

The main goal of european integration after wwii

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



Abstract

This essay charts the original motivations for the project of European integration, referring to the political and economic circumstances prevailing in Western Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. In addition, this essay tackles the evolution of the European project in the context of the increased globalisation of the system of states since the 1970s. This work also examines the viability of European project from the perspective of the emerging multipolarity of the international order.

Introduction

One of the most salient features of the configuration of the international political system in the aftermath of World War Two was the end of the internal balance of power in the Western part of the European continent. The conflagration which took place between 1939-1945 had devastated the financial resources of the United Kingdom, which had been used in order to fight a war of national. In addition, the destruction which took place in Western Europe severely diminished the capacity of the industrial nations of Europe to reconstitute themselves as independent centres of power (Judt, 2005: 43). Furthermore, the continent had been invaded by two extra-territorial powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, which became entangled in a political conflict that divided Europe into a Communist and a US sphere of influence respectively. The project of European integration evolved in order to contain Communist expansionism and to tie Western Europe into a bloc of trading nations amenable to the free market philosophies espoused by the United States (Keukeleire and

MacNaughtan, 2008: 48). This essay will begin by charting the original motivations for the project of European integration, making reference to the circumstances prevailing in Western Europe in the wake of the Second World War. This essay then proceeds to tackle the evolution of the European project in the context of the increased globalisation of the international political system since the 1970s. Finally, the viability of the European project is examined in the context of the emerging multipolarity of the international order.

The original motivations for European integration

At the end of the Second World War, the main industrial powers of the Western part of the European continent had been emasculated by an internecine war that pitted the Axis powers against the liberal democracies, destroyed by the Nazi advance into Western Europe (Judt, 2005: 43). The intervention of the United States was influential in securing the victory of the Allies over the Axis powers. At the same time, the Soviet Army invasion of the Eastern part of the continent produced an important fracture in the political order of the continent, since it prevented the possibility of the restoration of the internal balance of power as it existed before World War Two (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 80). The looming confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union prompted Washington to entrench a semi-independent centre of power in one of the areas earmarked as the 'industrial perimeter' of the world, comprising the Western part of Germany, France, Italy and the BENELUX countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) (Nolan, 2012: 92). This policy was meant to contain the

Communist advance into the richest part of the continent and to ensure that once economically rehabilitated, these industrial economies would not attempt to pursue the autarkic policies which had been responsible for hampering world trade during the 1930s, ultimately leading to the onset of the Second World War. In order to successfully implement this policy, Washington ensured that the industrial economies of the Western part of Europe would receive Marshall Plan funds, geared towards reconstituting the economic mechanisms disrupted by the war (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 69). In addition, the Truman Doctrine posited that the United States would assist countries threatened by Communist infiltration, particularly in the Mediterranean basin, which Washington wanted to secure due to civilisational reasons. It pays to add that in the wake of the war, the United States had substantial military capabilities deployed in Western Europe, including Germany, which was occupied by US, British and French military forces (Bache, George and Bulmer, 2011: 94). The intensification of the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union prompted Washington to establish the conditions for a common security structure in the form of NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). NATO's Charter provided that an attack on any of the member states by an external force would prompt a military response by the other countries belonging to the organisation. At the same time, Washington worked for the pooling of economic resources between the industrial economies of Western Europe (Hix and Hoyland, 2011: 95). By 1950, EURATOM and the European Coal and Steel Organisation had been created with the purposes of ensuring that French and German industries would not be in direct competition with each

other; hence avoiding the possibility of conflict. (Yesilada and Wood, 2009: 88) The most momentous milestone in the process of economic integration would be the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which guaranteed the free movement of people goods and capital amongst the member states of the European Economic Community (EEC), made up of West Germany, France, Italy and the BENELUX countries. It should be added that the United Kingdom was left out of the initial integration project due to a lack of European vocation and the ties that bound London to the Commonwealth (Judt, 2005: 43). In addition, there was also a possibility of establishing an independent centre of power in Western Europe, based on a putative London-Paris axis, that could have acted as a 'third force', in addition to a US-led bloc and a Soviet sphere of influence.

Nevertheless, West Germany had joined NATO in 1955, officially ending the internal balance of power that was part and parcel of the European system of states since the Peace of Westphalia (1648). The architecture of the international financial and economic system was also conducive to the project of European integration (Yesilada and Wood, 2009: 40). The Bretton Woods system, established in 1944, anchored the major Western European currencies to the US dollar, whose value was backed by gold. Furthermore, the United States had lowered tariffs for European exports, hence propelling an economic boom that lasted until 1973 (Schmidt, 2006: 72). In addition, it is import to remark that US intervention had enabled the democratisation of Germany and Italy and the establishment of a prosperous and free community of nations in a continent which was always fractured by internal divisions. In this regard, it could be argued that the United States had a

civilisational interest in promoting European integration, due to the cultural ties that bind America to the Western European nations (Nolan, 2012: 83). It is possible to argue that the political realities of the Cold War provided an enormous impetus for the establishment of a project of European integration based on the principles of social market economics and liberal democracy. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the drive towards economic European integration begun in earnest during the Nazi conquest of Western Europe (Alesina and Giavazzi, 2008: 49). The Nazi war effort entailed that the industrial economies of the continent served the production needs of the German Army. Consequently, significant industrial and transport links were established. These developments led to the expansion of the productive capabilities of France, Italy and the BENELUX countries. These factors contributed to the success of the integration enterprise, which was anchored by the political and military sponsorship provided by the United States.

The process of European integration in the context of globalisation

It is possible to argue that the evolution of the Cold War signposted the development of the project of European integration. Towards the 1970s, the relative decline of the United States, severely hit by the economic stagnation and the political turmoil generated by the Vietnam War, and the decline of the Soviet Union, created significant changes in the make up of the international political system. Furthermore, the abandonment of the gold standard by the Nixon administration and the oil crisis that quadrupled that price of crude petroleum in 1973 created a further impetus for European integration (Cini and Perez-Solorzano Borragan, 2010: 79). The shift of the

production system from the Western productive areas to the Far East created the possibility of an evolution towards a multipolar international order and the increasing irrelevance of the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. The EEC reacted to these events by putting forward the idea of a single European currency and initiating the process of enlargement that absorbed United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark into the organisation. It may be posited that the Western European nations became more independent from a political standpoint, as seen in the reluctance of Germany to allow the deployment of US Pershing Missiles in its territory during the 1980s (Brown Wells, 2007: 72). The process of European integration became relevant upon the end of the Cold War, when the EEC began to work towards absorbing the Eastern bloc into its political and economic structures. At the same time, European integration was a useful mechanism in order to contain the potentially resurgent power of reunified Germany. The end of the Cold War facilitated the advent of globalisation, marked by an increased internationalisation of the systems of production and consumption. The need to remain competitive in the new international economic environment compelled the European Union, established in 1992, to launch another wave of enlargement and set up a common regional currency to facilitate trade amongst the European nations (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 91). It should be added that the United States remained a supporter of the project of European integration, as it ensured that interstate relations in the continent would be remain peaceful (Vachudova, 2005: 70). In addition, the emerging multipolarity of the international order impelled Washington to retain a close link with Europe, seen as an important

market for trade and investment. The end of the Cold War has not derived in the reconstitution of a revisionist projection of the power on the part of Germany (Brown Wells, 2007: 50). The Berlin Republic has remained firmly rooted in the European and Atlantic institutions. Moreover, Germany has retained strong political links with France, reassuring Paris about Germany's intention to focus on shoring up its economic power rather than its military capabilities. It is worth noting that upon the end of the Cold War, Francois Mitterrand, the French President, imposed the creation of the euro as the main caveat for acquiescing to the reunification of Germany (Alesina and Giavazzi, 2008: 39). The willingness of Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, to agree to this provision, is indicative of a consistent German policy, pning from the end of the Second World War to the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, to shun any ' special path' as part of its projection of power (Bache, George and Bulmer, 2011: 73). Germany, as the pivot of the European integration project, has been influential in securing the expansion of the EU towards the East, absorbing the Eastern part of the country and several new member states from 1995 until the present day (Rosamond, 2000: 40). Furthermore, Germany remained a significant ally of the United States in the international political system, contributing to defray the costs of the Second Gulf War, and participating in several Nevertheless, the European integration project has attached to, in its most recent conception, a measure of independence from the political power of the United States. To be sure, the linkage of the EU member states to NATO and the assiduous trade and investment relations between America and Europe continue to prop up the Atlantic alliance in a significant manner. However, EU powers such as

Germany and France have also expressed some concerns regarding the unilateralist stance taken by the United States in connection to the War in Iraq (2003). As a result of these developments, it may be argued that the project of European integration, whilst desired by the main members states of the EU and the United States, has attached to it an element of political independence that relates to the emerging multipolarity of the international order (Brown Wells, 2007: 59). To be sure, the transatlantic partnership remains strong. However, the European Union has acquired a more independent stance that stems from the need to engage with the emerging economies of the globalised world (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 116).

The viability of the European integration project in the contemporary context

In its most recent formulation, the European integration project has shown a profound divergence of interests between Germany and the Northern European members of the eurozone, and the stagnant economies of Southern Europe. Whilst before the launch of the euro these economies could devalue themselves out of a recession by making their products more competitive in world markets, their membership of the euro restricts their capacity for independent action (Cini and Perez-Solorzano Borragan, 2010: 62). In addition, keeping up with the strict criteria on inflation and debt targets set by the Maastricht Treaty creates significant problems for countries that had grown accustomed to a relatively high level of inflation in order to boost their economies, as in the case of Italy and Spain (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan, 2008: 51). The only choice presented to the eurozone

member states in order to preserve the common currency as the pivotal element of European integration is to impose austerity measures for the sake of restoring economic growth. This needs to be accompanied by a commitment on the part of Germany to become the guarantor of the debt incurred by the less rich nations of the eurozone (Hix and Hoyland, 2011: 66). This is bound to cause further frictions between Northern and Southern European nations. Furthermore, the onset of the world's financial crisis in 2008 has seen a resurgence of extremist political parties that want to restore national independence, not least to stem the tide of immigrants from Eastern European nations. In spite of this grim outlook the viability of the European integration project remains connected to the preservation of peace in the European continent and the opportunities afforded to its citizens by belonging to the biggest economy in the world (Ginsberg, 2010: 59). The projection of power of the European Union allows member states to enjoy trade and investment opportunities with the emerging economies of the globalised world. Furthermore, the Atlantic connection ensures that the EU does not have to spend a substantial amount of money in building up its military capabilities, since NATO retains its central role as the guarantor of European security. In a globalised world, the role of the EU is to ensure that the goods and services produced in the different member states can be sold without hindrance in other European markets (Leonard, 2006: 45). Since the EU is biggest exporter and importer of goods and services in the world, we can identify a prevalence of economic factors that provide good rationale for the continuation of the process of integration (Schmidt, 2006: 82). This is one of the reasons why the European integration project retains a high level

of relevance. The process of globalisation impels nations to group themselves into regional blocs that enable them to compete for the distribution of goods and services in the international markets. The prevalence of trade economics has been a constant feature behind the motivation for a greater and closer economic and political union in the European continent. To be sure, the conditions in the international order have changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War. In the globalised world only great economic spaces will be in a position to negotiate aspects related to the spheres of trade, the environment and international security (Habermas, 2012: 117). However, the motivations behind the process of European integration have retained an element of constancy that have enabled Europeans to enjoy the highest living standards in the world and restrained the possibility of internal conflict (Dinan, 2010: 81). This is the direct result of the manner in which the process of European integration was articulated during the Cold War and the way in which the European nations respond to the challenges of the time. At the same time, it could be argued that the project of European integration needs to become recalibrated in order to take into account the demands posed by the public for more accountability in the implementation of inter-governmental policy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it could be argued that the premises that established the process of European integration remain relevant in the contemporary world. The political context of the Cold War provided a powerful motivation for the establishment of political and economic mechanisms that allowed for a

sustained period of economic growth and stability in the European continent. The political sponsorship given by the United States anchored the process of European integration within the parameters of free market economics and liberal democracy (Dedman, 2009: 75). These parameters have been implanted upon the nations that were absorbed into the European structures during the 2000s. The evolution of the project of European integration was signposted by the manner in which the Cold War unfolded since its inception. This entailed that the Western European nations recovered a measured of political independence by the 1970s, due to the three decades of uninterrupted economic growth and the security provided by the Atlantic security structures. Towards the end of the Cold War, the European integration project was reconstituted in order to respond to the challenges of the globalised world. Consequently, economic considerations prevailed over any attempts to impose a higher level of political harmonisation (Bache, George and Bulmer, 2011: 98). In fact, the functionalist approach seems to have been the preferred way to maintain the vibrancy of the European integration project. This means that although the European Union will not become a supranational state, it will retain a high level of relevance due to its economic power (Cini and Perez-Solorzano Borragan, 2010: 119). Nevertheless, for the European integration project to retain its purpose, there needs to be a fuller spectrum of economic convergence, which means that the Southern members of the eurozone will have to adhere to strict austerity measures. In addition, Germany will have to adopt a more vigorous stance when it comes to the establishment of mechanisms for the economic harmonisation of the eurozone (Alesina, and Giavazzi, 2008: 45). For all the

reasons cited above, it can be concluded that the European integration project, although derived from the political expediencies of the origins of the Cold War, remains a workable way in which European nations can insert themselves in the globalised world.

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