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Historical events in the European integration procedure (1945-2020)

Dr. Sanjeev Kumar

Abstract

The development of European Union integration, in which it currently participate, was launched soon after the end of the World War second. It relies on tragic experiences connected with the largest and also most tragic armed conflict in human history, caused by Nazi Germany. After the war, in Europe, and more specifically in its western part, there arose conditions favourable for the start of a new, planned integration of the countries of the Old Continent. Western European leaders decided to undertake coordinated actions aiming at the reconstruction of European countries and their economies and introduction of a new political order, which could guarantee the security of nations and give a chance for their successful development in the future. The article explores an introduction to the origins, nature and development of European integration since 1945. Particular emphasis is placed on the conditions for integration at the domestic, European, and international levels. It critically examines how historians have conceptualized and explained Europe, the history of economic and political integration, and the attitudes of individual states to the process of European integration.

Keywords: Benelux, banking union, continent, eurosceptic, integration, zollverein, custom union, reconstruction, confederation, reformation, schengen agreement etc.

1. Introduction

Europe had to witness a second upheaval, World War II (1939-1945), so that it fully becomes aware of the suicidal irrationality that nationalist rivalry had led the continent to. The necessity of some type of European integration in a new way to reorder the European political map became evident. In 1949, following again an American initiative, most of Western European democratic States founded, alongside the USA and Canada, the NATO, the great Western military alliance confronted with the Soviet Union. The aim is to provide accurate information for research and education purposes that gives the fullest possible insight into the history of a united Europe. Far from focusing purely on the European Communities and European Union, the 'Historical events' section strives to cover all the major regional and sub-regional initiatives for political, economic, social, military, scientific and cultural integration and unification among the countries of Europe.

One year before, in 1948, the Benelux (Customs Union between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) had started working by introducing a common external tariff. This Union had been created in 1944, before the end of the Second World War. The setting up of the Council of Europe, in 1949, meant another major step forward. The Council tried to incite political cooperation among European countries. However, its statutes did not claim as an objective neither the union, nor the federation of States, and no sort of surrender of sovereignty is expected from the member States. Their main function has been to reinforce the democratic system and the human rights in the member States.

2. Goals of the European Union

The goals of the European Union are

- Promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens
- Offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders
- Sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress, and environmental protection
- Combat social exclusion and discrimination
- Promote scientific and technological progress

- Enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries
- Respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity
- Establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro.

3. Values of European Union

The EU values are common to the EU countries in a society in which inclusion, tolerance, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination prevail. These values are an integral part of our European way of life:

- Human dignity is inviolable. It must be respected, protected and constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.
- Freedom of movement gives citizens the right to move and reside freely within the Union.
- The functioning of the EU is founded on representative democracy. Being a European citizen also means enjoying political rights.
- Equality is about equal rights for all citizens before the law. The principle of equality between women and men underpins all European policies and is the basis for European integration.
- Human rights are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

These goals and values form the basis of the EU and are laid out in the Lisbon Treaty and the EU Charter of fundamental rights.

4. Research Methodology

The research has been prepared using a multidisciplinary approach involving contemporary history, law and political science to examine the degree of influence of the various endogenous and exogenous factors that resulted in the revival of the European integration process. Basically

research is based on primary and secondary sources of information. The primary sources of information data are collected from government reports and officers interviews. The data collected from the secondary sources of information, it is classified and presented in the form of simple tables for easy understanding. In addition to the literature collected through journals, books, articles, seminar reports.

5. Ideas of European Unity (before 1945)

Europe as a cultural sphere is first used during the Carolingian dynasty to encompass the Latin Church (as opposed to Eastern Orthodoxy). Military unions of “European powers” in the medieval and early modern period were directed against the threat of Islamic expansion. Thus, in the wake of the Fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, George of Podebrady, a Hussite king of Bohemia, proposed in 1464 a union of European, Christian nations against the Turks (Wen, 2013: 109) [1]. In 1693, William Penn looked at the devastation of war in Europe and wrote of a “European dyet, or parliament”, to prevent further war, without further defining how such an institution would fit into the Immanuel Kant's 1795 proposal for an “eternal peace congress” political reality of Europe at the time (Penn; Murphy 2002) [9].

In 1728, Abbot Charles de Saint-Pierre proposed the creation of a European league of 18 sovereign states, with common treasury, no borders and an economic union. After the American Revolutionary War the vision of a United States of Europe, similar to the United States of America, was shared by a few prominent Europeans, notably the Marquis de Lafayette and Tadeusz Kościuszko. Some suggestion of a European union can be inferred from (Boltho and Eichengreen, 2008) [2].

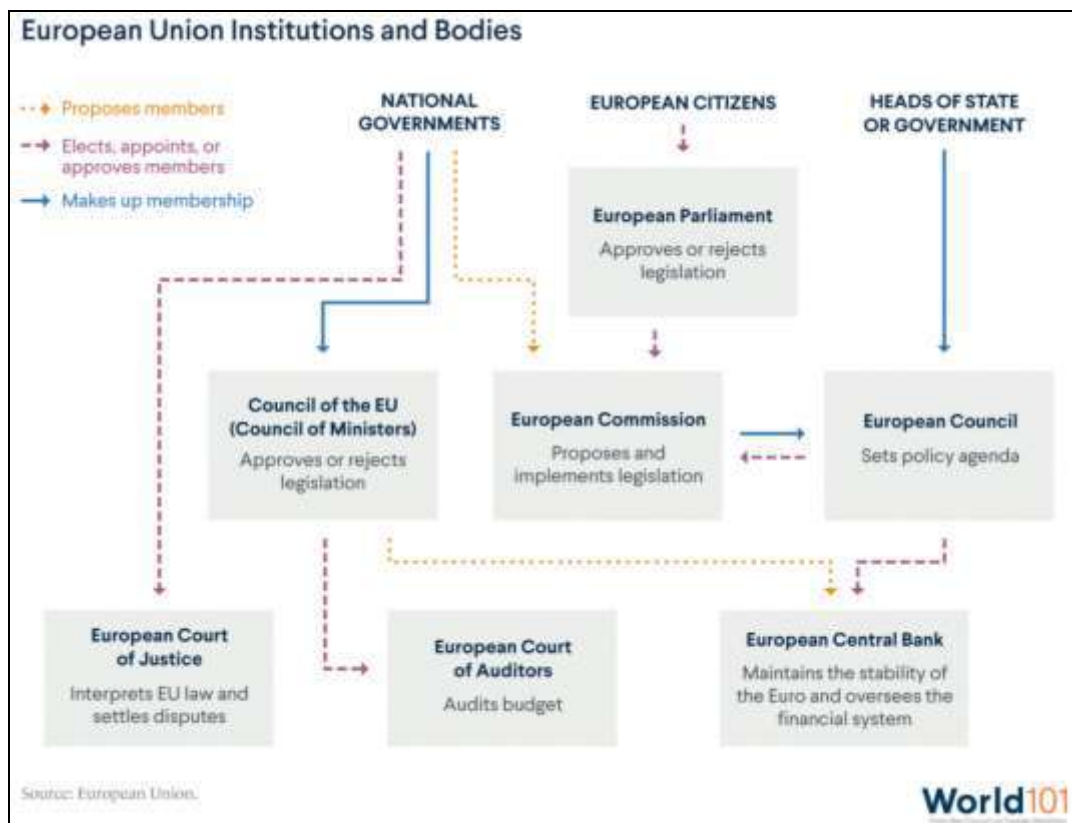


Fig 1: European union institutions and bodies

When we look at the process of unification in Europe practically and historically, it can be seen that the first constitution having similar characteristics with the EU is the Hanseatic League. The League formed in 1356. It is a prototype of the EU with cities in Northern Europe having common commercial practices, a Europe wide common currency, with its institutions to be located in city centers like Lübeck (Hirst, 2007: 49-52) ^[6]. This league collapsed in 1669 due to its clumsy structure, the rise of new rivals and the impact of the Reformation, and the emergence of the Westphalian state order. Following that, a number of unions, which were mainly based on unification of customs and trade area, were established. Among them, the Bavaria-Württemberg Customs Union (1823-33), the Middle German Commercial League (1821-31), the German Customs Union (Zollverein, 1834), the Tax Union (1834-54), the German Monetary Union (Deutscher Münzverein, 1838), the Moldovan Wallachian Customs Union (1847), the Swiss Confederation (1848, completed in 1874), the German Monetary Convention (1857), the Scandinavian Monetary Union (1875) and the Benelux (1944) were the most outstanding ones (Mattli, 1999: 4-9) ^[8]

6. During 19th Century

The concept of Europe referring to Western Europe or Germanic Europe arises in the 19th century, contrasting with the Russian Empire, as is evidenced in Russian philosopher Danilevsky's *Russia and Europe*. In the 1800s, a customs union under Napoleon Bonaparte's Continental system was promulgated in November 1806 as an embargo of British goods in the interests of the French hegemony. Felix Markham notes how during a conversation on St. Helena, Napoleon remarked, "Europe thus divided into nationalities freely formed and free internally, peace between States would have become easier: the United States of Europe would become a possibility" (Felix Markham; 1966) ^[4].

In the conservative reaction after Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the German Confederation (German: *Deutscher Bund*) was established as a loose association of thirty-eight sovereign German states formed by the Congress of Vienna. Napoleon had swept away the Holy Roman Empire and simplified the map of Germany. In 1834, the Zollverein "Customs Union" was formed among the states of the Confederation, to create better trade flow and reduce internal competition.

United States of Europe was also the name of the concept presented by Jastrzębowski "The envisioned United States of Europe was to be an international organization rather than a super state" (Jastrzębowski, 1831). Italian writer and politician Giuseppe Mazzini called for the creation of a federation of European republics in 1843. This set the stage for perhaps the best known early proposal for peaceful unification, through cooperation and equality of membership, made by the pacifist Victor Hugo in 1847. Hugo favoured the creation of "a supreme, sovereign senate, which will be to Europe what parliament, is to England" and said "A day will come when all nations on our continent will form a European brotherhood. A day will come when we shall see the United States of America and the United States of Europe face to face, reaching out for each other

across the seas."

6.1 The Beginnings of Cooperation (1945 – 1959)

The European Union is set up with the aim of ending the frequent and bloody wars between neighbours, which culminated in the Second World War. As of 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community begins to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure lasting peace. The six founding countries are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The 1950s are dominated by a cold war between east and west. Protests in Hungary against the Communist regime are put down by Soviet tanks in 1956. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome creates the European Economic Community (EEC), or "Common Market" (Henisz, Witold, 2000) ^[5].

6.2 A Period of Economic Growth (1960 – 1969)

The 1960s is a good period for the economy, helped by the fact that EU countries stop charging custom duties when they trade with each other. They also agree joint control over food production, so that everybody now has enough to eat and soon there is even surplus agricultural produce. May 1968 becomes famous for student riots in Paris, and many changes in society and behaviour become associated with the so-called '68 Generation'.

6.3 A Growing Community (1970 – 1979)

Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom join the European Union on 1 January 1973, raising the number of Member States to nine. The short, yet brutal, Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 results in an energy crisis and economic problems in Europe. The last right-wing dictatorships in Europe come to an end with the overthrow of the Salazar regime in Portugal in 1974 and the death of General Franco of Spain in 1975. The EU regional policy starts to transfer huge sums of money (Henisz, Witold; 2000) ^[5], to create jobs and infrastructure in poorer areas. The European Parliament increases its influence in EU affairs and in 1979 all citizens can, for the first time, elect their members directly. The fight against pollution intensifies in the 1970s. The EU adopts laws to protect the environment, introducing the notion of 'the polluter pays' for the first time.

6.4 The Changing Face of Europe (1980 – 1989)

The Polish trade union, *Solidarność*, and its leader Lech Wałęsa, become household names across Europe and the world following the Gdansk shipyard strikes in the summer of 1980. In 1981, Greece becomes the 10th member of the EU, and Spain and Portugal follow five years later. In 1986 the Single European Act is signed. This is a treaty which provides the basis for a vast six-year programme aimed at sorting out the problems with the free flow of trade across EU borders and thus creates the 'Single Market' (Bache, and S. Bulmer; 2011) ^[1]. There is major political upheaval when, on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall is pulled down and the border between East and West Germany is opened for the first time in 28 years. This leads to the reunification of Germany, when both East and West Germany are united in October 1990.



Sources: European Union Political Map Britannica 2020

Fig 2: European Union

6.5 A Europe without Frontiers (1990 – 1999)

With the collapse of communism across Central and Eastern Europe, Europeans become closer neighbours. In 1993 the Single Market is completed with the ‘four freedoms’ of: movement of goods, services, people and money. The 1990s is also the decade of two treaties: the “Maastricht Treaty” on European Union in 1993 and the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999. People are concerned about how to protect the environment and also how Europeans can act together when it comes to security and defense matters. In 1995 the EU gains three more new members: Austria, Finland and Sweden. A small village in Luxembourg gives its name to the ‘Schengen’ agreements that gradually allow people to travel without having their passports checked at the borders. Millions of young people study in other countries with EU support. Communication is made easier as more and more people start using mobile phones and the internet.

6.6 Further Expansion (2000 – 2009)

The Euro is now the new currency for many Europeans. During the decade more and more countries adopt the euro. 11 September 2001 becomes synonymous with the “War on Terror” after hijacked airliners are flown into buildings in New York and Washington. EU countries begin to work much more closely together to fight crime. The political divisions between east and west Europe are finally declared healed when no fewer than 10 new countries join the EU in 2004, followed by Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. A financial crisis hits the global economy in September 2008 (Campos and Coricelli; 2012) [3]. The Treaty of Lisbon is ratified by all EU countries before entering into force in 2009. It provides the EU with modern institutions and more

efficient working methods.

6.7 A Challenging Decade (2010 – 2019)

The global economic crisis strikes hard in Europe. The EU helps several countries to confront their difficulties and establishes the 'Banking Union' to ensure safer and more reliable banks. In 2012, the European Union is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Croatia becomes the 28th member of the EU in 2013. Climate change is still high on the agenda and leaders agree to reduce harmful emissions. European elections are held in 2014 and more Eurosceptic are elected into the European Parliament (Krastev, 2020) [7]. A new security policy is established in the wake of the annexation of Crimea by Russia. Religious extremism increases in the Middle East and various countries and regions around the world, leading to unrest and wars which result in many people fleeing their homes and seeking refuge in Europe. The EU is not only faced with the dilemma of how to take care of them, but also finds itself the target of several terrorist attacks.

6.8 COVID-19 Pandemic and the Road to Recovery (2020-2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic triggers a major public health emergency and unprecedented economic slowdown. The EU and its member countries work together to support healthcare systems, contain the spread of the virus, and secure vaccines for people in the EU and further afield. To help support the recovery, leaders agree the largest stimulus package ever financed from the EU budget: the focus is on a green and digital recovery as the EU works to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 (Krastev, 2020) [7]. The UK

leaves the European Union after 47 years of membership, opening a new chapter in its relationship with the European Union.

6.7 COVID-19 Crises and EU Emerge a Global Player (2019-2024)

The COVID-19 pandemic has lead Europeans to radically reassess their view of the global order with a majority now keen on more EU-wide cooperation to face global challenges, new research has found. The EU remains one of the few serious international actors that believe in, and still mostly practices, a liberal view of world order as articulated in its Grand Strategic Vision Statement and echoed in its New 2019-2024 Strategy (Krstev, 2020) [7]. The challenge facing the EU is what it might usefully do to secure positive reform to that order. The EU's external relations cannot be just about geopolitics because, taken literally; the notion of geopolitics is guided by geographical factors in the determination of external political, security and economic relations.

7. Concluding Remarks

The process of European integration has brought about the largest and most open common market in the world, the Euro, and the banking Union. The idea of a United Europe was not entirely new. Enlightenment philosophers, especially those who traveled abroad as Montesquieu did, already recognized the deep similarity of the Western countries, which as Perry Anderson rediscovered in one of his essays are essentially like a "Single Republic." On the other side of the eighteenth-century Atlantic, George Washington was one of the earliest statesmen to speak of a United States of Europe as the natural outcome of processes already at work in Europe. United States of Europe movements spread later, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, with the famous French writer Victor Hugo as one of the movement's high priests.

The historical development of the European Union evolved in a regional cooperation organization after the Second World War. The Europe had suffered a big loss of human and economic damage from the two World Wars in the twentieth century. In order not to repeat human mistakes in the future and united on questions of regional and International importance, drew attention to socio-economic and strategic importance. In the development of the European Union as an organization of regional cooperation, today it has made a great contribution to the formation of other more organizations of the world society. As a result of the impact of COVID-19, the European Union states emerged as a world power in terms of cooperation and security. A study of the historical analysis of the integration of the European Union makes it clear that it is achieving its goals.

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