

European Integration Case Study

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of 27 member states, mainly situated in Europe. The United Kingdom withdrew from the EU on 31 January 2020, ending the former 28-member composition. To some, the nature and scope of this massive union or alliance are only a political and economic initiative, but in reality, the citizens of these nations have had some strange but extremely strong cultural bounds among them for centuries. Few people say that the European Union and its articles would fall one by one due to the lack of cooperation between the stakeholders of these nations, and this might well prove to be a reality shortly. But the reality is that this unparalleled and unprecedented integration between the citizens of different nations, with different languages at large, by itself is evidence of the everlasting process of future integrations. May the policies and interests of member states allow its citizens as freely as they have been, or put some formal limitations on further integration among people.

The phenomenon of European unity is not only an outcome of the Lisbon Treaty, as in 2009, or because of some economic or trade memorandums, like of Treaty of Paris of 1951 and the Treaty of Rome of 1957, which were purely economic joint ventures between these nations to improve their monetary condition after the scars of 2nd world.

The real basis of the European Union was set by the Latin Empire or by the Holy Roman Empire of the West even before historians had begun writing the history of nations and empires. The current 27 member states of the European Union, as well as the United Kingdom, were historically connected to parts of the wider Roman world, although the extent and nature of Roman rule varied across Europe.

Background

As we have covered earlier, neither the idea nor the existence of combined European states is new, but if we talk about the formal process of integration among these nations in the 21st century, historians like “Victor Hugo” 1945, who dreamt and promoted the idea of Europe brotherhood. They even argue that even after the fall of the Roman Empire back in 476, almost all of the previous European nations viewed themselves as an unfortunate part of the usurped Latin empire, and many young bodies waged wars of salvation against the invading usurpers (Nugent. 2013).

Though having a long history of union among these nations, the American and French revolutions stirred even further new momentous for the proponents of the integration among European states. Though in a very different and warlike style, European countries were even held together before

under the rule of Napoleon's Empire (Pollack 2015).

According to a few historians, the demise of Napoleon marked the actual beginning of the renaissance of European integration since Napoleon had his political reasons to curb any official and documented unions or charters of integration among themselves.

Breakage And Emergence Of Nationalism

We see a set of a family that lives together mostly in harmony, carrying a great amount of love, care and respect for each other since their habits, lifestyles, and natures are similar due to their genetic approximations. Even those with such natural love and loyalties for each other disagree on many occasions and subsequently end up bickering and physical fighting (Versluis et al., 2010)

So always remained the case of Europe. The bloodiest of wars of written human history were fought among these European neighbors. Those people who shared cultures and thoughts were at each other's necks. As there were progressive citizen federalist movements voicing for a combined and harmonious future of Europe, there were a few extreme nationalists and fascists thundering from behind the curtains who wanted their nationalities to regionally dominate. Those who were filled with nationalistic ideas came out victorious, though they were quite a few in numbers, like in Germany. But they somehow took over power at home first and then unleashed their brainwashing and propaganda tools. They were so successful in their efforts to spread hatred and raise the temperature of these nations that they ended up causing two, one after another, world wars.

But right after these wars and the penalties and patch-ups between these nations, ideas of re-integration began to flourish as swiftly as ever before (Cini, 2016). The word "United States of Europe" was delivered by Winston Churchill right at the end of the 1st World War.

Though these apparently idealistic theories couldn't thwart the mayhem of the 2nd world War, the efforts of these integrationists were evident in the formation of organizations like the League of Nations in 1929.

Post-World II Events Which Led The Bases Of Modern Day European Union

Right after the Second World War, a need arose more desperately to bind and combine all the nations of Europe to avoid flames of fire reigniting in the shape of interwar primarily and as a joint defense against any invading power secondarily (Kenealy, et al. 2015)

Subsequently, in 1948, practical steps were initiated in the Hague congress. This Hague Congress proved to be pivotal for the future of European countries and their integration process. It was in this congress that the College of Europe and European Movement International came into existence,

which to this day are serving as a center of the European Integration research forum.

The Pact Of Rome

Though emotional, cultural and ethnic similarities do play amazing roles in human lives, in the real world of hard and rough realities, the main focus of each living human remains on sustenance, and that is why I, in my opinion, consider the “Pact of Rome” to be the most logical foundation of the present day European Union, and the magnificence it achieved after the signing this free trade economic pact.

Countries like West Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy, and Belgium formed together to develop an economic consortium in 1957, which they called it European Economic Community (EEC) (Sandholtz.1998). In the same period, this group of six nations also signed an atomic energy pact, which was named the European Atomic Energy Community. Both of these six-nation cooperation treaties came into effect in 1958.

The pact of Rome was severely objected to in next coming years by France since it wanted nuclear development to be limited and précised. So, in 1965, another set of an agreement was reached, which elaborated the aims of the nuclear program and its future objectives.

Enlargement Of Nations Entering Economic Pact Of Rome

After the success of combined efforts by the signatories of the Rome pact, in 1973, other countries like Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Norway also joined the pact. Later, in 1981, Greece joined the economic pact, and in 1986, Spain and Portugal joined the club.

One of the most significant developments that spurred out of the Rome Pact was the pavement for the “Schengen Agreement” in 1985; this agreement gave a real sense of union and integration to the citizens of the entire European world. The opening of the borders and free traveling for Europeans within European countries opened new doors of opportunity in every signal aspect of European life (Wiener 1998). Subsequently, a single European Union Flag was designed and used as a trademark of unity.

Four years later, in 1990, a major event of the fall of the Soviet Union occurred, which set the Eastern Bloc, the west of Germany free, and allowed a greater Greater Germany to reunify and strengthen the already massive power of combined nations.

Further disintegration of the former Soviet Union brought countries from Eastern Europe, like Malta and Cyprus, into the fold of the European Union in 1993.

Treaty Of Maastricht & Lisbon

In the 21st century, the phenomenon of the European Union was officially established in 1993, when the Treaty of Maastricht was formally signed by all nations, including Austria, Sweden and Finland. Later in the year 2002, official currency was lounged from banks to replace national currencies in all of its member states. This currency was called the “Euro” (Baldwin. 2006), which became the second-largest currency within a year of its circulation.

In 2013, Croatia became the 28th and the last nation to join the European Union, but before that, major structural and regulatory legal laws were made and enacted for each nation of the union to follow while dealing with other member nations of the union.

Difficulties Faced By The Union

As we have been discussing in detail, the European relationship has remained one of the most unique of all others to be found in the history of unions and alliances. When we were talking about the romantic side of this unparalleled integration of 27 member states, we didn’t mean that there are no problems whatsoever.

The journey of the European Union had generally been very complicated to manipulate since we are talking about around 4,475,757 km² (1,728,099 sq mi) of the landscape, roughly 450 million people from 27 countries with 24 official languages. So, as per this baffling number, to believe that there can be such massive institutionalization integration of such diverse ethnicities by itself is an achievement worthy of the highest appreciation.

But the problems are there, yet unsettled, and few are deteriorating to the extent of no return, and others are in the pipeline to get worse; let’s have a look at the major and existential problems faced by the organization called European Union:

The United Kingdom, Brexit, And EU

The United Kingdom, the second most powerful and stable economy of the European Union, has been in disagreement on many different issues, which she considered to be just a liability to its economy (Gros, 1996). Though one of the oldest proponents and facilitators of European integration, it later found itself in the middle of depression-ridden nations. Considering itself to be stranded, the House of Commons, the United Kingdom’s elected members, took a decision and called polling on whether to stay in the union or not. Each time the votes have been polled, the thumping majority have voted in favor, leaving the membership of the European Union, as per the privilege given to all member states in Article 50, and adopting the term “Brexit,” which officially means “Britain to Exit.”

However, some sections of British intelligentsia have been foreboding any such move as Brexit because they had some calculations about a massive economic slump due to it. And it remained true to some extent when the British pound went into a 15% slump on the very next day it voted in favor of Brexit. But it didn't affect the overall British economy seriously, and the pound recovered its losses against the dollar within a few days.

Paris-Berlin Strife

One of the major problems faced by the entire working structure of the European Union is the adamant and fractious strife between two of the leading countries of the European Union. The relationship between two neighbors and member states of the organization gets so heated that incidents of heads of state.

Accusing each other of interfering in the internal politics of the other states and trying to topple governments were recorded in the European Union's yearly general meetings. Pictures of German Chancellor "Angela Merkel" were transformed into "Hitler's" in local newspapers in France due to her austerity policies enforced in Europe (Majone. 2006). Few German diplomats had complained about increasingly anti-German behavior from their counterparts. Though the stakes are high, and the track record of both countries tells their prowess in leading and maintaining affairs, in their inter-relations, they have proved themselves childish intransigents, blocking others' ways, which is subsequently hampering the process of progress. Though both sides accuse each other of deliberate obstinacy, few of the current, as well as unsettled historical issues, have remained the bone cause of this behavior by both sides. A few of them should have some elaboration.

Monetary Policies

The present disagreements are genuinely about monetary policies, primarily caused by Germany.

The matter of fact is that Germany is gradually finding itself to be in a situation, where Great Britain found itself and finally decided to leave the union as a solution to its impending burdens. So Germany somehow tries to make and enforce such monetary policies, which might help them reduce the pressure on their economy and allow others to share the burden collectively. France and other Southern European Union member states don't let any such moves by Germans, which might cause their economy to suffer from repression. Likewise, any proposal in France is believed to be self-centered and rejected abruptly by the Germans, even without considering the proposal's objectives, as was the case of the French proposed "European Banking Union."

Revenge Policies Between The Two Nations

Since France has been one of the most significant colonial powers of the 20th century, only next to Great Britain, it had to this day some liking of jumping into other conflicts as peacekeeping. The matter of fact is that France, along with five African countries from the Sahel region, has formed an anti-terrorism force of 5000 soldiers, specialized and dedicated to counter-terrorism in the Sahel region. So France remains at the heart of all warring activities actively (Borzel, 2000).

Back in 2012, France was preparing a force of peacekeeping for its Mali mission, which by law was French responsibility since Mali was a French colony. France, in pursuit of sharing the moral responsibility and garnering troops for peace purposes, submitted a proposal to European Union Headquarters.

The proposal was discarded quite abruptly and unceremoniously mainly by the German Chancellor “Angela Merkel.” In an argument during the discussion on the proposal, Germany maintained that since this was the sole responsibility of France to look after her former colonies, it wasn’t binding on other members of the organization to spare their men for war. So France, dispelled, dishonored and furious, was blocked and consequently had to go out alone for its peacekeeping mission.

Later that same year, came the usual session for “Greek and Italy” monetary Bailout. This time, it was France that was ready to strike back as revenge for the callous treatment it had from its co-member states at large and by its German foe in particular. Since Germany is considered to be the most stable and affluent nation in the entire European Union economically, so naturally, the responsibility lies primarily on the Germans to help co-members in need of the hour. But France had the other view about helping fiction. France, while straightly and rather bluntly denying taking any part in granting monetary bailout to these co-members, stated That since it’s the Germans who are exporting their products for business to these courtiers who are looking for bailouts, so it’s not binding on any other nation to help them buy German productions, but it’s only the Germans, who have to take care of the situation!

Refugee Influx Crisis

The Arab Spring of 2011 marked one of the worst refugee crises in history, mass migration worldwide. It was estimated only in 2015, around one million crossed into Europe, causing an overwhelming crisis for the respective countries to cope with. Mass migration from civil war-ridden countries like Syria, Iraq, Libya, Eritrea, and Afghanistan in fluxed towards Turkish seas to sail into Europe for a better future.

Germany stood first and most kind to these helpless migrants and granted asylum to around 476,000 asylum seekers, mainly from Syria. Hungary was next in line, which received and granted asylum to around 177,130 refugees in 2015.

Though very generous on their part in helping stranded and homeless people, concern was raised abruptly because of a lack of preparations, funds, and even human resources. Especially in countries like Greece, which has already been facing an acute monetary depression for almost half a decade and which is the gateway for almost 90% of refugees pouring into Europe from Turkish maritime passages, the load has become unbearable. On the other hand, the majority of European people are afraid to live side by side with these migrants, who are mainly Muslims (Van Houtum. 2007). Even there is discontentment among the general European mindset that there are potential extremist elements among the refugees who can wreak havoc at any time once they are given equal rights of living between them.

Turkey, on the other hand, is the main facilitator of refugees traveling from the Turkish mainland through its sea to around the world. Member nations European Union have repeatedly requested Turkey to curb or at least lessen the flow of migrants, but Turkey has repeatedly shown its inability to help out in the situation. Rather Turkish foreign office is using the scenario to its political advantage.

Russian Re-Emergence

Along with all the up stated problems, one of the most serious concerns for the European Union and its member states is the re-emergence of Russia as a superpower or regional power on the international stage once again. Russia is finicky about meddling in its neighbor`s affairs. Being a neighbor is not the only qualifying standard for Russia to start causing a disturbance in other countries, but a matter of fact that Russia, under the dynamic leadership of “Vladimir Putin” has changed its approach to making interest out of countries. Russia is not only looking for its interest anymore, but rather it’s looking to dominate once again the region, which engulfs large parts of the Balkans and adjacent, which is part of the European Union, as part of its satellites, or to form a collision, similar to Warsaw of the cold war era.

Conclusion

As we have discussed in fair detail about the past and present of the European Union, the area to predict or speculate is its future. The future of the organization, its member states and their relationship among themselves.

According to a very high number of political scientists and thinkers, the European Union and its institutions are bound to dissolve in utter dysfunction and failure. And one of the reasons for it is their ever-increasing reliance on the United States of America. The United States and the E.U are partners in NATO, which has a united fighting force with the name of the Security Council United Nations. Now, the presence of entire E.U nations in that fighting force is not even symbolic. Instead, almost all of the European Union member states rely on the United States when the threat resounds from the Russian side.

So, all of the E.U. members have to plan and invest a lot more in their military spending to avoid Russian slow but visibly steady encroachments toward the center of Europe. Secondly, as has been the case of the United Kingdom and Brexit, Brussels had no satisfying answers to the logical questions of the United Kingdom. Since the example is set by Brexit, and many like Germans and French must have the same questions, there have to be some basic changes in the policy-making of Brussels, changes which might make deals mutually beneficial for all the countries included, rather than the culture of one consecutively giving and other constantly asking.

Mutual benefits would be in the interest of nations involved in the EU, which would determine the future and existence of the union and its future dream of integration in years to come.

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