2003. Then, the European Monetary Union was tested by the European debt crisis in 2008-2009. The Ukraine crisis in 2013-2014 once again tested the common foreign policy in the EU. Next, the European migrant crisis in 2015 tested the EU's internal security policy. Finally, Brexit and the populist crisis in 2016-2017 called into question the very identity of the EU and the institutions designed to safeguard and promote that identity. So, what do these crises mean for the future of the European project?

Here, I argue that a renewed focus on enlargement might be a viable avenue for solidarity and deeper integration on the heels of this season of crisis. Many have argued that “enlargement is at the core of the EU's soft power—its power to transform its nearest neighbours into functioning democracies, market economies, and true partners in meeting common challenges” and have noted that “the EU has achieved far more through its gravitational pull than it could ever have done with a stick or a sword” (Rehn, 2007, p.1). When we consider the history of EU enlargement, the overall successes are clear. Of the 31 countries that have applied for membership from 1957-2016, 22 have successfully joined and five others—Albania, Macedonia,

Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey—are on track to join. Only three countries—Switzerland, Norway, and Iceland—have rejected membership while in the process of accession, and only one country—Morocco—has ever been turned away. Now, as of June 2016, only one current member—the United Kingdom—has ever voted to leave. For many international organizations (IOs), such a record of accession would be considered remarkably successful.

Thus, I argue that it has been enlargement as a *response* to crisis—not just crises themselves—that has been the greatest catalyst for deeper cooperation and integration in the EU. In each period of crisis, the EU has responded by focusing on its strengths and by using enlargement as a means to further develop those strengths. Consequently, I examine how a renewed focus on enlargement could shed new light on the ongoing crises facing Europe, beginning with the response to Brexit.

The paper proceeds with the following sections. First, I discuss the theoretical motivations and contributions of a study focused on the future of EU foreign policy in light of Brexit. Next, I discuss how the salient issues in the British referendum campaign in 2016 are actually old issues between the EU and the United Kingdom (UK) that were never resolved; these similarities reveal the internal challenges that the EU must overcome if it is going to successfully promote enlargement—and the required domestic and international concessions that are part of enlargement negotiations—in the future. Third, I discuss the challenge of enlargement fatigue within current EU member states and how this fatigue is symptomatic of the broader climate of crisis in the EU. Enlargement fatigue will likely be an important factor in the Brexit negotiations and may prove to be an important stumbling block to ongoing enlargement negotiations. Finally, I discuss how a renewed focus on enlargement might provide the necessary avenue to address unresolved issues in the Union and the necessary forum to further

promote unity and purpose among members. Despite all of the many challenges currently facing the EU, many countries are actively in favor of membership, which is momentum for the European project that the EU cannot afford to overlook.

Theoretical Motivations and Contributions

One of the central guiding questions in International Relations (IR) has been whether and how international organizations matter in world politics. Many scholars continue to be divided on this question for both ontological and epistemological reasons. Realists, for instance, contend that international institutions are epiphenomenal and inconsequential to international politics based largely on theoretical assumptions regarding the primacy of states (e.g. Krasner 1976; Kindleberger 1981; Mearsheimer 1994/1995). Neoliberal institutionalists, in contrast, argue that international institutions have a significant influence on world politics in general and states' policies in particular (e.g. Keohane 1984; Keohane and Martin 1995; Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001). Empirical scholarship continues to fuel this debate by producing contradictory findings regarding the influence of international organizations on domestic and international outcomes (e.g. Rose 2004; Pevehouse 2005; Goldstein, Rivers, and Tomz 2007; Gray 2009).

However, the extensive literature on EU enlargement clearly shows how this process brings about important domestic policy changes. In the EU context, the process of making domestic policy and institutional changes to align with the standards of the European Union is called Europeanization. Many scholars have studied this process whereby member states, or potential member states, more closely align themselves with EU governance practices (Scalera 2017; Börzel and Risse, 2009; Börzel, 2002; Featherstone, 2003; Ladrech, 1994). Thus, the process of EU enlargement shows that the negotiations as part of the accession process are an

important mechanism whereby IOs matter to domestic and international politics of member states.

Still, the outcome of the UK referendum on membership in the EU draws out some important theoretical problems yet to be answered in the literature. First, scholarship clearly shows that accession to international organizations has important short-term consequences for member states (Scalera 2017). But, what are the long-term consequences of differentiated membership experiences? Is it the case for the UK that its difficult accession negotiations created a membership experience that was doomed from the start?

Secondly, IO scholars have seemingly agreed that there is a trade-off between breadth and depth of cooperation (Downs, Rocke, and Barsoom, 1996; Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal, 2001). However, it may also be the case that breadth and depth of cooperation *can* coexist if enlargement brings about internal reforms. In the case of the EU, it seems that this pattern holds true; often new or impending enlargements coincide with deeper cooperation through new treaties. Is that in fact the case? Additionally, in the face of Brexit, how will this trade-off between breadth and depth play out in the future of the EU?

Finally, there is extensive literature on the design and growth of international organizations from a variety of perspectives, such as rational choice (e.g. Hawkins et al, 2006; Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal, 2001) and constructivist approaches (e.g. Barnett and Finnemore, 1999). However, there are relatively few studies that seriously examine how IOs dramatically evolve or even die. One important exception to this is gap is the literature on the evolution of NATO after the end of the Cold War. Still, the current and future transformations facing the EU in the aftermath of Brexit are categorically different than what happened in the case of NATO as the catalyst for evolution in the EU case is an internal shock rather than an

exogenous one. Moreover, NATO has certainly been able to reinvent itself with its out of area missions, especially those in the Middle East, whereas it is unclear at this point in time if the EU will really be able to “reinvent” itself in a similar fashion. Thus, the current challenges facing the EU in light of Brexit present a unique opportunity for more theorizing on the causal mechanisms to explain the evolution of international organizations and even, potentially, their death.

In all of these ways, this project has important theoretical motivations and the potential for making important theoretical contributions to the EU literature and the IO literature more broadly.

The Real Problem with Brexit: Highlighting the Problems of Cooperation

In 2015, UK Prime Minister David Cameron campaigned on a promise to offer a public referendum on EU membership if he were elected (Wheeler and Hunt, 2016). Backed by anti-EU members of the Conservative Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), Cameron won the general election. The promised referendum, popularly known as the Brexit vote, took place on June 23, 2016 after months of intense public debate and campaigning. While the early polls showed that the Remain campaign had the lead, the final results of the referendum showed a surprising 52 percent in favor of leaving the European Union (McDonald-Gibson, 2016). Now, the UK and the EU must negotiate an end to this relationship.

The UK and the EU have never had an easy relationship, however, which should make the Brexit vote less surprising than it was. The United Kingdom opted out of the original negotiations on the Treaty of Rome and instead waited to apply for membership until the 1960s. Then, when the UK finally did apply for membership, its entrance was vetoed by French

President Charles de Gaulle who cited a lack of political will on the part of the UK and an overall lack of fit between the UK and the Continent (de Gaulle, 1963, pp. 6, 8). Eventually, the French lifted their veto and the UK became a member of the European Economic Community in 1973.

However, in 1975, the UK held a referendum on its membership much like the one held in 2016. At that time, Foreign Secretary James Callaghan raised concerns over the budget allocations under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was an essential benefit promised to UK farmers to secure their support for membership (Jenkins, 2006). Other issues, such as budgetary contributions and linguistic sovereignty, led to a highly contentious and divisive public debate on membership (BBC, 2005; Jenkins, 2006; Wallace, 2012). Eventually, a referendum was called on UK membership on June 5, 1975. In the end, 67.2 percent voted in favor of remaining in the Community (BBC, 2005; Jenkins, 2006).

If we consider the arguments proposed by the leave campaigns in both 1975 and 2016, we see striking similarities between the two campaigns. I refer to original campaign materials produced by the leave campaigns in 1975 and 2016 to identify the core issues of the campaigns. For the 1975 campaign, I make use of archival material found in two different archives, the Uwe Kitzinger and Noël Salter fonds of the Historical Archives of the European Union and the Barbara Sloan European Union Document Collection at the University of Pittsburgh, both of which include original newspapers, printed leaflets, and other propaganda material from the 1975 referendum campaign. For the 2016 campaign, I make use of online material found on the campaigners' own webpages as well as online news sources.

After comparing these original materials, five core issues emerge in both the 1975 and 2016 leave campaigns that are strikingly similar. Even though the language used by the two

campaigns are clearly rooted in the political climate of the time, the root concerns raised by both are essentially the same (see Table 1).

The first issue that was raised in both referenda campaigns is the concern that the UK is required to make uneven contributions to the EU's budget that put a strain on the UK's domestic economy. In the 1975 referendum, the concerns over the budget were primarily expressed in terms of "propping up Europe" instead of investing in the domestic economy to ensure price stability. In 2016, budgetary concerns were presented as a trade-off between supporting the EU budget or supporting domestic "priorities like the NHS, schools, and housing."

The second issue raised in both referenda is the concern that UK lawmakers could easily be overruled by both EU lawmakers and EU courts on many issues. In the 1975 referendum, discussion around this issue was more general and more concerned with the UK's independence in a global world. In 2016, the discussion around this issue was largely focused on the migrant crisis. The Leave campaign used the pressures of immigration and the fear of open borders as a framework for expressing this concern that the UK could be "overruled by EU judges."

The third issue raised in both campaigns was the need to preserve UK national identity. Like in the previous issue, the 2016 Leave campaign again used fears over immigration to frame the issue of national identity; open immigration to the UK was viewed as a threat to national identity whereas a skills-based immigration policy could protect national identity while still allowing for necessary influx of people into the economy. In 1975, the threat to national identity was very different as it was only one generation removed from the legacies of World War II. Here, the threat to national identity came from pressures from the Germans and the French who could corrupt the British yet again. Identity concerns were focused more on whether or not

English would be an official language of the EU and how the Franco-German alliance would force the British to intervene on the Continent to their own detriment.

The fourth issue concerned the UK's global trade opportunities with the world outside the EU, especially with other countries in the Commonwealth such as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. In both cases, the argument was made that the EU market is limited for UK trade opportunities but that there are emerging markets outside the EU that are open to UK products. By consequence, then, these increased trading opportunities with the Commonwealth and other emerging markets, like India, China, or Brazil, would bring more prosperity and more jobs to the UK domestic market.

Finally, the fifth issue raised in both referenda was that the UK must protect its sovereign right to make domestic and international laws in accordance with democratic principles. In the first referendum in 1975, the anti-EU campaign primarily focused on the undemocratic nature of membership negotiations. This argument is perfectly summed up by the following statement: "The British people have never been allowed to vote on the biggest decision of their lifetime—a taste of alien dictatorship in a country which taught the world democracy." Thus, the 1975 referendum was an opportunity to preserve a democratic voice in membership negotiations. In 2016, the concern over the undemocratic nature of the EU was largely tied to institutions and the power of the unelected European Commission and European Court of Justice to make and enforce laws that were required to be implemented in the UK. Here again, though, the concern is focused on electoral accountability—the right to "elect and kick out" those who are in power in the EU.

In all, these five campaign concerns reflect several truths about the relationship between the EU and the UK as well as the issues facing intergovernmental cooperation of any kind. First,

it is clear that the UK has always had a difficult relationship with the EC/EU as evidenced by the similarity of issues in 1975 and 2016. It is an unfortunate reality that neither the UK nor the EU leadership in Brussels sought to resolve these issues.

Second, it is evident that issues of cooperation between the UK and the EU have been exacerbated by periods of crisis leading up to the 2016 referendum campaign. When examining the language used by the Leave campaign in 2016, it is clear that the recent Eurozone crisis and the recent Migrant crisis both caused tension between the UK and the EU. The budgetary concerns are not just about the cost of contributing to the EU budget but also about the tradeoff between contributing to the EU budget instead of investing at home. Therefore, without the backdrop of an economic crisis to contextualize this claim, concerns about the budgetary contributions could have been alleviated by considering the rebate the UK receives annually from the EU. Similarly, the Migrant crisis provided a tangible context for concerns over the power of the EU and national identity. It became clear that the UK could not shield itself from the pressures of immigration when the European Commission implemented a quota system for relocating migrants and the European Court of Justice upheld it (Kanter, 2017). Therefore, the Leave campaign had a focal point to justify its argument that EU law can overturn domestic law and that immigrants could be forced upon the UK in drastic numbers thereby upsetting its domestic society.

Finally, it is also clear that many of these issues between the UK and the EU are not unique to their particular relationship but are emblematic of the general issues of intergovernmental cooperation. It has long been understood in the cooperation literature that there is a trade-off between broader and deeper cooperation. In other words, multilateral agreements or international organizations that have broader membership will likely be shallower

in their level of cooperation (Gilligan, 2004; Downs, Rocke, and Barsoom, 1996). From this we can also extrapolate that even smaller and deeper IOs might reach a limit to cooperation as membership increases. This seems to be the case in the European Union for many older members; the progress of deep intergovernmental cooperation has been unable to keep up with the expansion of membership. Or, conversely, a Union focused on expanding its membership was unable to prepare itself to weather the inevitable challenges of pursuing deep cooperation. Whatever the case, we should not be surprised that tensions and fractures exist in the EU as it has faced very significant difficulties in attempting to pursue both breadth and depth in the last two decades.

Enlargement Fatigue

From 1973 to 2013, 22 states have joined the European Union in six waves. First, in 1973, enlargement moved north to include the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark. Then, enlargement moved south to the Mediterranean countries in the 1980s with the admission of Greece, Spain, and Portugal. In the 1990s, enlargement efforts turned toward central Europe with the admission of Austria, Sweden, and Finland. The EU experienced its largest enlargement to date in 2004 with the addition of the “EU-10” countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Cyprus, and Malta. The fifth wave of enlargement in 2007 brought Bulgaria and Romania into the Union, and the sixth wave included Croatia in 2013. Iceland began its negotiations for membership in 2009 but requested that the negotiations be put on hold in 2015. Currently, five countries are considered official candidate countries—Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey—all of whom are on the path to accession. Two other countries—Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo—are also

considered potential candidate countries, meaning that they are receiving pre-accession technical assistance from the EU and are welcome to apply for membership when ready.

Despite these successes in enlargement, many EU citizens and policymakers alike have begun to experience “enlargement fatigue.” For these, the EU is simply large enough and does not need the added difficulties that come from bringing new members into the Union. Many point to 2004 as the turning point for enlargement fatigue as two significant events happened in that year. First, the “big bang” enlargement of the EU-10 ushered in the greatest number of new members ever into the Union. Next, the EU drafted and signed the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (TCE) in the fall of 2004. Although 18 states ratified the TCE, French voters and Dutch voters rejected the referenda to ratify the treaty in May and June 2005, which brought the ratification process to an end and signaled a major failure in multilateral negotiations. These two events—both that should have been seen as major successes—actually signified an unfortunate turning point for the EU.

Even though 2004 and 2005 marked a significant turning point in the EU, actual evidence of enlargement fatigue does not begin to show in Eurobarometer public opinion polls until a few years later (see Table 2). Between May 2005 and July 2009, attitudes in favor of enlargement and against enlargement remain steadily split at around 40% each. However, in July 2009, Eurobarometer results show a majority of EU citizens against enlargement for the first time at 45.55% against and 43.42% in favor. Since then, this trend of the majority of EU citizens being against any future enlargement has continued in every successive wave of Eurobarometer surveys through March 2018.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the UK was one of the EU member states with the most significant enlargement fatigue. Eurobarometer polls since 2004 show a steady decline in

support for enlargement among the UK general public, with numbers particularly low in the years immediately preceding the Brexit referendum (see Table 3). This fatigue combined with the Leave campaign's strategy to tie fears over immigration and xenophobia to EU enlargement policy shows more insight into why some in the UK were clearly against membership in the EU (Ker-Lindsal, 2018). Clearly, then, the EU public has expressed and continues to express its enlargement fatigue with significant consequences for the EU.

Enlargement fatigue is also clearly visible at the elite level. Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker famously announced at the start of his term in 2014 that there would be continued negotiations under his presidency but no new enlargements until after 2019 (European Commission, 2014; Alexe, 2015). For many current EU members, this promise of no new enlargements provided a necessary pause for the EU to focus on other pressing internal issues, such as the financial crisis or the migrant crisis. However, many candidate countries at the time saw this as a significant step back in their quest to become members of the EU. This sentiment was especially powerful in Turkey, where many young people began to question whether the EU had turned its back on them (Scalera, 2017). Still, candidate countries have pushed forward with negotiations believing that eventually this enlargement fatigue will meet its end.

Already, we have seen a shift in enlargement policy due to the pressures of the migrant crisis. In November 2015, a new "medium-term strategy" was launched that commits the EU to pursuing more steady progress in enlargement negotiations with candidate countries in the Balkans in exchange for their assistance with the migrant crisis (European Commission, 2016, p.1). In the 2016 *Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, the Commission notes that "the migration crisis has been one of the key issues on the political agenda" and that it continues to "demonstrate the strategic relevance of enlargement policy" in the Western Balkans region"

(European Commission, 2016, p.4). Thus, while enlargement fatigue remains an important reality at the public opinion level, the political importance of enlargement as a policy tool for the EU seems to be bringing a slight shift to opinions on enlargement at the elite level. Still, public opinion in current member states as reported by Eurobarometer surveys remains strongly against future enlargements. Whether or not public opinion will follow this softening seen in elite opinion not remains to be seen.

The primary lesson we can learn from enlargement fatigue and its consequences for EU policy in the last few years is that the EU has a difficult time “selling” its successes to the general public. Scholars remain convinced that the process of joining international organizations can have important benefits for new member states, such as allowing for important domestic reforms (see for example Scalera, 2017). Additionally, the membership process can be beneficial for existing member states of an international organization, because it allows the IO to extract concessions and screen new members (see for example Scalera, 2017; Kydd, 2001). However, there has been little evidence that these benefits to enlargement have been well communicated to the general public. Given the intensity of enlargement fatigue and its connection to the Leave campaign during the Brexit referendum, it is clear that the EU needs to reconsider its strategy for selling its successes to the general public.

The Upside of Brexit: Critical Focus on Prospects for Unity and Strength

The British referendum and eventual exit are without question low points for the European Union. For the first time in its history, a member state has rejected its membership in the Union. The future relationship between the UK and the EU is very much uncertain as decades of laws, practices, and values will have to be untangled. However, for those 27 that

remain in the EU—and the others seeking to join the EU—this point in history is a pivotal opportunity to bring about real changes that will further solidify and unify the EU.

EU leaders wasted no time responding to the Brexit referendum with disappointment in the outcome and calls for unity within the remaining 27 members of the Union. Jean-Claude Juncker, Commission President, made one of the most poignant statements of regret by saying: “I am saddened by this British vote and I make no secret of it. ... I would have liked the United Kingdom to stay forever by our side, with us. It has decided otherwise. We must accept the consequences” (Juncker, 2016). Many others within the EU responded with similar disappointment at the outcome of the referendum, but they were also quick to balance their sadness with a resolve for unity. In the same speech, Juncker also stated: “Our project goes on, and although the British vote may have slowed us down a little, we must continue our course towards the objectives we share with renewed ambition” (Juncker, 2016).

Similarly, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, remarked in his first press release after the vote: “Today, on behalf of the twenty-seven leaders I can say that we are determined to keep our unity as twenty-seven. For all of us, the Union is the framework for our common future” (Tusk, 2016a). These are powerful statements by two of the most important leaders in the European Union.

Along with these calls for unity also came an awareness that the EU needs to address its shortcomings and find solutions for several serious issues. Tusk noted after the European Council meeting in July 2016: “it is clear that too many people in Europe are unhappy with the current state of affairs, be it on the national or European level, and expect us to do better. The leaders recalled during our debate that for decades Europe has brought hope and that we have a responsibility to return to that” (Tusk, 2016b). In order to return to that old Europe, leaders

acknowledged the issues that must be addressed in the aftermath of Brexit. In a joint statement by all EU leaders, it was acknowledged that: “Together we will address our common challenges to generate growth, increase prosperity and ensure a safe and secure environment for our citizens” (Schulz, Tusk, Rutte, and Juncker, 2016). In his speech to the European Parliament, Juncker highlighted that the EU needs to address its social issues, find a new response to the economic crisis, focus on creating an energy union, and modernize the EU to prepare for the digital future (Juncker, 2016). These issues are not new to the EU—many have been on the table for years—but perhaps the shadow of Brexit will encourage more leaders to take these issues seriously and to find ways to compromise in order to bring about a solution.

Going forward, the EU should not lose sight of the other ways to motivate reform and renewal in the Union. Enlargement has long provided a powerful motivation for reform in the past as evidenced in the Single European Act of 1986 or the establishment of the Copenhagen Criteria in 1993. Today, five countries are considered official candidate countries—Albania, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey—and none have shown any significant signs of slowing down in their pursuit of membership in the EU since the Brexit referendum.

In fact, according to Eurobarometer results from November 2016 to March 2018, all countries believe that membership in the EU would be “a good thing” for their country (see Table 4). Only in the case of Turkey in November 2016 did “against” ever come out as the preferred position, and this was certainly complicated by Turkey’s own domestic instability and by the fact that Turkish membership was vilified during the Brexit campaign (Ker-Lindsay, 2018). Most encouraging is that three of the five countries—Albania, Montenegro, and Macedonia—remain in favor of membership in the EU at percentages well above 40%.

In the case of Macedonia, the government's enthusiasm for EU membership reached new heights in the summer of 2018 when the government proposed changing the country's name to end a long-standing feud with Greece. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia became an independent country, but Greece was strongly opposed to this new name, especially its shortened version of Macedonia. The Greek province of Macedonia was the home of Alexander the Great, and many Greeks believed that the choice of Macedonia as the country's name "implied territorial aspirations over a northern Greek region of the same name" (Kitsantonis, 2018). Consequently, Greece had promised to veto any attempt that Macedonia would make to join the EU or NATO.

On June 12, 2018, Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev announced the government's decision to change the country's name to Severna Makedonija or Republic of North Macedonia. He was quoted as saying: "We said 'yes' to Macedonia's future. And that future lies within EU and NATO..." (Kitsantonis, 2018). At the same press conference, the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said this decision "opens a window to solidarity, friendship, cooperation, prosperity and mutual growth" and committed to dropping Greece's objection to Macedonia's entry into the EU and NATO (Kitsantonis, 2018). Consequently, the Macedonian parliament has agreed to hold a referendum on the name change and membership bids in the EU and NATO on September 30, 2018 (Reuters Staff, 2018). It is too early to tell what the outcome of the referendum will be but, given high levels of public opinion in favor of EU membership as reported by the Eurobarometer, projections for an outcome favorable of EU membership look positive. In fact, the EU has such confidence in the outcome of the referendum that the EU has set a target date of next year to move forward with accession talks with Macedonia (Norma and Stamouli, 2018). Clearly, then, these candidate countries have not lost hope in the European

project, and in the case of Macedonia, some are making significant strides to show their commitment to the EU.

For the European Union, these efforts to move forward with accession on the part of the candidate countries should be a source of encouragement. Their enthusiasm for the EU might serve to highlight the positive attributes of the EU for current member states and encourage real reform where necessary. However, many questions still remain as to whether the EU elites can truly capitalize on this positive energy, especially without the UK acting as a strong voice in favor of enlargement. What is clear, though, is that the EU needs victories and enlargement is relatively low-hanging fruit.

Conclusions

Time and time again, the European Union has found a way to continue to move forward even in times of crisis. However, the last few decades have been particularly challenging for the EU as it has faced so many diverse crises. Now, the realities of Brexit have forced the EU to fully admit its shortcomings and to recognize that it must resolve these crises or risk further fractures in its membership. Calls for solidarity and unity have come from many different directions since the British referendum in 2016, but the EU will need something tangible to maintain the momentum of reform. By relying on the historical success of enlargement and the continued enthusiasm of candidate countries, the EU might find a viable catalyst for transformation and lasting solidarity.

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Table 1

United Kingdom Referendum Issues from 2016 and 1975

Reason to question membership in the European Union	British Referendum 2016 – From Vote Leave Campaign (www.voteleavetakecontrol.org)	British Referendum 1975 – From “Why Britain Should Not Go into Europe” EU Archives IMG 4825
1. Unequal budget contributions to the European Union strain the UK’s domestic economy	“We will be able to save £350 million a week. We can spend our money on our priorities like the NHS, schools, and housing.”	“Britain’s balance of payments, which every family has had to suffer to bolster, will be ‘knocked for Six.’ We should have to pay hundreds of millions—the lowest, <i>Government</i> estimate is £ 200 millions a year—for the privilege of propping up Europe and supporting France’s old-fashioned farmers.”
2. UK lawmakers are overruled by EU lawmakers and courts on many issues	“We’ll be in charge of our own borders. In a world with so many new threats, it’s safer to control our own borders and decide for ourselves who can come into this country, not be overruled by EU judges.”	“Our greatness and prosperity have always come from the wide world. We would be throwing away our history with our freedom. For Britain no longer would be independent. The Queen would be a cipher and our courts and Parliament over-ruled from Europe.”
3. UK national identity must be preserved in the face of many outside influences	“We can control immigration. A fairer system which welcomes people to the UK based on the skills they have, not the passport they hold.”	“The British have reason to distrust the Germans and to have no reliance on the moral courage of the French and Italians. Every incursion we have ever made into Europe has meant only young men killed.”
4. The UK’s global trade opportunities will be hindered by EU, especially with partners like Australia and New Zealand	“We’ll be free to trade with the whole world. The EU stops us signing our own trade deals with key allies like Australia or New Zealand, and growing economies like India, China or Brazil. We’ll be free to seize new opportunities which means more jobs.”	“There is no great market to be tapped—it is supplied already. And European growth is declining. ... We should lose the markets of Australia, New Zealand and Canada—the big <i>growing</i> markets of the future.”
5. The UK must protect its sovereign right to make domestic and international laws in accordance with democratic principles	“We can make our own laws. Our laws should be made by people we can elect and kick out—that’s more democratic.”	“The British people have never been allowed to vote on the biggest decision of their lifetime—a taste of alien dictatorship in a country which taught the world democracy.”

Table 2 – EU Public Opinion on Enlargement

“What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it. Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years.”

Date	For	Against	DK - Don't know
10/2004	52.62 %	35.36 %	12.02 %
05/2005	49.83 %	37.88 %	12.29 %
03/2006	43.31 %	43.39 %	13.29 %
09/2006	44.44 %	43.50 %	12.06 %
04/2007	47.27 %	40.72 %	12.01 %
09/2007	43.88 %	42.48 %	13.64 %
03/2008	45.79 %	40.86 %	13.35 %
10/2008	43.81 %	43.06 %	13.13 %
06/2009	43.42 %	45.55 %	11.03 %
05/2010	39.84 %	47.79 %	12.37 %
11/2010	43.14 %	44.92 %	11.94 %
05/2011	42.02 %	47.00 %	10.98 %
11/2011	36.18 %	52.51 %	11.31 %
05/2012	35.79 %	53.02 %	11.19 %
11/2012	37.96 %	51.81 %	10.22 %
05/2013	37.09 %	52.64 %	10.27 %
11/2013	37.11 %	52.23 %	10.67 %
05/2014	36.87 %	49.11 %	14.02 %
11/2014	39.26 %	48.31 %	12.42 %
05/2015	39.32 %	48.76 %	11.92 %
11/2015	37.71 %	50.75 %	11.54 %
05/2016	36.82 %	51.98 %	11.20 %
11/2016	38.76 %	50.80 %	10.43 %
05/2017	39.69 %	49.26 %	11.05 %
11/2017	42.06%	47.21%	10.73%
03/2018	43.60%	46.11%	10.29%

Table 3 – United Kingdom Public Opinion on Enlargement

What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it.

Further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years

Date	For	Against	DK - Don't know
05/2015	36.40 %	51.42 %	12.18 %
11/2015	40.21 %	47.91 %	11.88 %
05/2016	35.95 %	53.62 %	10.43 %
11/2016	38.64 %	44.90 %	16.46 %
05/2017	35.82 %	42.49 %	21.68 %
11/2017	44.53 %	41.53 %	13.94 %
03/2018	41.70 %	42.00 %	16.29 %

Table 4

Public Opinion on Enlargement within Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries, 2016-2018

“Generally speaking, do you think that (your/our country’s) membership of the EU would be...?”

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>A good thing</i>	<i>A bad thing</i>	<i>Neither</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
<i>Albania</i>	May 2016	79.3%	3.9%	14.1%	2.7%
<i>Albania</i>	November 2016	83.6%	2.9%	12.5%	1.1%
<i>Albania</i>	May 2017	82.2%	2.1%	15.2%	0.46%
<i>Albania</i>	November 2017	87.9%	3.4%	8.7%	0%
<i>Albania</i>	March 2018	90.1%	2.2%	7.3%	0.2%
<i>Montenegro</i>	May 2016	52.98%	11.32%	29.75%	5.95%
<i>Montenegro</i>	November 2016	41.43%	12.43%	35.59%	10.55%
<i>Montenegro</i>	May 2017	43.35%	19.65%	33.91%	3.08%
<i>Montenegro</i>	November 2017	43.05%	18.05%	33.46%	5.45%
<i>Montenegro</i>	March 2018	56.05%	15.93%	25.72%	2.30%
<i>FYR Macedonia</i>	May 2016	53.00%	13.98%	29.36%	3.66%
<i>FYR Macedonia</i>	November 2016	56.67%	14.38%	26.30%	2.65%
<i>FYR Macedonia</i>	May 2017	56.83%	14.99%	26.01%	2.17%
<i>FYR Macedonia</i>	November 2017	59.10%	15.40%	24.35%	1.15%
<i>FYR Macedonia</i>	March 2018	51.71%	19.05%	28.29%	0.95%
<i>Serbia</i>	May 2016	38.82%	29.56%	24.93%	6.90%
<i>Serbia</i>	November 2016	32.20%	30.93%	31.41%	5.46%
<i>Serbia</i>	May 2017	37.77%	28.43%	29.03%	4.77%
<i>Serbia</i>	November 2017	43.17%	26.63%	25.94%	4.26%
<i>Serbia</i>	March 2018	40.04%	25.12%	29.24%	5.59%
<i>Turkey</i>	May 2016	39.47%	26.02%	25.93%	8.58%
<i>Turkey</i>	November 2016	28.08%	39.23%	24.90%	7.79%
<i>Turkey</i>	May 2017	41.33%	25.10%	30.98%	2.59%
<i>Turkey</i>	November 2017	46.61%	24.00%	25.10%	4.28%
<i>Turkey</i>	March 2018	28.88%	28.69%	34.66%	7.77%