

Analysing levels of european integration in the 1970s politics essay



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How much, and for what reasons did the process of European integration slow down in the 1970s? The decade of 1970s is very often considered as the time of stagnation or slowing down in the process of European integration. Some analysts like Caporaso and Keeler call this period 'doldrums era of the 'Dark Ages' for the Community',^[1] or like Dinan characterises it a harmonization in European integration.^[2] However, can we say that the phrase harmonization equals stagnation? The more adequate appears to be Andrew Moravcsik claiming, that the particular era can be considered twofold, from the federalist point of view it was the time of stagnation, but on the other hand, it was also 'a decade of both consolidation and innovation'.^[3] For the reason of such diverse outlooks towards that certain time of European integration, in order to testify and assess how much process of integration in European Community slowed down, important is to explore and explain the achievements and innovations that were implemented during the whole 1970s. Nevertheless, in order to obtain more objective picture crucial is to include in that considerations also all failures of the decade. Furthermore, with the intention to determine a reason for the lack of significant progress in 1970s, the domestic situation of member states and events that took place inside the Community will be studied in this essay, but also for the enhancement of the general conclusion, an overall condition of Europe and the world in that specific period of time. 1970s seems to be a phase of changes in directions of integration in Europe, therefore it is vital to found out why states are considered to act more separately than collectively in that time, and began to be, to a greater extent than in previous decades, concerned with their national interests. Next, another fundamental question emerges, i. e. why consensus and unanimity

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in decision-making became so difficult to achieve. In addition, it is essential to mention, that the starting point for the decade was Hague summit, held in 1969, which 'prepared the ground for further advances', [4] in other words, during that summit aims were established to be attained during next few years. Consequently, it will be analysed whether and to what extent such goals has been realised during the decade. In order to make this essay clearer, in the first part will be analysed how much the process of European integration slowed down, and in the second will be provided reasons for such occurrence. In the conclusions the main points of the essay will be summarised and there will be created an overall picture of the decade.

The attempt of assessing how much did the process of European integration slow down in the 1970s appears to be problematic, because this particular decade, as well as all previous periods beginning from the end of the Second World War, differ substantially in many scopes, consequently it is hard to compare them. All the most meaningful agreements and treaties for the establishment the European Community, and then finally European Union have been inaugurated in 1950s, namely Treaty of Paris launching ECSC, then establishment of WEU, as well as Treaty of Rome founding EEC and EURATOM. Also 1960s is important time, when EEC and Custom Unions were instituted, the European Community was formed, and the Hague summit took place determining strands and goals for the next decade. It can be argued that in that context 1970s are seen as quite poor period, because of the lack of any significant treaties or innovations, which would be meaningful from our perspective, over 30 years later. Nevertheless, during 1970s numerous important improvements were introduced, but in order to obtain

more insightful and comprehensive image of the overall decade it is essential to revise not only all the most principal achievements of that time, but also all attempts and efforts that have been undertaken, even if they ended up unsuccessfully.

After the Hague summit first meeting aiming to determine necessary task to fulfil in order to make a progress in functioning European Community was Paris summit, where has been agreed by the participants, to modify the present Community into more official form of political cooperation, namely European Union. Although Paris summit can be regarded as an attempt to develop European collaboration, its contribution into genuine integration is rather slight, some find it as the summit defining intention for further integration rather than producing any vital advancement. Nevertheless, Paris summit had an impact on few important innovations that have been achieved later. For instance, during that summit has been made significant effort to initiate collective environmental policy, Dinan claims Paris summit was ' the genesis of the EC's first Environmental Action Program'.^[5] Another successful outcome of Paris summit was the implementation of the European Social Fund in 1974 ' to improve the quality of life of its citizens'.^[6]

Next noteworthy achievement of the 1970s was the signing of the Lomé Convention in 1975, the trade agreement between the EC and group of 46 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. That enhanced the meaning of the EC in the international arena. In the result, for the first time in history of the European Community, European Political Cooperation has been launched, granting the EC official significance as the unity in foreign policy. From that moment during numerous international meetings of states or institutions, the <https://assignbuster.com/analysing-levels-of-european-integration-in-the-1970s-politics-essay/>

EC was capable to perform and participate as the single body of cohesive states, acting as a representation of all member states of the European Community.

Furthermore, the Treaty of Luxembourg in 1970 extended the European Parliament's role in budgetary dispositions and regulations.[7]It was not, however, the only improvement affecting the functioning of the European Parliament during that certain decade. At the decay of the 1970s, after long lasting struggles, mainly because of the long process of legislative amendments in British Parliament,[8]in 1979 for the first time direct elections to European Parliament were held in all member states, which consolidated the EC democratically, and granted the EC more legitimate power.

Nonetheless, European Parliament's innovation was not the only progress in context of institutional improvements that have been reached during 1970s. Even more important than Parliamentary elections emerges to be the creation of the European Council in 1974, as the body for the regular meetings of heads of all the member states to determine the direction for further progress. Some analysts call the decade of 1970s ' an era of summitry'.[9]Nevertheless, the European Council was first authorised body of the EC, where political leaders of the member states were formally able to meet and discuss the future of the Community and the collective interests.

Moreover, 1970s was a time of significant progress towards Monetary Union, which was not established eventually in that decade, and it is very often regarded as the main failure of that decade, but the reasons for that will be

explained later in that essay. However, negotiations in that field have been inaugurated. The most successive achievements towards future European Monetary Union was in 1978 the decision to implement of the European Monetary System.[10]

All the above programs and creations were of the significant importance primarily because they are concerned as the policy of deepening of integration. In spite of that, 1970s was the period of the first enlargement of the European Community, subsequently first step of the policy of widening. In 1973 three states, namely United Kingdom, Denmark, and Ireland joined to the six states that founded the community in 1957. Even if we say that all endeavours during the whole decade of 1970s aiming to deepen European integration was not very successful, we definitely cannot deny the significance of the first enlargements of the Community. Therefore, at least from that perspective, 1970s appears to be crucial period of time for the EU's future.

Above examples prove that 1970s is not accurately regarded as the total stagnation in European integration, both in the scope of deepening as well as widening. Notwithstanding, the process of integration certainly slowed down to a significant exchange in that particular decade. In 1970s vital is the fact that the character of the European integration has diametrically changed in a comparison to previous periods. In further part of that essay the reasons for that phenomenon will be clarified, and the motives for difficulties with launching certain innovations, for instance European Monetary Union, will be explained. One of the arising questions whilst studying this period of time is

why negotiations did last so long, and therefore impede implementation of any modernising treaties and resolutions.

Crucial factor whilst considering the reasons for such slowing down is a historical context. Important here is the fact, that Europe, but also the whole world, was, we might say, in the middle of the Cold War. Started process of détente, literary divided Europe, and two ideological camps in the struggle for the influence in the world politics, also lasting Vietnam War, all of that factors had a significant impact on the domestic politics of the European Community.

During Hague summit has been agreed to introduce European Monetary System, however the EC was already divided into two camps of opinions and perceptions about the future reforms. On the one side stand economists, namely group created by Germany, Netherlands and to a certain extent Italy; they opted for harmonisation of the economic policies in Europe in the first line. On the other side were situated France, backed by Belgium and Luxembourg, namely monetarist camp proposing the monetary cooperation first, and then economic collaboration. In the result Werner Report has been created calling for simultaneous and gradual implementation of both strategies in near future.[11]Subsequently, common currency and Central Bank as the controlling organ coordinating the financial and currency policy of the EC was decided to be introduced. However, future events of the decade undermined the whole process. One might ask why, for instance, Vietnam War had any impact on the domestic situation of the EC, but that together with another important event during that certain decade resulted in the economic instability, and in a consequence, major changes in world

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economic policies. More precisely, in 1971 Europe has been hit by the international monetary crisis, which began in US, country involved in ideological and military Cold War struggle for hegemonic power, and greatly weakened by military operations in Vietnam. Here can be seen how worldwide events directly affect the EC's domestic situation. Monetary crisis was furthermore enhanced by the huge American payment deficit, which also prominently destabilised European financial difficulties. The European Community's member states struggled to find a suitable resolution of the monetary crisis; however the opinions how to face the problem were diverse. On the one hand, Germany proposed to join the EC's floating system; however, France opposed that solution and opted, on the other hand, for devaluation of dollar. In Council meeting no agreement has been achieved, and finally Germany and Netherlands floated their currencies. In 1972 during Paris summit an agreement to a certain extent has been reached, and plan for the implementation of the European Monetary cooperation Fund was set up. Moreover, the EC states obliged themselves to reduce fluctuation and eventually launched the resolution called snake, in order to consolidate currency system among the EC's member states. Notwithstanding, snake failed later on as the result of the oil crisis, which occurred as the consequence of Yom Kippur war between Arab states and Israel in 1973. Oil crisis led to an occurrence called stagflation, and that affected the interior stability of the whole EC.

The national bargaining between monetarists and economists demonstrates changes in the character of the process of European integration. The importance of effect in changing leading ideology of the integration was

proclaimed in 2000 by Joschka Fischer, who said ' In the past, European integration was based on the " Monnet method" with its communitarization approach in European institutions and policy.'[12]Founding fathers of the Community, Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, advocated the communitarian vision of European unity, they believed in the possibility of creation of federation of European states, and supranational institutions as the leading and joining organs of the community. It is apparent in 1960s the existence in French foreign policy of the resistance to the supranationalism and federalism. It was particularly evident in ' de Gaulle's vision of an intergovernmental Europe',[13]resulted in long opposition of an enlargement of the EC and protagonist policy protecting national interests. Changes of the leading figures of the member states lessened a little these national bargaining, and subsequently when Pompidou became the president of France, British membership was no longer resisted. Nevertheless, after final enlargement in 1973 there aroused another problem, namely Euroscepticism, mainly in UK and Denmark, what became another issue in decision-making process. The outcome of the intergovernmental atmosphere and changed attitudes of the member states, enhanced additionally by the economic crisis, were predominantly evident in the work of the European Council. Some analysts even claim that the European Council in 1970s ' was symbolic of a profoundly intergovernmental era in the history of the EU.'[14]All of the above factors extremely weakened and undermined the decision-making process.

Further aspect that caused the difficulty in the reaching an agreement was the 1973's enlargements. It was not only, as has been said above, due to the

less pro-European policy in new members than among other EC's states, but mainly because the effect it had on the European institutions. It was the first enlargements in the history of EU, and institutions such as, for example, the Commission, faced the problem of the growing number of diplomats and bureaucrats. Another problem of the European Community, beside the insufficiency of the European institutions weakened by the enlargement, was the lack of the leadership. As Jean Monnet claimed in 1974: 'What is lacking more than anything in European affairs ... is authority. Discussion is organised: decision is not. By themselves the existing Community institutions are not strong enough.' [15]

Moreover, substantial impact on the process of European integration in 1970s to a great extent had a domestic situation of the member states, in particular of Germany, France, and UK. The Western Europe in 1970s had to face numerous problems of the various natures, economic, social as well as political. Rising unemployment, high inflation, and decline of the domestic growth forced the members of the EC to secure their national interests rather than prioritise greater integration. As Urwin argued 'In the 1960s the average annual growth rate within the OECD countries had been 4.8 per cent; in the 1970s it sank to 3.4 per cent.' [16] Another issue was the spread of the terrorist threat, as the outcome of movements of 1968 in Germany, namely RAF organisation, and in France as well. However, also the importance of the feminist notion cannot be omitted, as it has a great impact on the economic situation, mainly because larger amount of women were seeking for work. As long as feminist has usually positive effect on the social progress of states, in that situation it exacerbated the scale of

unemployment. Additionally, strikes in UK, and rising opposition in the political arena in Italy and Denmark, caused that member states' governments focused more on the problems stroking their countries and autonomous solutions, rather than integration. Many of those problems aroused because of the financial crisis of 1970s, and affected the decision-making process in European institutions, what subsequently slowed down the negotiations, reaching of agreements, and finally integration per se.

To summarise, the whole period since the 1969 Hague summit until, we may say 1979 ' wise men's report' had been very unsuccessful period for the European integration. Three appointed experts characterised in their report in 1979 bad condition of the Community and had blamed for that ' substantive problems stemming from economic and political constraints'.

[17]On the one hand, there have been some substantive improvements achieved during 1970s, such as first enlargement, EPC, or implementation of the European Council, nevertheless although the long struggles and negotiations the European Monetary System has not been launched, and member states acted more separately than collectively, securing their national interests. Derek Urwin argues that the EC ' failed to develop a concerted economic or political response to the crisis, indicating perhaps how easily narrower national interests could uproot the common structure.' [18]The main reasons for the slowing down in the integration appear to be monetary and economic crisis, exacerbated by war in the Middle East; domestic problems of the member states, which enhanced the intergovernmental character of the European cooperation; and first enlargement, even if also seen as an achievement in a context of the

widening, it had a great impact of the stability of the European institutions and decision-making process. We certainly can admit that to a significant extend process of European integration did slow down in 1970s, nevertheless that stagnation was a motivation for actions that have been undertaken in 1980s and further decades to recover a condition of the EC and improve the integration, which finally led to the signing of the Maastrich Treaty in 1992, establishing European Union.

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