

The Idea of a European Union in the Interwar Period

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Abstract

The study of the political history of European construction is particularly important to explain the context in which the first institutional nuclei of European integration appeared. This paper identifies the main contributions from the interwar period to the project of a united Europe and their role in defining the process of creating the future European Union. The paper analyzes two main federalist projects namely "Pan-Europe" and "Briand initiative", looking at the similarities between them and at the elements prefigured by the two Europeanists of the federalist movement which are found in the current political-institutional configuration of the European Union. I conclude that Coudenhove-Kalergi and Aristide Briand's proposals still represents, after 90 years since their drafting, core principles and values we recognise today in the European Union of 2020.

Keywords: European Union, European idea, federalist movement, Pan-Europe, interwar Europe

1. Introduction

The interwar period has made a remarkable contribution to the development of the European idea, even though the global conflagration led by totalitarian ideologies was being prepared. Never before has the unity of Europe been discussed so much, the danger of the outbreak of a second European conflagration making the idea of unity and cooperation seem strictly necessary.

In the context in which today, after almost 70 years since the emergence of the first communities that would extend European cooperation from economic to political, the European Union still presents some identity issues that make it appear as a "hybrid" in international relations, its example illustrates how states with a history and a common culture, the European one, choose to cooperate. Before becoming a true political objective, the idea of unifying Europe was only a dream of philosophers and visionaries. If Victor Hugo advanced the idea of the "United States of Europe", being inspired by humanist ideals, the Austrian count Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi regarded the interwar period as a new form of hope, wanting to fulfill this ideal.

Coudenhove-Kalergi's successor and collaborator will be none other than the illustrious Aristide Briand with his so-called proposal "Briand Initiative" which was considered to be the highest point of the movement for the unity of Europe in the interwar period, its plan of European Union under federal model being presented to the member states of the League of Nations.

A first question we can focus on is: how did the federalist movements of the interwar period influence the onset and institutional evolution of European construction? In the context in which this period represented for the ideal of European unity the highest point, to which many personalities and political leaders joined, and the states seemed to really want to maintain the peace and prosperity of Europe, why their initiatives were doomed to failure?

In the process of deciphering this evolution, another question arises, namely: which elements prefigured by the Europeanists of the federalist movement are found in the current political-institutional configuration of the European Union? ; we will keep in mind that the projects enunciated during the interwar period were highlighted mainly due to the complexity and the prophetic character ascertained after the start of the second world conflagration.

The paper is structured in three sections. The first presents the context of the epoch in order to understand the reasoning of the two plans, as well as the elements that have slowed the beginning of the European construction. In the second section I perform an analysis of the two models: Pan-Europe vs. European Federal Union, led to the identification of the vision that could best be folded for interwar Europe. Although the two initiatives are based on the same ideal, under the same federalist current, there are some differences that tend to bring political weight, or, on the contrary, ready to reach

their goal through certain economic or social concessions. The third section, raise the issue as to whether some of the elements of the interwar projects are present at the level of the current European institutions and policies, and if so, which ones.

In the elaboration of the paper I used as a working method the descriptive method, being a historical subject whose development and purpose is known, the analytical method and the comparative method. In order to understand the factors and the reasons that determined the events to take place in this way, the analytical method will be used in examining the details, especially regarding the authors' manifest documents which are primary sources. The comparative method was used to identify the different views of the two analyzed federal authors as well as to compare the European construction plans and the present European Union of 2020.

2. Context and Considerations

The idea of a united Europe or, as it is known, the "European idea" is not specific to the 20th century, the permanent desire to unify and generate a homogeneous political thought, capable of ensuring peace, finds its roots in the many projects that have happened throughout history, the European continent being the one that has generated the most important artistic, literary, common religious movements, democratic ideals, but Europe is the one that has also generated the multitude of wars and divisions (Bărbulescu, 2008: 33).

The trauma of the years 1914-1918 inspired the first serious movements of European integration and paved the way for the unionist desire of the interwar period, a period when at the level of the intellectual and political elites the ideal of "European Ideas" was resumed, the moment being marked by numerous European associations that were broadcasting federalist theses.

The instability of Europe after the "great war" would not only be reflected politically, but also economically. Europe's economy was devastated, with the costs of the war approaching \$ 200 billion in 1914 used for military purposes and another \$ 150 billion in material damage (Crouzet, 2001: 172). The peace of 1919 is considered by John Maynard Keynes as "morally detestable, politically stupid and economic nonsense", the peace signatories paying too little attention to European economic problems, exacerbating their own interests contrary to the elaboration of a reconstruction program (Campbell, 2011: 170). However, the period between 1924 and 1929 may be considered "prosperity", but the rising trend was misleading: in 1929 industrial production was 30% over 1913 while the United States of America (US) recorded an increase of 80%. Also, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita reached a rate of 2.8 percentage points between 1922 and 1929, but in the last year it was only 6 percentage points above the level of 1913, this fact highlighting the precarious situation of the economy (Crouzet, 2001: 173).

Starting with 1929 the place of the period of slight economic growth is taken by the crisis and the depreciation. The American economic boom due to the increase of the productivity - the buyers being encouraged to purchase goods on credit and banks were being encourage to lend - brought huge profits, the stock market reaching a very high level. But at the slightest sign of pressure from banks and lack of confidence, everything was about to collapse (Campbell, 2011: 170). This was the case on the "Black Tuesday" of October 24, 1929 when the Wall Street stock market went into free fall. Europe was not immediately affected, but only in 1931 did the signs of the crisis begin to be felt on the old continent, with the massive withdrawal of US capital from European banks, Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom being the first to hit this crisis (Campbell, 2011: 172).

In June 1933, a World Economic Conference was held in London, at which the US was represented by Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who will convey the message to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, insisting that his main concern should be monetary exchange, and in January 1934, with the adoption of "Johnson law", even private loans to countries that had not paid their war debts were forbidden, so there was no common solution, each country taking its own remedial measures (Campbell, 2011: 173). This led to the imposition of controls on economic exchanges in order to disrupt the world market, the best example being the solution adopted by Germany and the Central European or Balkan countries. Thus, the German hegemony begins to take shape, since the Balkan and central countries could not repatriate the gains from the sale on the German market, having to buy German consumer goods, this policy becoming the main way of access for the Nazis at the peaks of power (Crouzet, 2001: 173).

Count Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi was the one who launched the initiative of a federal Europe through the "Pan-European Manifesto" of 1923, and then through the Pan-Europe book that analyzed in depth the situation of the continent, considered to be the most important work demanding immediate unification of Europe in an attempt to save it from the imminent danger it was facing: World War II. He argued that the only way to regain Europe's position, declining and risking being crushed between the rising powers, the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), was the formation of Pan-Europe. In this way, not only peace but also economic recovery could be ensured (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1923).

His vision of Europe was centered around a federal constitution, as Rosamond (2000: 21) believes, being motivated by two main perceptions: in a positive sense, Europe was in many ways a natural entity that could become a global force, if it succeeded in overcoming nationalist political obstacles, and on the other hand, in a rather negative view, stated that in the absence of fundamental changes in the policy of organizing Europe the continent would be divided by a bloody nationalist conflict. The finality of Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi's idea is known and is due to the catastrophic context before the second world conflagration.

Also during the interwar period, the idea of a European Union goes from the level of the intellectual elites, such as Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi, to notable political elites such as the French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand. Briand, on behalf of the French government, elaborates in 1930 the famous "Memorandum on the organization of a European federal union regime", also known as "Memorandum of the French government" presented at the Assembly of the League of Nations on May 1st, and sent the the later to the European chancellors (Rosamond, 2000: 21). The document proposed the coordination of the European states under the auspices of the League of Nations through the creation of a "European Conference" which was to have a Standing Political Committee and a Secretariat. Certainly, it was a political project to create a federation based on the idea of "union", and not just "unity", but also on the principle of respecting national sovereignty, which all states remembered, and the independence of states (Briand, 1930: 10). The governments had political responsibility for the economic dimension of the respective "European Union" project, which was based on the approximation of the economies of the European states.

The most favorable response came from Spain, and the most vehement opposition from the United Kingdom, because of its economic policy that revolves around the colonies, and from the Soviet Union - the project of "European Union" being considered by Joseph V. Stalin as a war machine against the USSR. Unfortunately, the economic crisis of the 1930s and the emergence of totalitarian regimes ultimately led to the failure of what may be called the "Briand Plan", with devastating consequences for Europe. The details of Aristide Briand's plan, and the similarities with what will be, after more than 60 years, the European Union of the Treaty of Maastricht or that of the Treaty of Lisbon, will be later presented .

Although the federalists' program and the spiritual revolution that it symbolized were abandoned and effectively defeated by the conservative restoration of the post-war years, the federal idea did not disappear with it. Arguments that nationalism and nationalist rivalries had discredited the independent state as the foundation of political organization and international order continued in the 1940s and were most forcefully expressed in the political vision of the Italian federalist Altiero Spinelli. Urwin (2010: 17) states that for several reasons the siren voices of federalism were heard by a larger audience than had been the case in the interwar period, so enabling the possibility and dream of union to survive as an item on the European political agenda.

The division of Europe between East and West after 1945 fuelled alarm in Wester Europe about its own fragile defences in the light of what it feared were the territorial ambitions of the USSR. When the European integration began, there has been a tendency, especially among those strongly committed to a federal Europe, to see development moving, if not smoothly, then nevertheless inexorably along a single plane towards a predetermined goal (Urwin, 2010: 17).

The collapse of Spinelli's strategy, built around a Parliamentary Assembly which was given an important role in the decision making, was considered by some authors to be the end of the federalist phase in the political development of the Community, the so-called "constitutional method" being rejected and considered unrealistic and impractical (Burgess, 1992: 33).

With the abandonment of Altiero Spinelli's strategy, the steps of European integration are heading towards Jean Monnet's approach. Thereby the failure of political integration changed the efforts towards the economic integration supported by Monnet. Heaving a rich experience as a negotiator, Monnet suggested an ambitious plan to French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. His idea was to place the coal and steel market under an independent authority, creating thus a common sphere of interests between Germany and France (Cărauşan, 2012: 129).

By the declaration of his Foreign Minister, France agreed that the production of coal and steel of the two countries would be administered by a supranational authority. On May 9, 1950, Robert Schuman, through his famous speech conceived and elaborated by Jean Monnet, triggered the process of European integration that was set with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).

In this way, the premises of a cooperation between old enemies were offered, at the same time being settled "The Europe of the six" - the first European organization of a federal type, independent of the governments of the Member States and initiating a totally new process in the international relations of common exercise of sovereignty (Cărauşan, 2012: 129).

For some authors Jean Monnet was considered to be a pragmatic neofunctionalist-federalist, being rather interested in an incremental integration that will start from less sensitive economic sectors (Ion, 2013: 35). However, they note both the difficulty to ascribe the full paternity of the community method to Jean Monnet, as well as that of establishing its theoretical nature accurately. The hybrid between neofunctionalism and federalism is, from their point of view, inadequate (Ion 2013, p.42).

As we already know today, the story of integration was complex, with numerous subplots, strategies, and different ambitions. But, as advocated by the federalists and other scholars (Urwin, 2010: 17), the role of ideas and beliefs has always been central to the progress of European integration.

3. European Projects for Unity And Union in the Interwar Period

3.1 Pan-european Manifesto by Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi

The Pan-European manifesto is, chronologically speaking, the first concrete manifestation of the historical reconciliation of the European nations, from the interwar period, which offered coherent solutions for their unification in a stable political structure based on the community of values and interests, vision which Kalergi details through Pan-Europe, published in Vienna in 1923. By creating United States of Europe, Kalergi proposed a detailed program that would restore Europe's former brilliance, competitive ability in global economic competition and not least and perhaps most importantly, endowment with institutions and alliances capable of preventing a new war.

Starting from two problems that Kalergi considers important, the social one represented by the class confrontation and the "European problem" caused by the confrontation between the European states, it launches the following essential question meant to help raise public awareness of the danger that could be generated by those problems: "In the state of economic and political division in which it is, can Europe defend its peace and independence from the great expanding extra-European powers? or will it be necessary, in order to save its own existence, to organize itself into a federation of states?" (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 11). The answer to this question, in the author's opinion, is solely: Pan Europe. Europe, which had almost completely lost its self-confidence after the First World War, had to help itself, uniting its goals and interests, thus constituting a political-military union.

This politico-military union would bring Europe back to the "great powers" and regain the capacity for action in the realm of world politics, a capacity lost with the end of the First World War when from a dominant position, Europe was pushed defensively: on the military side being threatened by the Russian invasion, and economically, by American competition, being torn apart by national and social conflicts, hard hit by its demographic and industrial potential, falling prey to economic and monetary chaos (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 18).

As for the "great powers" system, this is considered to be a new construction because the federations of nations appear. Thus, among the new system are states such as Russia - a federation that includes Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Tatars, etc., the British Empire - a union of people consisting of Anglo-Saxons, Irish, Franco-Canadians, Buri, Arabs., Indians, etc., Pan-America - a union comprising Anglo-Americans, Spaniards, Portuguese, blacks, Indians, etc., while in Europe a reverse process was taking place: the proposal for freedom was the priority, considering that the smallest nations were claiming their right to full sovereignty regardless of their ability to exist and to resist competition (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 21). These rising powers will "swallow" European peoples if they, once released, are not united for common goals. Thus, Europe must find a compromise between the desire for freedom and the need for organization, a compromise that will lead inward to a growing autonomy, and abroad to an increasingly advanced federalization.

The situation of Europe in the world is considered by Kalergi (1926: 24) to be unique, causing a "constant anxiety" in the international sphere, especially in those areas where peace reigns. The idea highlighted is at first sight scandalous: "as a political notion, Europe does not exist", but the context in which it is, namely the chaos created between states and peoples, makes this part of the world look like a "barrel of international conflict powder", a retort of the future world conflagrations. The historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle (2004: 30) is also of the same opinion, who rightly notes that during the war there was no longer Europe: "*De 1914 à 1918 il n'y a plus l'Europe*", emphasizing the need to revive Europe with the rebirth of the "European idea".

The "European issue" as well as the "European discord" will find its solution, says Kalergi (1926: 24), only through the unification of its people, this unification being fulfilled either voluntarily or by forming a Pan-European federation.

Although Europe had lost its world hegemony, it had not yet lost its independence, culture, positive history, in a word: the future. Kalergi (1926: 24) believed that an agreement reached at the right time would also allow Europe to participate, as the fifth equal partner in rights, in the division of spheres of influence, while divided, diminished in its political influence, it would eventually become bankrupt, "Plagued by misery and indebtedness", the victim of a Russian invasion that would fall prey. Thus, in a speech to the Chatham House in June 1931, Richard von

Coudenhove-Kalergi points out that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of nationalism is still present in the perception of Europe, although the attempt to diminish this manifestation is not sufficient for the creation of a universal real state (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1931: 638). He considers that between the period of "national" humanity and the period that will one day lead to the organization of the whole world in a federation of states, it must go through a "continental" period, a period in which traditional patriotism will change into a "patriotism for all areas of the world".

Among the exact reasons for Kalergi's initiative, which calls for the immediate cooperation of Europeans, three are shown to be the most important: the first, and perhaps most important, was the prevention of another war between the European nations; the second was the prevention of economic ruin; and the third reason was to prevent Europe from a Bolshevik invasion and from the danger posed by communist ideology.

Unfortunately for the nations involved in the Second World War, Kalergi's prediction came true, Europe being thrown again, after only about 20 years of relative peace, in a new world confrontation, and this time Germany being the one which trigger the conflagration. Again, Count Kalergi, with catastrophic precision, would foresee how the resentments between France and Germany would be a catalyst for what would be considered the biggest and most disastrous war: "From the terrible crisis in which France and Germany is currently struggling they will go out either allies and Europeans, or devour each other; they will bleed at the same time in a fierce clash" (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 105). Kalergi (1926: 85) considered that "world war only weakened Europe, a future conflagration would destroy it!", a claim supported by the reality of those times - most Central and Eastern European states were diplomatically and militarily preparing for war, hatred and envy being the greatest motivations that urged political leaders; the same political leaders who directed their thinking to the past, rather than to the future, considering that it is more convenient to project future events from the past without making any changes, than to project things that have not happened so far.

To eliminate European economic chaos, unemployment, social unrest and social disorder, the whole of Europe had to fulfill, in full understanding, the following future tasks: the reconstruction of the destroyed areas, the lifting of the morale of the workforce, the definitive settlement of the damages and the debts of war, the recognition of the Russian regime and the support of Russia's rebirth, and in agreement with it, the promotion of a disarmament program and the creation of the pan-European customs union, which will rebuild trade links destroyed by the war (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 98).

The only solution that seemed to represent the rescue of the continent was to ensure long-lasting peace. This was obvious because as long as each state feels threatened by its neighbors, an atmosphere conducive to the development of a prosperous and powerful economy cannot be established. Kalergi (1926: 99) considered that the greater the shortcomings and misery, the more people will recognize the need for economic policy and will willingly relinquish some of their sovereignty to save themselves from hunger, bankruptcy and war. Thus, if reason is not required, Pan-Europe would be created out of necessity, becoming a community of peace, through a broad perspective construction, on a democratic-federal basis.

This construction was to be carried out in stages, the first step from the European anarchy to the pan-European organization being the convening by one or more governments of a pan-European conference. The start of this initiative will have aroused an enthusiastic echo on the continent, and the basis of the approach could have started from Switzerland - whose federative structure was considered a model for Pan-Europe, by the Small Entente - who had engaged mediators in numerous European crisis outbreaks, being strongly interested in European federalization, or by France - in its capacity as a strong European force, this approach constituting for her a prestigious gain, without damaging her position (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1931: 644). The program of this conference had to be precisely outlined and the territorial issues remained out of the discussion, and this would be composed of different committees on the issue of the arbitration court, the guarantees, the disarmament, the minorities, the transport, the finances, the customs regime, the compensation and culture.

The second step was the conclusion of the treaty of arbitration and guarantee between the democratic states of the European continent. This step was to be prepared by each state individually, by concluding separate arbitration treaties, with other European states (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 134).

The third step towards the establishment of Pan-Europe is the creation of a pan-European Customs Union, which would make Europe a unitary economic area. This restructuring of the European economy had to be done gradually but the demolition of customs borders was an immediate objective (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1931: 135). On the other hand, the crowning of all the European endeavors was the constitution of the United States of Europe, following the model of the North American continent, to be made a pan-European constitution, thus Pan-Europe being able to appear to the other continents and world powers as a state union; within the federation each state having maximum freedom. Considering the parliament would have the legislative power, Pan-Europe was to have two parliamentary chambers: the people's chamber and the member states's chamber. In Kalergi's vision (1931: 135) the people's chamber would have been made

up of 300 deputies, one each for one million Europeans, and the member states's chamber of 26 representatives of the 26 European governments (USSR and the British Empire not included).

Thus, through this federative alliance, it was considered that the Pan-European states had more to gain than to lose, among the essential advantages being: the security of preventing an inter-European war, the neutrality of Europe against world conflicts, the protection against an invasion of "red" or "white" Russia, the possibility of disarmament, the ability to sustain competition with the Americans and the British, and, for a long-term vision, with the Far East and Russian industries (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 136).

On the other hand, in the case of the continuation of the European policy of the respective moment, Kalergi (1926: 136) envisaged the following consequences: a new European war, with the destruction to the foundations and depopulation of the continent, the permanent interference, political and military, of the extra-European powers in the European internal affairs, an invasion and the installation of a "red" dictatorship, successive arms races that will lead to financial collapse, and the inability to sustain competition with the Anglo-Saxon nations which will lead to bankruptcy and economic enslavement.

The symbol under which the Europeans were to unite was the cross of the sun, a red cross against the background of a golden sun - the symbol of humanity and reason. "The red cross of the medieval crusades is the oldest symbol of the European supranational community. Today it is the symbol of international humanity. The sun also represents the European spirit that illuminates the whole world. Hellenism and Christianity - the cross of Christ on the sun of Apollo, are the perennial foundations of European culture" (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 151). Another symbol to identify Pan-Europe was its motto, Kalergi appealing to a sentence from St. Augustine: "In necesis unitas - in dubiis libertas - in omnibus caritas". Kalergi understood that unity must be found in necessary facts, freedom in questionable cases, and compassion must be found in all things, Pan-Europe being a necessary construction, citizens having the opportunity to join the formation voluntarily, and compassion and understanding for every people within the federation would be paramount.

Among the state officials who received important calls from Kalergi are the former President of Czechoslovakia, Thomas Masaryk, Austrian Federal Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, President of the Reich Paul Löbe, Konrad Adenauer, at that time General Mayor of Cologne, French Ministers Aristide Briand, Louis Loucheur and Paul Boncour, like many others in most European countries. Of these the most vocal and the one who tried to carry on the legacy built by Kalergi was undoubtedly Aristide Briand, who would be eleven times prime minister and, almost permanently, France's foreign minister, who was to be presenting, at Kalergi's request, a concrete proposal for the creation of a European Union.

3.2 Aristide Briand's plan: European Federal Union

The highest point of the movement for the unity of Europe in the interwar period was the initiative of Aristide Briand for the European Union. It seemed that, for the first time, it was moving from the field of theory to that of practice, the unity of Europe becoming for many centuries from a cultural theme to a political theme. Having a rich diplomatic and political career behind him, Briand advocated, but without success, the Franco-German reconciliation, being called "the apostle of peace" and on the occasion of his appointment as head of government in 1929, he included in the governing program the intention of "to achieve the United States of Europe" (Ștefănescu, 2007: 71).

Like Kalergi, Briand (1930: 10) sees it necessary to realize the "European idea", considering the lack of cohesion the most serious obstacle to the development and efficiency of the political, economic or legal institution. It proposes a project that seeks: the search for a form of European cooperation in collaboration with the League of Nations, but which does not harm the authority of the latter, but instead strengthens it, preserving universal peace, dispersing military force, the possibility of expanding economic markets, and trying intensification and improvement of industrial production. This economic approach was precisely to preserve the sovereignty of the states, specifying that under no circumstances does the institution of a federal union affect the sovereign rights, the Member States retaining their full independence, this Union being built around free trade and customs union.

On September 5th 1929, Briand presented his plan for the organization of Europe to the delegates of the 27 European states members of the League of Nations in Geneva. It was not an ambitious plan: to make it achievable, the author sought modest, acceptable formulas, saying that "I have in recent years joined propaganda in favor of an idea that has been described as generous, to avoid, probably, to be called reckless" (Ștefănescu, 2007: 70).

The memorandum of the French government "on the organization of a federal European union" emphasized its need from the perspective of a sense of collective responsibility in the face of the danger that threatens European countries from a political, economic and social point of view. This need to establish a permanent regime of solidarity for a rational organization of Europe would result in improving the living conditions of Europeans and would guarantee security, based on de facto solidarity. It shows how the formula of European cooperation in alliance with the League of

Nations does not seek to weaken the latter's authority, nor to form a European group with different objectives, but to harmonize European interests under the control and in the spirit of the Society, through integration into its universal system of a geographically limited but effective system (Briand, 1930: 11).

Briand (1930: 11) thought that the realization of the European federative system related to the League of Nations would have been an element of progress of its activity, benefiting from the Union and the non-European nations, although, the policy of a European Union that wanted to be achieved through the cooperation of the governments of the European nations, implies practically a conception contrary to those presented in most cases, the creation of a customs union would abolish the internal borders in order to strengthen the external borders, thus constituting an instrument for fighting against the countries outside Europe.

In the beginning of the memorandum of the French government it was stated that "Europe is a human continent", a splendid manifestation of will and thought, it is the society of the European peoples, which on ancient and Christian bases, created a civilization, the glory of the human races. It was also shown that the borders of the European states, covering 20,000 km, are a hindrance to industry and economic cooperation (Briand, 1930: 11).

Because in the meantime the great economic crisis had started, the memorandum changed the focus from the economic to the political aspects, insisting on respecting the sovereignty already mentioned earlier; a political domination from the big states being impossible to imagine considering the connection with the League of Nations, in which two principles are clearly highlighted: sovereignty and respect for equal rights of states.

In the second part (*Nécessité d'un mécanisme propre assuré à la Union Européenne*) the memorandum outlined Briand's plan in the form of questions to European governments. The first question was: "Is it necessary to make a general pact to consecrate the principle of moral unity and solidarity that was established between the European states?" (Briand, 1930: 13). It was intended that by signing a treaty between the governments of the European states, members of the League of Nations, the objective should be clearly stated to the association in the collective service of the European pacifist organization, the signatory governments committing themselves to be in constant contact by organizing regular or extraordinary meetings, to examine the problems of European interest faced by the states and the citizens.

The second question concerned the need for an institutional framework of the future Union, observing how the political level is reached. In this part it was presented as necessary a representative and responsible body that would take the form of a regular meeting called the "European Conference" (Briand, 1930: 14). This body was to be composed of representatives of all European governments that were members of the League of Nations, the conference being the leading forum of the European Union, in coordination with the League of Nations. Also, we can observe that in order to avoid any predominance in favor of one European state over another, the rotation of the presidents of the European Conference, which were to be elected annually, was specified.

Another necessary body, this time an executive one, was to be the "Standing Political Committee", composed only of a certain number of members of the European Conference, which would in practice act as the study body and, at the same time, the instrument of the European Union; their meetings to be held in Geneva. As in the case of the European Conference, the presidency of the Political Committee was to be rotated in order to avoid any particular predominance. The secretariat of the Union to be set up was to ensure the implementation of the administrative instructions given by the Chairman of the Conference or Committee, the connection between the signatory governments of the pact (the treaty), the notice convening of the bodies' work and the necessary preparation for discussions, as well as the recording and notification of their resolutions.

The most complex part of the memorandum concerned the concrete aspects that had to be considered in order to determine the essential directions that were to be put into practice through the elaboration of the European organizing program. It mentions the subordination of the economic problem to the political one, the economic progress being strictly determined by the security guarantee, this problem comprising aspects related to the common market, the progressive decrease of the customs tariffs, large public works, all under a common organic structure. However, certain guarantees are maintained against the weaker nations regarding the risk of political domination that can result from an industrial domination of the big states, true reconciliation and trust between the people being a basic pillar. Even so, it will be necessary, says Briand (1930: 16), for a strong sense of necessity to intervene politically in favor of the community, to impose on the members of the community, the sincere conception of a liberal tariff policy.

European political cooperation had to be directed around something considered essential: a federation based on the idea of "union" and not necessarily of "unity" - that is, a federation quite elastic in order to respect the national independence and sovereignty of each state, while solidarity is collectively guaranteed. This vision would have to be considered modest since it was not ideal for the creation of a European government, but the realization of the administrative bodies that would work, as we have shown, through the existing governments (Haas, 1948: 548).

The memorandum was sent to the 27 states on May 1, 1930, with the request to respond by July 15, encouraging governments to make comments and suggestions. Briand expressed his firm belief that the responses of the national governments will be in line with the ideals and aspirations of the European conscience, forming the permanent element of reconciliation and the establishment of the embryo of federal organization - the sustainable framework of this European cooperation (Briand, 1930: 20). This moment was considered decisive, with Europe having the opportunity not to repeat the mistakes of the past, being responsible for its own destiny. "S'unir pour vivre et prospérer" - under this thought, Aristide Briand concludes his document, once again appealing to the responsibility of the political leaders, those who would take the decision to throw Europe again in a disaster that had to overcome, from all points of view, the previous war.

The answers sent by the European governments highlight the contrast between the Europeanist vision of the Briand plan (with all its hesitations and prudence) and the nationalist reservations, still prevalent in Europe. Duroselle (2004: 37) notes that only two states have fully accepted the Briand project and another three have received it with detailed reservations. The remaining 22 states, including Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, raised significant objections. Duroselle (2004: 37) also notes that most of the answers can be interpreted as a "polite refusal" and draws this drastic conclusion: "when we think about the origins of World War II, we cannot help but regret the blindness of European politicians in 1930".

The main objections presented by the majority of states were published by the French government in a White Paper and is summarized as follows: 1) the insistence on maintaining absolute sovereignty; 2) the idea that the European organization would affect the League of Nations and its general framework would be preferable to the European one; 3) the structure, considered too cumbersome, to the future Union was criticized; 4) objections were raised regarding the priority of the political agenda over the economic one; 5) it demanded the extension of the European organization to states that were not then members of the League of Nations, first of all the USSR and Turkey; 6) the non-European responsibilities of some states were mentioned (Ștefănescu, 2007: 71).

In September 1930 a second European Conference was opened in Geneva, with the purpose of discussing the measures necessary to continue the road to the European Union. A rather tense debate followed, noting the obstructionist position of the United Kingdom and Briand's intervention, which drew attention to the fact that he conceived the plan when "the fate of European civilization was hard to come by and if the European nations do not realize this serious situation now, they could wake up to the impossibility of remedying it" (Ștefănescu, 2007: 72). The conference, however, ends with a modest result: the adoption of the resolution expressing the wish of the states to close the collaboration between them and the decision to demand that the European Union issue be included on the agenda of the 11th session of the Assembly, which opened under the presidency of Romanian diplomat Nicolae Titulescu.

The causes of the failure of the Briand initiative for the unification of Europe are numerous and full of historical lessons. A first cause being the general situation on the continent, at that time the economic crisis called for unilateral measures of political selfishness, straining relations between states through protectionism. European politicians at that same time had neither the lucidity nor the authority to act with determination and energy (Campbell, 2011: 172). The death of German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann in 1929 and Aristide Briand in 1932 were strongly and negatively felt for the European project. But the most tragic, brutal and sure element for the failure of Europe's generous peaceful organization project was Hitler's coming to power in January 1933. Europe, and with it the whole world, were heading for a new catastrophe that was about to bears the name: World War II.

4. European Union: Interwar Inspirations

The European construction built in the 1950s of the last century represented the efforts of the political and intellectual elites engaged in the stability of the European continent, which had been destroyed for so many centuries by the disagreements between the component states. From the same principle, of maintaining peace between the "brothers" of Europe, the ideas created in the interwar period emphasized the need for a solid cooperation that would bring Europe back to the peak of prosperity, regaining its cultural, political and economic hegemony.

The federalist movement, represented most vocal by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, proposed that Pan-Europe, which would be created by necessity, become a community of peace, through a broad-based construction, on a democratic-federative basis (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 98). Moreover, the European construction envisaged by Kalergi, as we saw above, would not only be limited to certain principles, but also proposed an institutional architecture.

Thus, the crowning of all pan-European endeavors was the construction of the United States of Europe, following the model of the United States of America. Appearing to the other continents and world powers as a united state, within the federation each state was to have maximum freedom. Kalergi (1926: 135) proposed that the federation would consist of a Parliament with two chambers: the people's chamber and the member states's chamber, the last being composed of 26 representatives of the 26 member governments, and the people's chamber of 300 deputies, respectively one deputy to

one million citizens. Members of parliament were to be elected either by national legislatures or directly elected by citizens (Haas, 1948: 533).

This architecture can be similar to the recent ideas of the European Parliament (EP). Thus, the current EP, in a bicameral understanding, would represent the Peoples's chamber, and the current Council, could be understood as the Member States's chamber. On the other hand, the membership of the EP between 1952 and 1979 was obtained by the designation by the National Parliaments, thus achieving a second degree representation and linking the status of a European Member to that of a National Member, the mandate of a European Member being valid for both as long as the national one remained valid (Bărbulescu, 2008: 192).

Given that the Constitutional Treaties also provided for the possibility of a direct appointment by citizens of the members of the EP, in order to achieve this goal, the EP had to elaborate a project, which was to be approved unanimously by the Council, and then in turn, the Member States validated the respective document according to the constitutional rules regarding the adoption of international law documents. Thus, on September 20, 1976, the Council adopted a decision on the organization of elections by universal and direct suffrage which was in fact a fulfillment of the commitments assumed by the Treaties, that is to say, a natural evolution of the European Communities, part of a process that was gradual, dynamic and constitutional (Bărbulescu, 2008: 193). As such, since 1979, every five years, direct elections for the European Parliament have been organized. Over time, EP has evolved in different directions, but we can argue, based on the above discussion that, more or less, EP has certain particularities expressed since the '20s by Kalergi.

Also, another institution which would have represented the supreme guarantor of maintaining peace between the democratic states of the European continent, would take the form of an Arbitration Court or the Federal Court. This Federal Court was to watch over the treaty of arbitration and mutual guarantee to be signed by the member states of the federation. Kalergi (1926: 134) expressed that this step was to be prepared by each state separately, concluding separate arbitration treaties with other European states, and those states that really, unconditionally wanted to remove the danger of an armed attack, would also have to conclude defensive alliances, with the obligatory guarantee of the Arbitration Court and the inviolability of the borders. Thus, the advantages offered to members of such a defensive alliance would be so obvious that, gradually, Kalergi believes, all European states would voluntarily join them.

A particular feature of this Arbitration Court was the inclusion of the United Kingdom, however, provided that in the guarantee agreement it was stipulated that in the event of armed conflicts between it and the Asia or Pacific area, where the colonial interests of the United Kingdom gravitated, Europe would not intervene (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 134). Also, this Court would have to decide in case of possible disputes between the Member States, which is as close to the duties of the current Court of Justice of the European Union.

The Court of Justice is the European institution that the Constitutional Treaties have entrusted to oversee the correct interpretation and application of European law. Even if this was, and is, the main attribution of the Court, through the institutional reforms carried out over time, new powers were added to it. Thus, by the changes introduced in the activity of controlling the legality of decisions, the Court of Justice can rule on disputes both between the Member States and between them and the European Commission (Bărbulescu, 2008: 326). This particularity brings the Court of Arbitration closer to its role established in the 1950s - when the danger of possible conflicts still persists, or of the current Court that intervenes even between disagreements between Member States and the supranational level.

As the economic situation of the continent was largely influenced by the decisions of the Member States applying protectionist policies and trade was hindered, Kalergi (1926: 135) proposes, for Europe to regain its place in the world economic system, a pan-European Customs Union. This Customs Union was to make Europe a unitary economic area, which would have been possible by restructuring the European economy.

The imposition of customs protectionism was, in Kalergi's (1926: 144) opinion, closely linked to the danger of a war, which forced every state in Europe to prepare for a possible conflict with its neighbors, considering that it would have to deal with the situation alone. This public opinion could change as soon as, due to the European understanding, the danger of war disappears and with it the need for the existence of closed economic areas of national interest, i.e. national autarchy.

By the intelligent elimination of the inter-European protectionist tariffs, at the same time as the social reforms were envisaged, neither the nations nor the workers would be harmed, but only the groups of "unfit" industrialists to face the free competition of the great inter-European industry. An advantage in Kalergi's (1926: 144) view would have been the improvement and the cheapness of European products, thanks to free competition, which would have benefited first and foremost all European consumers.

The demolition of customs borders had to be carried out as quickly as possible, with the conclusion of customs

agreements, possibly even monetary ones, between the European democratic states. By expanding and incorporating such customs agreements, the creation of the pan-European economic zone was being prepared and accelerated (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 135).

Almost 20 years after Kalergi announced its plans, in 1944, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands created a customs union (Benelux), which became operational in 1948. In 1951, France, Germany and Italy joined Benelux, creating the ECSC, thus designing the European construction. In 1955, its president, the former Prime Minister of Belgium Paul Henri Spaak, began work on a larger customs union. His report was an important part of the elements that underpinned the 1957 Rome Treaty, which established the European Community and created a customs union between all its members (European Commission, 2014a: 4).

The 1957 Treaty of Rome initiated the customs union as an essential basis of the Community. Under these conditions, the Customs Union was established on July 1, 1968, 18 months earlier than it had been foreseen (European Commission, 2014a: 4). The customs duties that still existed for intra-Community trade disappeared and a common customs tariff was introduced for trade with the rest of the world, instead of national customs duties; in 1993 the customs controls at internal borders were eliminated, which resulted in the disappearance of long queues of commercial vehicles at the border crossing points.

Today, the provisions regarding the free movement of goods are to be found in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Part Three, Title II). They prohibit customs duties on goods traded between EU Member States and indicate that as soon as a common customs tariff is applied to the external borders of the Union, the goods must be able to move freely.

Through the project of Pan-European Customs Union enunciated by Kalergi, once again, the model was drawn up that was to be the basis of the current European configuration, and it reached its intended purpose: the European economic reconstruction that led to a political integration.

Since Kalergi can rightly be called a "visionary", I say this by finding myself at the end of research on his ideas of European unification, and risking issuing value judgments, he has also contributed in terms of the current hymn of the European Union, by its 1929 proposal as "Ode to Joy", the end of the 9th Symphony by Beethoven, to become a hymn of a united Europe. The anthem symbolizes not only the European Union, but Europe in a broader sense. The poem "Ode to Joy" expresses the idealistic vision of Schiller, the one to whom the lyrics belong, which he wanted all people to become a united family - a vision shared by Beethoven (Lucarelli S., Cerutti F. and Schmidt, 2011: 118).

In 1972, the Council of Europe transformed the "Ode to Joy" into its own anthem, and in 1985 the European leaders adopted it as the official anthem of the European Union. It is important to note, as Lucarelli S., Cerutti F. and Schmidt (2011: 118) do, that the European anthem does not intend to replace the national anthems of the member countries, but to celebrate their common values, being played in the official ceremonies represented by the European Union and in general at different European events.

The resemblance of this project to the reality of the European Union today is not a pure coincidence, because, as Brugmans (1990) pointed out, in an organization such as the European Union, "only the visionaries are realists", and Kalergi, based on the analysis presented above, has the merit to be considered "European", in this context being synonymous with "the one who sees far".

On the other hand, the most important attempt from a political point of view, moving the discussions from declarative level to practical level, constituted the proposal made by France through its Foreign Minister Aristide Briand before the meeting of the League of Nations on September 5, 1929, known as the "Briand initiative".

Wanting to develop European federal cooperation by preserving the sovereignty of the states, the initiative of Aristide Briand departs to some extent from the plan outlined by Kalergi, mainly regarding the political decision-making structure, attracting the states precisely by guaranteeing their sovereignty and independence.

Thus, the institutional framework developed in the "Memorandum on the organization of a European federal union regime" was to be composed of a representative and responsible body that would take the form of a regular meeting called the "European Conference". This body was to be composed of representatives of all European governments that were members of the League of Nations, the conference being the leading forum of the European Union in coordination with the League of Nations (Briand, 1930: 14). Also, we can observe that in order to avoid any predominance in favor of one European state over another, the rotation of the presidents of the European Conference, which were to be elected annually, was specified.

As we can well see, this body, composed of representatives of all member governments, can be likened to the current Council of the European Union. This is because the Council is the institution of the Union, in which the representatives of the governments of the Member States, namely the ministers of each Member State who are competent in a particular

field meet. The composition of the sessions of the Council, as well as their frequency varying according to the topics addressed.

But, probably the most obvious resemblance, is related to the specification that in order to avoid any predominance in favor of one European state over another, the presidents of the European Conference would be elected annually, by rotation. Thus, the present Council is rotated by the 27 now Member States of the Union, each having a period of six months. During the respective semester, the Presidency conducts meetings at all levels, proposes guidelines and elaborates the compromises necessary for the adoption of decisions by the Council. Also, in order to promote the continuity of the Council's work, the successive semiannual presidencies cooperate closely in groups of three. The team of the three presidents draws up a joint program of the Council's activities for a period of 18 months.

Another necessary body, which was to act as an executive, was to be the "Standing Political Committee", composed only of a certain number of members of the European Conference, which would in practice ensure the policy formulation body, and the same time, the instrument of action of the European Union. As the composition and mode of action of the Committee, as well as the organization or chairmanship of the sessions, were to be established at the next conference, but as nationalist reservations still prevailed in Europe, the project was struck by the contrast between the Europeanist vision of the French plan and the refusal of states. From the minimal attributions drawn we can nowadays consider this body to be a kind of European Commission.

In these circumstances, the European Commission can be an interpretation of this body that was to take the form of the Standing Political Committee, especially in the attribution of proposing the regulations which it submits to the approval of the co-legislators, representing the policy formulation body of the Union, and as an instrument of action, by managing and implementing policies.

The economic dimension of the "Briand initiative" was based on the "approximation" of the economies of the European states, whose political responsibility remained within the governments. In order to achieve this goal, the governments had to establish, through a pact of economic solidarity, the objective they are trying to define as ideal for economic policy, namely the establishment of a single market (Briand, 1930: 17). Briand (1930: 17) believed that the immediate construction of this rational organization of production and exchange of goods was necessary, and that the free movement of goods, capital and people was to be progressively realized, ultimately leading to the prosperity of the citizens.

As we can see, as far as the economic field is concerned, Aristide Briand's plan goes beyond the Customs Union outlined by Kalergi and follows several aspects that we find today in the current internal market of the European Union. Thus, the cornerstone of the current single market is represented by the four freedoms enshrined in the Treaty of the European Union, namely the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital.

The Single European Act of 1987 represented the first major revision of the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957, creating what subsequently became the European Union. The main purpose of the Act was to give new impetus to the pace of European integration and the existing common market. On this basis, the leaders of the EU had agreed on a famous plan, including a timetable for the adoption of new measures aimed at "finalizing the single market" (European Commission, 2014b: 4). The plan was successful, and on January 1, 1993 the Single Market became a reality for the 12 states that formed the European Community at that time.

The EU Single Market allows citizens and businesses to move and operate freely in the territory of the now 27 Member States. Specifically, the concept of EU citizenship gives Europeans the right to reside, study or receive a pension in another country in the EU. It also gives consumers access to a wider range of products at competitive prices and allows them to enjoy greater consumer protection when shopping at home, abroad or online. With the help of the Single Market, large and small businesses can carry out simpler and cheaper business transactions outside national borders and compete globally.

Also, over its 25 years of existence, the Single Market has grown from 345 million consumers in 1992 to more than 500 million today. The EU Single Market is one of the world's largest economies with a GDP of 15 trillion euros while the economic benefits of the Single Market amount to 8.5% of EU GDP (European Commission, 2018: 1).

It can be seen that the economic definition of the European Union that was projected in the 1930s is very similar to what will become, after more than 60 years, the European Union of 1992 or, even more, of 2020.

Moreover, the recognition of the existence of a "European citizenship" complementary to the national one, meant to guarantee the future protection of the cultural and national identity of its peoples by the future European Union, is probably the strongest objective of the integration envisaged by Briand. As the future Union was to be placed under the umbrella of the League of Nations, the document proclaiming European citizenship stated that the 27 states were to adhere to a citizenship through which they would exercise mutual solidarity led by pacifist ideals (*Société des Nations*,

1933: 4).

The creation of European citizenship was necessary in the context of the Union to be born, the proclamation of this new citizenship corresponding to the newly created European federal spirit. This was to be inspired by two historical precedents: on the one hand, the creation after March 16, 1816 of the Swiss Confederation, resulting in a perfect association: German, French, Italian, and, on the other, after the election of President G. Washington, in March 1789, the Confederation of the United States of America, which in Briand's reality represented "Overseas Europe" (*Société des Nations*, 1933: 1).

It took almost a century for the citizenship of the European Union to finally appear. Thus, European citizenship was defined by the Treaty on European Union, signed in 1992 in Maastricht, and entered into force in 1993. Including rights, obligations and participation in political life, European citizenship aims to strengthen the image and identity of the European Union and to involve more and more its citizens in the process of European integration (European Commission, 2010: 2).

However, the citizenship of the European Union does not replace national citizenship, but comes to complement national citizenship, a similarity also found in the case of the citizenship project initiated by Briand, making it possible to exercise some of the rights of the citizen of the Union in the territory of the Member State in which an EU national lives. In addition, European citizenship is based on the common principles of the Member States: the principle of freedom, the principle of democracy, the principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the principle of the rule of law, included in the Treaty of Amsterdam, and stems from fundamental human rights (European Commission, 2010: 4).

Even if these initiatives failed to be implemented at that time because of the economic crisis of the 1930s - which was beginning to be felt in Europe - and the triumph of fascism favoring a nationalist climate, ultimately led to the loss of any hope of reconciling peoples, today - after almost 90 years - many of the aspects concerning a future European Union or United States of Europe are identified in the current configuration of the European Union after the Treaty of Lisbon.

5. Final Remarks

The importance of the interwar period for European integration represented, beyond the theoretical aspects, a model of collaboration that inspired the political elites after 1945 to understand that they must not repeat the mistakes of the past and that the need for collaboration and unity must find practical answers. Furthermore, they understood that the guarantee of peace should not be made by imposing severe restrictions on the states that lost the war, but on the contrary, by helping Europe the political elites will help themselves.

In the late 1920s, the ideals sustained by the Pan-European Movement such as preserving and guaranteeing peace, stopping the expansion of Bolshevism, the idea of economic integration and saving the continent from ruin were regarded with delight by the majority of the population, being conceived in one name: the United States of Europe. However, the population identifies Pan-Europe with the abolition of borders, borders for which some states made great sacrifices during the First World War, so this alternative has not become, in the collective thinking of the Europeans, clearly a possible objective. Kalergi considered European unification a goal achievable mainly because of his personal ties with Stresemann and Briand, and had thought that France and Germany would set a significant example if the collaboration would begin with states that had been in different sides over time. Their deaths suspended European unification, since pan-Europeanism no longer had such supporters with influence at the level of European politics.

Another reason that led to the failure of the pan-European initiative can be considered the strong opposition coming from the United Kingdom, taking into account its colonial aspirations, wishing not to participate in such a Union. The economic downturn, which emerged in the late 1920s and early 1930s, with unemployment and a considerable decline in social welfare, was also a major hindrance to European integration. The governments of European countries responded to this crisis through protectionist policies. While the ascension of Nazism to power in 1933 became a real danger threatening Europe, it was clear that the federal ideas analyzed earlier were no longer relevant, their place being taken by national socialism.

"If not the reason, then the need will create Pan-Europe" - Coudenhove-Kalergi's words were never more true than at the crucial moment in the years after the second conflagration that devastated Europe and made her look to the past in order not to repeat the mistakes made during the interwar period (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 1926: 28). Indeed the need was the key to a united Europe, a Europe whose sketches were so well drawn in the interwar period that many of the ideas projected at that time propelled and influenced the integration process begun in 1950 and are still found in the architecture of the European Union of the 21st century.

The solidarity created with the treaty signed in 1951 led the political elite created at the level of the member countries to

extend the partnership to other areas, as happened by the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community, the latter building an expanded Single Market, including a wide range of goods and services. It is interesting to note how Robert Schuman's view in his famous statement that launched the European integration project is and must be valid today: "Europe will not be built at once or as a result of a single plan, but by concrete achievements that will first of all create de facto solidarity" (Bărbulescu, 2008: 41). The changes that have occurred since the Treaty of Paris in 1951 and up to now, show us how the European Union we know today has traveled exactly the way that Schuman's words predicted.

Today, the European Union represents a project based on peace, freedom, stability and prosperity, characteristics promoted by the interwar projects that were the basis of this configuration. After centuries of suffering caused by devastating conflicts, with the establishment of the Union a new era began, the absence of war and borders turning one of humanity's oldest dreams into reality.

Some authors suggest that a polity can be a federation without being a state (Kelemen, 2019: 28). Kelemen believes that a federal perspective on the EU can readily acknowledge that the EU is not sovereign and lacks some essential attributes of a state, including the monopoly on the legitimate use of force. In the EU context, Member States clearly retain ultimate sovereignty in that they are free to leave EU as the United Kingdom has chosen to do from February 2020. But, as long as EU Member States remain in the Union, the EU acts as the highest governing authority in many spheres and EU law has supremacy over national law in the areas it covers (Kelemen, 2019: 29).

As former President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, noted, today we have managed to turn enemies into friends, overcome national, religious and philosophical differences and "grow together as a united Europe", goals that parents of the European idea from the first half of the 20th century aspired to achieve. This assertion is strengthened also by his successor between 2017 and 2019, Antonio Tajani, who stated that "the European Union has been a formidable tool to bring about prosperity and stability. If we look back at our grandparents, we see how a united Europe realised their dream of ending war in Europe. They have seen their children and grandchildren born and raised in a time of peace and respect for fundamental rights" (European Union, 2016).

Nothing fits the end of this work better than the famous aphorism of Count Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi (1926: 7): "Every great political happening began as a Utopia and ended as a Reality". This is what gave birth to what we know today as the European Union. From the complex and unprecedented project that Kalergi proposed in the 1920s, being initially reluctantly received and considered utopian and by an economic nonsense in the context in which the winners of the war wanted to punish the "guilty", to the reality more or less in the 21st century.

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