



1. *European Perspectives on the EU: Part III*
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## European Perspectives on the EU: Part III

By PHILIP CHIVILY  
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*Note: This is the final installment of an interview with two Hamilton College students from EU countries.*

*What are your thoughts on the leadership of the European Union, and do you feel that the leadership needs to be reformed?*

*Chiara Bondi:* The EU parliament works in a unique way, and I don't know too much, to be perfectly honest, about how it all works. I just know that some of the most politically important countries in the EU are some of the most stable and independent ones, like Germany. Germany deals with its own problems, and only if something involves the rest of Europe do they call on the EU for support. The EU was originally created to protect all European nations from any attack or threat. But currently its leadership is so bureaucratic and involved in micromanaging the affairs of member countries that I do not know how effectively it can be reformed.

The EU has some good things and a lot of flaws. It would be impossible to reform it with just simple changes. Rather, very deep reforms, fundamentally changing the EU with new treaties and agreements, would be required. Someone in the EU parliament who wants radical, fundamental changes would have to get enough support in the parliament to become leader of the EU before it could really think about reform. Would it be bad if one powerful leader came in and forcefully made sweeping changes? Probably not, because the EU's system is currently broken – for example, letting someone like the Catalan rebel leader Carles Puigdemont escape justice. He escaped and can't be extradited back to Spain, since Spanish laws do not apply to Germany and Belgium, countries he fled to. And this has had a politically crippling effect in Spain. Radical reform of the EU might be problematic in the short term, but in the long term will be beneficial.

*Gabriele Fett:* I would say we need more direct elections, since we don't really vote for the person leading the EU, only for representatives. I don't know how that would work, though.

A few large countries that agree with each other and disagree with smaller countries could band together and elect a leader that represents their interests, screwing everyone else. Voters in Germany, France, Italy, and Spain could just dominate the leadership election. It would be like California and New York and maybe Texas dominating U.S. elections. If there were a better checks-and-balances system in the EU that could make it more vulnerable or at least more responsive to public opinion, that would be good too.

*In 2020, the United Kingdom officially left the European Union. Do you feel that your home country should follow the U.K. and leave? And what are your reasons for either remaining or leaving?*

*Chiara:* I've been asked this question quite a few times. I think Italy needs to get their s\*\*\* together a lot better before leaving. Right now, if they left the EU they wouldn't be doing as well as the U.K. is. One of the pros of the EU is that most countries use one currency, the Euro. Before the U.K. left, there was no Schengen Area and you had to go through immigration, and it had a different monetary system based on the pound, so it was already quite separate from the rest of the EU. The only thing they were getting from the EU was the defense agreements, and they realized they could defend their country on their own and that there was no overarching threat to them. Also, the U.K. has always had a really strong relationship with the United States, so if anything were to happen to them, they would work with the U.S.

Italy does not have any of this. It is part of the Schengen Area and does not have its own independent currency. If you look at Italy throughout history, it has always changed sides to whatever seemed to benefit them, and never stuck to one idea. So in order to leave the EU and still function properly without a decade of disaster, they first need to establish better diplomatic relations outside of the EU, develop their own monetary system, change how the ports of entry work, and enforce border control since Italy would no longer be a

## The AHI – A Welcoming Community

By JOE MAALOUF  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Before I joined Hamilton College as a bright-eyed, forward-thinking freshman in the fall of 2019, I was informed by the guidance counselor at my high school that graduates who attended the college had spoken highly of the Alexander Hamilton Institute (AHI). It was described as a welcoming community, determined to help supplement a Hamilton College education by sharing perspectives that differ from the left-leaning norm of our community. As an academically-inclined student who appreciated the merits and pitfalls of all parts of the political spectrum, I was excited to explore this opportunity and was even more delighted to be welcomed into a community that fosters personal growth, promotes academic rigor, and accepts dissenting opinions.

As a moderate, I often find myself walking the line between left-leaning social policies and right-leaning economic policies. Like what I think is a silent majority of the Hamilton College community, I identify as socially liberal and fiscally conservative on most issues. My political identity is respected and accepted by the AHI.

The AHI has also provided me with opportunities I would be able to find nowhere else. I was fortunate to be accepted to the WAPONS (Washington Program on National Security) program, open to students from across the country but limited to less than twenty per year, attending with two other Hamilton students and a dozen from various institutions across the nation. Led by the sweet and respected Dr. Juliana Pilon, former Professor of Politics and Culture and Director of the Center for Culture and Security at the Institute of World Politics in Washington DC, the program took us around the city and politically around the world, from dawn to dusk, speaking with influential figures who work in a variety of venues involving national security. I had the unique opportunity to have discussions with Raytheon lobbyists speaking about how defense contracts operate, a Brigadier General of the U.S. Army who operated in

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member of the Schengen Area. Can they leave the EU next week? Not a chance in hell. Italy is not independent enough, stable enough, and to be perfectly honest, does not have smart enough leadership. I don't trust Salvini, Conte, or Gentolini with my life. The first thing I would fix is the internal problems in Italy. They need a stable and competent government that people can trust before they even think about leaving the EU.

*Gabriele:* Italy should definitely not leave the EU. Unlike the U.K., we do not have a robust economy. It's pretty weak for the most part, and it's very tourist-oriented and service-oriented. We are not big exporters of important materials or goods. We export fancy clothes and fancy cars, but Gucci and Ferrari are not the reason most people are employed in Italy. So it would be silly to rely on frivolous exports. Italy is also in massive debt, and Germany has helped

a lot with money so it doesn't fall under like Greece. It would be like shooting themselves in the foot to leave. Maybe a country like Holland, Denmark, or Austria could leave, because they have much more robust economies and governments that function much better than Italy. The EU is almost like a babysitter for Italian governments.

*In one sentence, how has the EU affected your life?*

*Chiara:* The EU has opened my eyes politically and culturally, as it has enabled me to see so many different cultures and learn how to interact with people and appreciate people with different ways of life than my own, to see different political ideologies and how the world actually runs. Visiting and seeing everything firsthand teaches you a lot, and I

appreciate this, despite my criticism of how outdated the EU is and the many problems it has inadvertently created.

*Gabriele:* The EU has made my life easier with the ability to travel without having much difficulty. I fly a lot, especially when I was living in Italy and traveling to visit family members in the U.S. Traveling from Rome to Frankfurt to Los Angeles, or Rome to Paris to LA, and being able to go through the lines quickly without passports is really nice. And flying back into the EU is nice. There are two customs lines, one for EU passengers and another for non-EU passengers, and it can be up to three times faster for EU passengers. You just show them your identification and they let you go through.

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THE AHI . . . cont.

Afghanistan and described his personal experience, experts in Middle Eastern politics who offered enlightened perspectives on deteriorating Israeli-Palestinian relations and nuclear proliferation, and representatives from the International Monetary Fund's Polish delegation who addressed the future of cryptocurrency in regard to

she invited the whole WAPONS delegation to her home outside the city, where we had coffee, hors d'oeuvres, and dinner-table chats about her and her accomplished husband Dr. Roger Pilon's antics in graduate school and beyond. It was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had to date.

The WAPONS program was one

The opportunities I have had through the AHI are unparalleled in quality and unmatched in perspective. A community that welcomes dissenting opinions and will challenge members and non-members alike with occasions to analyze political and apolitical topics, the AHI takes a facts-based and reasoned approach

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national and global economic agendas.

Dr. Pilon radiated expertise, energy, and passion for every trip we took on our two-week journey, and that enthusiasm clearly permeated the program's atmosphere. Even after hours, when she went home after a long day of leading "her children" around the capital, the students often met to discuss the day's events together with her right-hand man, Mason Goad (a scholar and graduate student pursuing a higher degree in International Security), who assisted in all daily activities.

As if Dr. Pilon's connections allowing her to bring in a variety of high-profile figures weren't enough,

of the best summer experiences in which I've been involved. Informative and engaging, exhausting but worth every minute, it helped foster new understandings of the meaning of national security, including the importance of collective action and collaboration in finding modern, creative solutions to difficult, timeless problems. This opportunity was possible only through the coordinated efforts of leaders of the AHI, especially its president Dr. Robert Paquette and Dr. Pilon, one of its Senior Fellows. My experience with the AHI has been everything I expected and more – accepting, engaging, philosophical, and academic.

with which every member of the Hamilton Community should engage. Whether you agree with the right-leaning tendencies of the AHI's president and staff or not, it is always beneficial to understand and discuss the reasoning and opinions in alternatives to one's own beliefs, to stray from the spiraling whirlpool of confirmation bias. The AHI offers that, in a safe environment for intellectual discussion and dissent.

## ENQUIRY

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## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

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