

## the nature of the european leadership crisis and how to solve it

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### Abstract

Observers of the European Union (EU) agree that it suffers from a leadership crisis. However, diagnoses of the precise nature of this crisis vary: some lament the lack of strong, visionary leaders, while others argue that the EU suffers from too much elite leadership. This article takes issue with both diagnoses and argues that the root of Europe's leadership crisis lies in the misfit between the nature of EU leadership and the legitimating logic it is rooted in. All leadership implies inequality and therefore requires solid justification especially in the democratic European context. However, at the European level, the vectors of legitimacy that provide such justification are weak and contradictory, thereby tempting leaders to overstep the level of justification bestowed on them. Making use of ideological and identity leadership may help European leaders overcome the misfit between leadership and legitimacy that lies at the root of the leadership crisis.

**Keywords** European Union; leadership; legitimacy; social identification; ideology

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has had trouble finding adequate common solutions for the policy problems it faces. While the declining level of

public trust has affected politics in general, it appears to have limited the capacity of leaders to make decisions at the EU level in particular. This has led several observers to conclude that the EU is suffering from a leadership crisis, which has

been particularly noticeable with regard to Europe's attempts to deal with the problems of the Eurozone (Cramme, 2011; Hayward, 2008, McNamara, 2010; Westfall, 2013). This crisis goes beyond posing a situational 'threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms' (Boin *et al.*, 2005: 2; 't Hart, 2014), for in addition to endangering the European economic and monetary union, it has revealed a striking inability on the part of European leaders and institutions to deal with the problems in an adequate, timely and coordinated fashion. What started out as an economic crisis soon caused a serious decline of the 'symbolic frameworks legitimating the socio-political order' of the EU and thereby evolved into a full-fledged institutional crisis ('t Hart, 1993: 39; 2014).

Diagnoses of the precise nature and causes of the European leadership crisis vary. Some authors focus on the supply side of leadership and argue the EU lacks sufficient and strong leadership. Such analyses invariably result in a call upon key European decision makers to step up to the plate, and show some vision and resolve (Cramme, 2011; Hayward, 2008; Westfall, 2013; McNamara, 2010). While in uncertain times, vision and personality may indeed be consequential,<sup>1</sup> a diagnosis of the problems that relies solely on a model of political leaders as visionary lone rangers is incomplete at best. This diagnosis, for instance, neglects the fact that power is bestowed on leaders by their followers (Nye, 2008), and the EU has been suffering from a marked decline in legitimacy. While the literature devoted to the issue of legitimacy rarely invokes the concept of leadership and speaks predominantly in institutional terms, from a leadership perspective its conclusions are clear: if there is to be any more European leadership it should come in the form of the people governing the people (cf. Barber, 1998). This leaves us with two contradictory diagnoses of the current European leadership

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crisis: one that focuses on the supply side of the leadership crisis and laments the lack of strong, visionary leadership, and another that takes a demand-side perspective and argues that the EU suffers from too much strong, visionary leadership.

In this article, I take issue with both diagnoses and argue that rather than suffering from too much or too little leadership, the true nature of Europe's leadership crisis lies in the misfit between the nature of EU leadership and the legitimating logic it is rooted in. In taking this approach, I join those scholars working within leadership studies who take a relational perspective on leadership and emphasise the role of ideology and social identification in forging a bond between leaders and followers (Burns, 1978; Haslam *et al.*, 2011; Nye, 2008). In doing so, I argue that all leader-follower relations create inequality and therefore require solid justification, especially in a democratic and European context (see Helms, 2016). While several vectors of legitimacy exist that may provide such justification (Lord and Magnette, 2004), at the European level these vectors are weak and work against each other. As a result, the actions of European leaders often overstep the level of justification bestowed on them. Examples of leadership enacted during the Euro crisis are used to show that it is in this misfit between leadership and legitimating logic that the root of the

European leadership crisis rests. The article concludes with offering some suggestions on how leaders can deal with this misfit.

## **BETWEEN THE VISIONARY LONE RANGER AND FOLLOWING THE MOB**

The call for more European leadership is often a call for transformational leadership. A transformational leader mobilises followers through stories 'of ideals and aspirations, and is prepared to risk the political costs of ideological opposition to it' (t Hart, 2014; cf. Burns, 1978). In other words, when called to step up to the plate, European leaders are urged to throw caution and self-interest in the wind and present a grand vision for the future of Europe. These calls are often personalised and directed at the Heads of State or Government (most notably the 'Empress of Europe', the German Chancellor Angela Merkel), the Franco-German axis, or the President of the European Commission. In addition, they are accompanied by a longing for the good old days and European leaders who – according to legend – did have the resolve, personality and belief to provide 'true' leadership. For, if only Chancellor Merkel had the European commitment of Helmut Kohl, if Jacques Delors was still at the helm, if the current Franco-German axis was rooted in a personal bond as strong as Adenauer and De Gaulle's, Europe would not be in such disarray.

Though somewhat naive, there is a certain logic to this perspective: when the institutions, the directives and the inter-institutional agreements fail, when political talks on reform are hopelessly deadlocked, agency and power are the only factors left to turn to. The idea that an institutional perspective may explain stability, but a combination of agency, ideas and power is needed to understand

change is well-rooted in the theoretical state of the art on (European) policy change (Kingdon, 1984; Sabatier, 1998; Schmidt, 2008). So, when faced with large-scale crises it is only logical that many draw on this 'wisdom' and turn all eyes on the transformative potential embodied in key European leaders.

As a diagnosis of, and solution to the current problems, however, this view is one-sided, implausible and morally flawed. First, much of the hopes bestowed on the visionary lone ranger are derived from historical examples of great European leadership. However, accounts of historical events and the actions of leaders are often simplified and a-historical (Gilbert, 2008; Van Middelaar, 2013). Critical in-depth analyses of such cases reveal that in reality the French–German motor often faltered, that the success of Jacques Delors was highly dependent on the broader external environment of his period in office, and that only with the political clout offered by the prospect of German reunification was Helmut Kohl able to act on his long-standing pro-European vision (Cini, 2008; Cole, 2008; Paterson, 2008; Van Esch, 2012). And while this is not to discard the transformative effect some political leaders may have had on the world, it is evident that these and other studies do suggest that capable leadership only accounts for a fraction of a successful outcome (Kahnemann, 2011; Nye, 2008).

At the same time, it is evident that the opportunity to learn from, or repeat historical successes is hampered by the fact that the European political arena, as well as the European electorate has changed dramatically in recent decades. The enlargement of the EU to 28 states not only makes reliance on leadership by one (or a tandem of) member state(s) politically unlikely, it also severely limits the room for pan-European agreement (Paterson, 2008; Schild, 2010; Krotz and Schild, 2013). In addition, recent years have seen a trend towards the polarisation of

European politics and the Euro crisis has shown that the EU has significant distributive consequences for its member states and people (Majone, 2014; Scharpf, 2011). This has not only led to a divergence of interests among the member states, but also contributed to the rise of the so-called 'dismissive dissensus' among the ever more critical and better-informed European people. Although successful leadership is surely not impossible (Cramme, 2011), in such an environment even the heroes of Europe's past would be hard pressed to offer a solution to the current crisis.

More fundamentally, however, is the normative question of whether we truly want European leaders to be visionary lone rangers? I suspect not. In fact, many people would argue that there have been far too many lone visionary rangers in the history of the European Union. Two characteristics make the concept of lone visionary ranger highly unattractive and potentially toxic for the future of Europe. First, when people talk about 'vision' in the European context, they often have a pre-defined vision in mind, which is that of the ever-closer union. However, this vision is well on its way to being discredited. Many people support their country to be a member of the EU, but grand plans for federalisation or political unification of the EU no longer appeal to large sections of the European population. As Nye (2008: 19) explains, leadership is the power to orient and mobilise others and therefore 'implies followers who move in the same direction'. In other words, vision without supporters is not leadership (Haslam *et al*, 2011: 42).

The second problem with the visionary lone ranger concept is that it implies directive, top-down leadership. The advantages of this form of leadership are clear: it promises determinate and effective action. However, top-down leadership may be at odds with the democratic ideals of the EU and the sovereignty of its

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member states (Kane and Patapan, 2012; Barber, 1998). Moreover, the hierarchy implied in the concept of visionary lone ranger is problematic from a European historical perspective. The sensitivities it evokes and problems it creates are best illustrated by the calls on Germany to take its place as the *de facto* European economic and political superpower. Not coincidentally, these calls are most often heard at the other side of the Atlantic. As illustrated by the public back-lash following the German harsh stance during the negotiations after the Greek referendum of July 2015, few Europeans welcome a(nother) German hegemony in Europe (Camis o, 2012; Chandler, 2015; Myers, 2013; Nicolaidis, 2007). In fact, the whole rationale behind European integration and the Euro was to prevent another German hegemony (Van Esch, 2012; Dyson *et al*, 1995).<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the fragmented institutional design of the EU that is often listed as an impediment to European leadership (Cramme, 2011; cf. Teles, 2015) was specifically designed to prevent decision making to be dominated by a single strong leader (Van Middelaar, 2013). Division of power may hamper swift and efficient decision making, but the EU's *raison*

*d'être* provides ample reason for why Angela Merkel should have stubbornly refused to ascend the throne as the Empress of Europe. In moments of crisis, it is tempting to invoke power and determination. However, leadership is 'inseparable from follower's needs and goals', and just like a vision without followers, the wielding of naked power does not constitute leadership (Burns, 1978: 29). In fact, rather than a panacea, vision and naked power may actually prove a toxic mix in a historically burdened Europe struggling to increase its democratic credentials.

The inherent tension between the concept of visionary lone ranger leadership and democratic values is precisely where students of the democratic deficit feel the root of its problems lies (cf. Moravcsik, 2002). While they do not explicitly evoke the concept of leadership, the diagnosis that the EU suffers from a lack of input democracy suggests EU leadership is too much of top-down process. In its extreme form this position aligns with the conceptualisation of leadership implied in the much quoted phrase 'there go the people, I must follow them, for I am their leader' ascribed to French politician Ledru-Rollin.

Democratic deficit studies propose various institutional solutions that include the expansion of the mandate of the European and national parliaments, increased transparency of Council deliberation and the direct election of Commission President. Many of these proposals have made their way into the European system and practice over the last decade. The assumption underlying these measures is that if only the people are granted more input, they will regard the EU as more legitimate. But it is doubtful that this assumption bears out in reality. In fact, for all the advances in EU's transparency and input democracy, there is little evidence these measures have had any significant effect on the trust European citizens bestow on the EU (Camis o, 2012; Hobolt, 2014; Nicolaidis, 2007).

Further doubt about whether the leadership crisis may be solved by more government by the people is cast by studies that take a representative perspective on democracy. Although conclusions vary, contrary to popular belief most of these studies conclude that a relatively high congruence exists between the preferences of the people and the elite's views in terms of pro, or anti-European positions, left-right ideology and issue saliency (Arnold *et al*, 2012; Carruba, 2001). Yet it is still the case that the legitimacy of, and peoples' trust in the EU has declined. All in all, both the diagnosis that the EU suffers from too much, and too little leadership are thus implausible. This raises the question what is at the core of the current leadership crisis?

## **INEQUALITY AND THE VECTORS OF LEGITIMATE LEADERSHIP**

The perspective on leadership in EU studies is often general, unitary and personified. However, the European political system is highly fragmented and includes many actors, institutions and groups that may provide leadership. In a liberal international economic system even an unlikely actor like the incoherent and loosely tied collective of the financial markets may exert leadership. Moreover, in the complex European political system most actors are simultaneously involved in multiple leader-follower relations. Heads of State or Government (HSoG), for instance, not only act as formal leaders of their national constituency, but are at the same time a leader or follower in relation to other HSoG in the European Council. Powerful national leaders like Chancellor Merkel are looked upon to provide guidance for Europe as a whole. To add to this dual (or triple) hat syndrome (Ansell *et al*, 2010; Evans *et al*, 1993), the national balance of power may even force

powerful leaders to become close followers of the will of their people.

As actors' 'capacity to influence others always depends on who those others are' (Haslam *et al*, 2011: 18), the specifics of each of these leader–follower relationships must be taken into account when assessing leadership. Each leadership relation demands a different style and behaviour and juggling these different, and sometimes irreconcilable, demands requires great political sensitivity. Key factors to take into account in this balancing act are the inequality implied in all leader–follower relations and the 'vectors of legitimacy' that justify why leaders may exercise power over followers (see Helms, 2016; Haslam *et al*, 2011; Lord and Magnette, 2004).

As Helms argues in the introduction to this special section 'leadership-follower relations are essentially defined by structural inequality' (Helms, 2016; cf. Teles, 2015: 34). This makes leadership difficult to justify in a democratic system and the European context. The EU is based on cooperation between sovereign people and states. Their right to self-determination is in essence a right not to be led by others. This inherent tension between leadership and self-determination raises its head in the relations between the European member states and their people, among the HSoG and between national parliaments. The tension this may cause is particularly strikingly illustrated by the Greek referendum on the conditions for the second bail-out in July 2015. While the Greek people exercised their democratic right to reject the potentially devastating agreement, the other European leaders retorted that the referendum could not trump their say over the conditions for the loans. The fact that both parties were right in their fully incompatible and irreconcilable claims shows that while often criticised, given the sovereign status of its member states and democratic aspirations, the internal European leadership style is necessarily

collaborative and consensual (Scharpf, 2011).

Yet, calls for strong and top-down leadership do not emerge out of nowhere and may actually be rational. As theories on principal-agency, free-riding and hegemonic stability suggest, leadership can be highly beneficial to followers because it may provide them with desirable output at low costs (cf. Haslam *et al*, 2011; Nye, 2008). However, the emphasis these theories put on followers' potential gain indicates that even when called for, the inequality implied in any leadership relation requires legitimation by reference to its followers.

There are several grounds on which leadership may be seen as legitimate by followers. Reflecting on the debate on the democratic deficit and legitimacy in European Studies, Lord and Magnette (2004) have combined the various logics justifying EU governance into four so-called 'vectors of legitimacy'. While their perspective is institutional, these vectors may also shed light on why European leaders may have the right to lead others. In fact, the metaphor of a vector of legitimacy aligns perfectly with the relational perspective on leadership taken in this article. A vector can be defined as 'having direction as well as magnitude, especially as determining the position of one point in space relative to another' (Oxford dictionary). Metaphorically, it may thus be seen to simultaneously define the relationship between a leader and follower by indicating the direction of the hierarchy, as well as to constitute the force that binds them together. As is the case in Science and Mathematics, the vectors of legitimacy may vary in strength on a case-by-case basis and 'sometimes reinforce, and at other times, pull against one another' (Lord and Magnette, 2004: 184).

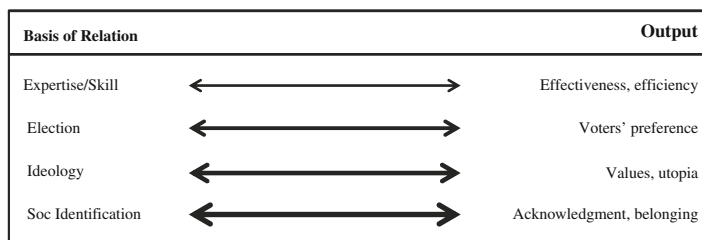
Lord and Magnette distinguish four vectors of legitimacy: indirect, parliamentary, technocratic and procedural. The second and third vectors in particular are

compatible with the agency approach implied in leadership studies.<sup>3</sup> The parliamentary vector relies on the power of elections and presumes the outcome of leadership reflects voters' preferences. The technocratic vector is rooted in the legitimising power of expertise with its promise to produce efficient outcomes. While these two vectors can be usefully applied to political leadership to explore the European leadership crisis they are insufficient. In drawing up their model, Lord and Magnette were clearly inspired by the current EU governance system and dominant forms of legitimacy, and failed to include two vectors pivotal to national and subnational politics that are underdeveloped at the EU level: The vectors of ideology and social identification (Burns, 1978; Haslam *et al*, 2011). When these are taken into account, a new model emerges that sums up how leader–follower relations may be justified in a democratic European context (see Figure 1).

A first rationale for endowing leadership upon an individual, institution or group is the expectation that their expertise or competence will allow them to make better decisions and deliver more effective or efficient results (Lord and Magnette, 2004: 185). This vector thus relies on a transactional form of leadership, a form of output legitimacy (Burns, 1978). Expert leadership, however, also implies a form of what Lord and Magnette call procedural legitimacy, the observance of due process and given and equal rights. This dictates that all

followers must be treated equally and the actions of technocrats should be free of bias (Lord and Magnette, 2004: 187). Technocratic expertise comes in two forms. First, actors can possess rare subject specific expertise that may be needed to solve complex policy problems. This is the basis on which, for instance, the (members of the) European Central Bank (ECB) are bestowed with the power to make monetary policy for the Euro zone. Second, actors can claim leadership on the basis of the administrative position and competence needed to realise the objectives of their organisation. National public officials and bureaucrats may claim administrative authority on this basis (Rhodes, 2014) and the main example of a European actor that may invoke this vector is the European Commission.

The second vector of legitimacy rests upon the democratic practice of elections. Followers vote for politicians and thereby provide them with a leadership position on the grounds that they will deliver policies and outcomes that reflect voters' preferences. This vector also relies on a transactional form of leadership and implies a form of procedural legitimacy. For, an election should be conducted fairly and according to the rules for its winner to be seen as a legitimate leader (cf. Lord and Magnette, 2004: 187). European actors that may evoke the electoral vector of legitimate leadership are the European and national parliaments, and the HSoG and ministers in the European Council and



**Figure 1** Four vectors of legitimate leadership.



Council of Ministers. One may even argue that the position of European Commissioners relies in part on a 'stretched' (and therefore weaker) electoral vector of legitimation as they are delegated to their posts by the national governments (cf. Kassim, 2016; Rhodes, 2014).

The third vector rests upon the ideological connection between leaders and followers for leadership to be seen as legitimate. Ideological leadership relies on mutual-held values and moral purpose, as well as a shared vision or utopia to forge a bond between leaders and followers. An ideological leader thus attracts followers by mobilising stories of ideals and aspirations and the management of meaning, and may stir up powerful passions. It is therefore a form of transformational rather than transactional leadership and has great mobilising power (Bennister *et al*, 2015; Burns, 1978). At the same time, ideological leadership may be a divisive force as its power partly derives from its contrast and conflict with, and quest against the values and visions embodied in opposing ideologies. While ideological leaders may become elected leaders, world history is filled with leaders of social movements that gained massive followership without ever standing for, or winning an election ('t Hart, 2014). And although much of politics is imbued with ideology, in the EU it remains an obscure phenomenon. However, with the extension of its power into more distributive policy domains it is on the increase. The vocal rivalry between right-wing anti-Europeanists like Nigel Farage of the UK Independence (UKIP) party and his liberal pro-European adversary Guy Verhofstadt, constitutes ideological leadership. Moreover, the former Greek Minister of Finance, Yanis Varoufakis' power of attraction over left-wing Europeans across continent is based on ideological leadership. As political leaders, the members of the European Parliament and leaders in the (European) Council are the most likely

candidates to exert European ideological power.

The final vector of legitimation is rooted in social identification and points to leadership legitimised by a mutual belonging of leader and follower to a particular social group. The more leaders are seen to be prototypical of that group, the more their leadership is perceived as a legitimate. Rooted deep in peoples' psychology, Haslam *et al* (2011) show that social identification forges very strong and durable bonds and strong transformational leaders like President Barack Obama use this mechanism to mobilise great loyalty in their followers.<sup>4</sup> In fact, as Haslam *et al* argue like in the case of a football club, followers' loyalty to a proto-typical in-group leader may survive many excruciating losses to the team (Haslam *et al*, 2011: 47). At first sight, social identification seems to be notoriously underdeveloped at the European level. For, although people may identify with multiple social groups at the same time, in the context of international affairs and crises, people's national identification still trumps European identification (Nicolaidis, 2007; cf. Risse, 2014). In fact, for some, 'Brussels' has become a very salient out-group. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the vector of social identification is therefore missing from the European political arena. In fact, in its guise of national identification it has a very significant influence on the actions and legitimacy of the national representatives in the Council of Ministers and particularly the European Council.

Dependent on the context, these four vectors of legitimacy have different strength, forge bonds between different sets of actors, and may reinforce or work against each other. The one constant, however, is that for any leadership relation to be legitimate, its inherent inequality must be balanced by a vector of proper nature and strength.



## THE SEEDS OF THE EU LEADERSHIP CRISIS

Given the EU's democratic aspirations and sovereignty of its member states and people, any act of leadership requires strong justification. However, the European political arena is characterised by weak vectors and its complex and fragmented nature induces the different vectors to work against each other. As this complicates balancing the need for leadership and its grounds for legitimacy, European leaders are easily tempted to overstep their legitimate authority.

First, all the four vectors of legitimate leadership are weaker at the European than at the national level. The weakness of the electoral vector has been well documented in European studies. The European parliamentary elections have a low turn-out and are still secondary elections. Moreover, parliamentary control over the (European) Council and the input of national leaders is difficult, putting into question the legitimacy their actions. In contrast, until recently, the strength of the technocratic vector of legitimacy in itself was rarely questioned. Criticism of the European Commission and ECB more often concerns them overstepping their technocratic authority by adopting a political role (Cini, 2008; cf Kassim, 2016). However, the Euro crisis changed this and has put into question whether the one-size-fits-all policies of the ECB can meet the implied procedural requirement of equal treatment in an economic zone as diverse as the Euro zone (Scharpf, 2011). Moreover, both the technocratic and electoral vectors are transactional in nature and rely on output legitimacy. The economic downturn and political instability caused by the prolonged crisis has dealt a serious blow to the output legitimacy and 'licence to operate' of its elected and technocratic leaders (Scharpf, 2011).

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Transformational forms of leadership generate more unconditional and enduring loyalties that may transcend crises. However, at the European level, ideological and social identity leadership are underdeveloped. The perceived character of the EU as a complex, technocratic regulatory state has rendered it a depoliticised political space and even the more polarised debates of recent years centre around more or less Europe rather than rivalling ideological visions of (E)utopia. As for social identification, many Europeans have some feeling of being European topped up on their – still dominant – national self-identification (Risse, 2014). However, when European leaders play the social identification card, it is almost invariably national in nature. In fact, the Euro crisis witnessed an increase in identity leadership emphasising the divisive and exclusive rather than the unifying and inclusive potential of national identities (Haslam *et al*, 2011). As the emergence of a European demos seems unlikely, the possibility of propping up Europe's leadership capacity by invoking social identification seems daunting (but see below).

In addition, at the national-level leadership usually rests upon a combination of mutually reinforcing vectors, with leaders claiming authority on a combination of competence, public support, ideological vision or proto-typicality. In the complex EU system, however, the vectors of legitimacy often work against each other. For example, while the authority of the ECB and European Commission primarily relies on their technocratic expertise, their officials are national delegates and could to some extent claim legitimacy on the basis of social identification or a 'stretched' electoral vector. However, rather than to fortify, this weakens their legitimacy by binding them to their national following and compromising their neutrality. This effect is not imaginary as studies show that the preferences of Commission and ECB officials indeed have distinct national characteristics (Hooghe, 2005; De Jong and Van Esch, 2015; Bennani, 2015). In fact, during the Euro crisis the clashes of opinion among the governors of the ECB were so violent that it was forced to deviate from its long-standing tradition of consensus decision making, and caused two German central bankers to step down. This seriously challenges the a-political and objective status of the ECB's policies and jeopardises its technocratic legitimacy.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, European leaders must cater different groups of followers but are bound to these groups by different vectors. Technocratic European leadership caters the whole of Europe, electoral leaders serve their constituency, ideological leaders speak for kindred spirits and identity leaders mobilise members of the in-group. Leaders have no basis to exercise authority over followers that they are not bound to through one of the vectors, but may be tempted to do so in response to calls for action from followers they do represent. Again, an example may illustrate the point. As the head of Europe's political and economic powerhouse, Chancellor Merkel has been looked upon

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by many to lead Europe out of the crisis. Merkel has the authority to lead the German people and impose crisis measures on them on the basis of the vectors of election and social identification and may even be the ideological spokesperson for her fellow advocates of austerity in The Netherlands, Austria and Finland. However, there is no basis on which she can speak for Europe as a whole. Moreover, even when her national constituency or ideological supporters demand her to do so, there is no vector of legitimate leadership that authorised her to 'impose special sacrifices on the citizens of Greece or Portugal or of any other member state' (Scharpf, 2011: 29). Europe is dealing with a dual crisis and Merkel's crisis measures were aimed at solving the economic crisis. However, by overstepping the vectors of legitimacy she has deepened Europe's leadership crisis.

## CONCLUSIONS

Part of the problems described in this article are of an institutional origin: the ambiguous design of the EU and EMU, and the lack of a proper EU crisis mechanism. This governance structure was once built by European leaders that were bound by their vectors of legitimate leadership, which now contributes to the decline in trust that restricts current European leaders. As Europe struggles to find a way out of its economic and leadership crisis, it is imperative not to deepen the latter in name of the former. In a democratic Europe, even

crisis leadership must be rooted solidly in the vectors of legitimacy.

However, leadership is not only about legitimacy but also about action and agency, so how can European leaders meet the demand for adequate, legitimate leadership? While answering this question would require a more extensive study than this, the reflections above offer some suggestions. First, rather than to see them as a barrier, leaders could use the specific strengths of each vector and the fragmented European system to their advantage to exercise collaborative leadership. Each of the many potential European leaders has a different followership and basis of legitimacy. While this may limit their individual leadership capacity, by combining their authority they may cater many different groups of followers and still respect the boundaries of legitimate leadership. In fact, the history of European integration suggests that combining different forms of leadership can be effective (Cramme, 2011: 48). In any way, collaborative leadership suits the European consensus culture much better than visionary lone leadership.

Second, to increase their legitimate leadership capacity, European leaders should explore the potential of ideology and social identification. Transactional forms of leadership tend to be individualistic and invoke rational calculation and do not foster the sense of solidarity and community that forges strong and durable political bonds among the European Union and its people. The discussion above shows there is pan-European mobilising potential in ideologically based visions of 'EUtopia', and at minimum ideological leadership could further politicise the European political space and boost turn-out for elections to the European Parliament. Some leaders may be wary of the potentially divisive power of ideology, however, a mature political system cannot be built on political indifference. Europe needs to learn how to deal with such conflicts through political

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debate (Barber, 1998). Moreover, since ideological cleavages do not align but cross the divisions that the pervasive power of national identity fosters at the EU level, ideological leadership may in fact act as a much needed counterforce to the increase in nationalism the Euro crisis caused.

That said, social identification could be a constructive and inclusive force in the hands of able leaders. Identities are not set in stone, they are social constructions that may be moulded and redefined by identity entrepreneurs. Eurosceptic European leaders have proven to be very skilled in this, but identity leadership may also serve other objectives. Moreover, European identity leadership does not require the existence of a European demos. In fact, given the attachment of the European people to their national identity and their 'unity in diversity', building inclusive national identities is likely to be more successful (Nicolaidis, 2007; Haslam *et al*, 2011). This, however, will not be an easy task and it relies on prototypical leaders to succeed, but all leadership is hard.

Naturally, the critical reflections at the start of this article show that many before me have called upon European leaders to collaborate, provide vision and use the

political passions of their followers responsibly. And sure, leaders must be prepared to risk losing leadership capital in order to solve pressing problems, and some of them will (Bennister *et al*, 2015; 't Hart, 2014). However, it would be naïve simply to hope and pray for leaders to 'do the right thing'. It would be far better to build an institutional context that provides incentives for leaders to enact their leadership in a collaborative, visionary and inclusive fashion. Any institutional reform resulting from the Euro crisis should take this into account.

To end on a positive note, let us look at an example of successful leadership. For we may have forgotten about it in the drama that followed, but the Euro crisis witnessed at least one instance of strong and legitimate leadership: The July 2012 announcement by ECB President Draghi that the ECB would do everything it took to save the Euro. Draghi's statement was preceded by months of failed crisis management and financial instability, but when in September 2012 he announced the establishment of the programme of Outright Monetary Transactions (OMT) to back up his claim, the markets calmed down and the bond yields of the debtor states started to drop. To date, not a

single euro of the OMT has been spent and the intervention earned Draghi the nickname of 'Super Mario'.

There are four reasons that make this act of leadership successful. First, Draghi did not overstep his technocratic legitimacy as the measure was entirely symbolic and did not cost the taxpayer any money ('t Hart, 1993). Second, as a supranational European leader, his intervention targeted part of his appropriate followership, the international markets, to stop them from harming the interest of another part of his followership, the European community of member states and people. Third, not burdened by any contradictory electoral demands and with the monetary power of the ECB to back him up, Draghi's speech-act was able to signal the implicit but reliable threat of 'no further' that the elected HSoG could not. The final reason for success flags the potential of European identity leadership and falls into the domain that renders all good leadership elusive and magical. For, despite being the most undemocratic of European leaders, Draghi adequately sensed that the European people were fed up with the havoc the financial market wreaked and stepped in to protect 'us' from 'them'.

## Notes

1 See Van Esch and Swinkels (2015) for an overview of studies attesting to this.

2 Prevention of German hegemony was also a prime motivation for the German leaders (Van Esch, 2012; Dyson *et al*, 1995).

3 The vector of indirect legitimacy takes a systemic perspective and argues that the EU's legitimacy rests upon the legitimacy of its 'component states, on its respect for their sovereignty, and on its ability to serve their purposes'. Procedural legitimacy refers to the legitimacy inferred by the 'observance of due process and given rights' and is an essential part of the electoral and technocratic vector (Lord and Magnette, 2004: 185–87, see below).

4 See the explanatory video 'The Speech that Made Obama President' of his 2004 keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention in Boston by THINKR (<http://youtu.be/0FPwDe22CoY>).

5 In addition, the ECB's interventions indirectly put additional financial burden on the European taxpayers and were deemed by some to violate the European treaties. They were therefore also perceived to constitute a transgression of the ECB's technocratic authority. Aware of the dangers of being seen as a political actor to the authority of the ECB, Draghi continuously urged political leaders to take the responsibility to solve the crisis.

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