

European Integration

The process of enlargement of the European Union is one of the great testaments of political and economic co-operation of our time, on a scale of grandiose proportions. The European continent is the setting of a complex, fascinating, and persistently dynamic political and economic history. From the classical ancient times of the Hellenic and Roman world, through the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, Industrial Revolution, and Post-Modernity, Europe has maintained its status of world leader in the ever enlightening process of political and economic development. Countless philosophers argued in favour of various socio-human ideas and agendas, which were at times at odds with each other. Immanuel Kant presented elaborate and extensive arguments, which sought to rationalize that the true mission of human beings' lives was living in accordance to pure reason, free of empiricist influence. Directly opposing the rigid and dogmatic Kantianism was John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism, which based at its foundation the "Greatest Happiness Principle," which simply, and to great argumentative effect, asserted that the mission of human beings in life was one of increasing pleasure and diminishing pain, for the greatest number of people possible, including one's self. Friedrich Nietzsche's nihilism against religious fervour called into question the supremacy of divinity and the lowliness of humanity, thus for the first time giving the European mind a sense of mastery over one's nature, through a power struggle to become the "super man," the solitary lone wolf, who stands taller and above the ordinary masses. Through a revolutionary economic expansion of Adam Smith's "Inquiry Into the Wealth of Nations," Karl Marx's immense

and priceless work of political economy, “Das Kapital” laid before the modern worker and capitalist alike the formulation and explanation of the mechanisms of free market economy, which together with Marx’s predictions of capitalism’s toppling by the proletarian masses, represents a grand finale of a great period of European socio-economic, political thought. The ideas of all of these great minds, taken into account, must indeed be remembered when seeking to assess and understand the contemporary European philosophy of economic and political integration. The 18th “Century of Reason” and the subsequent 19th “Imperialist Century” gave rise to many of today’s most astonishing political and economic ideas, which remain at the forefront of the foundations of the European Union. The 20th “Century of Warfare,” by far the bloodiest and most chilling in the scale of brutality and violence, demonstrated not just to Europeans, but humankind altogether, the importance of the concept of mutual co-existence and inter-dependent co-operation. Following the carnage of the Second World War, many prominent political philosophers deemed that the only way to prevent a third conflict, which would undoubtedly result in the destruction of humankind, would be to unify the European states politically and economically. This is the underlying philosophy at the foundation of the European Union, the world’s most powerful economic entity.

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty formally founded the European Union as a supranational union of states. The treaty was a final step in a process which began in 1952, with the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community. The integration of Western European countries was seen as a necessary step in the rejuvenation of economic standard and against a Soviet military invasion of Western Europe. Thus, in order to stop the expansion of Soviet communism and to resurrect the economic self-sufficiency of

Europe, the idea of European integration was born. Simultaneous with the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Western European unification progressed at a rapid pace. The 1957 Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community, which transformed into the European Union in 1992, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. The establishment of the European Union precipitated two crucial developments: the creation of a common currency and the creation of a common European free trade market. The unexpected collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact meant that the governing bodies of the European Union were faced with new issues. Former adversaries of the Eastern block became viable trading partners and their territories possible investment grounds for the expansion of western and northern European industries. It was thus, necessary to reorganize the European Union's outlook as one of no longer discriminating attitudes towards Eastern Europe, but instead one of a united Europe, including both of the formerly divided sides. As could be expected, this liberal policy of admission into the European Union experienced friction and opposition by the rightist elements of various capitalist European societies. The aftermath of the September 11 events ensured that radical nationalists like Jean-Marie Le Pen in France and Jorg Haidar in Austria played upon the fears of French and Austrian citizens, of an alleged "invasion" by non-European and non-Christian immigrants, who bring "crime, terrorism, and radical Islam."¹ The infamous historical treatment of Eastern European nations as inherently "under-civilized, barbaric, savage, and Oriental" is a fair depiction of the kind of attitudes that were directed against this neglected and unwanted part of Europe. The presence of large numbers of Yiddish and Gypsy populations in Eastern Europe only further added to the intolerance directed against this predominantly Slavic

part of the Old World. Throughout centuries, the Eastern fringes of Europe were seen as semi-civilized, and considered not truly European. The culmination of such attitudes reached their zenith in during the rise and fall of xenophobic, fascist National Socialism, which began with the collapse of the unstable German Weimar Republic and the rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933, and the destruction of Hitler's armies at the hands of the Soviet Red Army in the heart of Berlin, in May 1945. The horrors of the Second World War sparked crucial questions about the reconstruction of the New World Order and the new Europe. The Cold War between Eastern European Marxist-Socialism and Western European Capitalism froze the crucial questions of European division into a deadlock for half a century. It was thus not surprising that the sudden collapse of the U.S.S.R., Eastern European communism, and the chilling and violent death of Yugoslavia, overwhelmed the Western European governments, due to the fact that they did not have a clear idea of which approach to take in order to integrate these parts of Europe with the West. The Maastricht Treaty, which transformed the European Economic Community into the contemporary European Union, was an attempt to take into account the changing face of European affairs. That the concept of what is European broadened to include formerly rejected nations was best demonstrated by the admission of eight Eastern European nations into the European Union in 2004. Europe now faces a new era of increased economic co-operation and political unification.

The establishment of a common European Union is a great economic and political achievement of the late 20th century. It represents a step towards the solidification of a

supranational union of states, which is seeking to overcome regional differences that have divided the European nations for centuries. The 1957 Treaty of the European Economic Community says that any European country may apply to join the community.[i] The European Union itself is governed by four main institutions: the Commission, Council of Ministers, Parliament, and Court. The Commission is the administrative arm that initiates laws and directives. [ii] The Council of Ministers is made up of senior representatives of member states, which decides what laws and directives to approve.[iii] It is the main decision making body of the European Union. European Parliament was initially an advisory body, although it now shares real legislative The powers with the Council of Ministers.[iv] The ever-more important Court of Justice interprets EU laws and reconciles differences with the laws of member states.[v] In order for these highly bureaucratic institutions to function, giving up some sovereignty is a required necessity. The European Union is assuming increasing responsibilities of national defense of the member nations. Even though the Eastern and Central European member nations have much improvement to make in the area of environmental issues, the European Union will contribute toward their resolution with financial assistance. The majority of the electorate of the candidate nations for membership feel that admission to the Union will result in increased financial investment in their domestic industrial and service sectors, and will boost their national economies.[vi]

After a country applies, the Commission must give its opinion on whether a nation can qualify for membership status. This opinion can be overridden or accepted by the Council of Ministers. There is a set of criteria for admission into the European Union, which was established at the 1993 Copenhagen Summit. A candidate country must have stable

institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights, and protection of minorities. It must also have a market economy and accept European Union's laws and policies.[vii] Any single member state can veto any candidate for European Union membership. After an applicant nation is judged to satisfy the Copenhagen criteria, it is allowed to move to the next stage of the ascension process, which is the negotiation of the ascension treaty. The Treaty enforces the candidate nations' adherence to European Union laws and the implementation of those laws. In the case that a country is unable to adapt to the standards of European Union regulations, they will usually be given a transition period in which to complete the adaptation to the laws and regulations, which they can negotiate with the European Court. Upon agreement with a candidate of all aspects of the ascension treaty, the treaty must be ratified by the European Parliament, all member states, and the parliament of the candidate country.[viii] Upon ratification, the candidate nation becomes a full fledged member of the European Union.

New members, specifically the Eastern European members are required to accept the Euro as their national currency. They are, almost without exception, more than eager to do so, due to the fact that the Euro gives them a sense of economic security and unity with the more economically stable Western Europe. The acceptance of the Euro is the final and arguably most significant step in the entrance of a nation into the European Union. It is thus the final step in a process that is gradually turning history's gunpowder continent into a united confederation of common interests.

The European Union is the culmination of a few thousand years of political and historical development in the collective development of a European consciousness. The

establishment of a common European currency precipitated the integration of the Eastern fringes of Europe, as well as those Balkan parts, which were for so long derogatorily referred to as “Other” and “Savage” Europe. This is undoubtedly a positive development, due to the fact that the opening up of previously inter-closed cultures to each other will ensure greater understanding and tolerance of difference on a continent, which made persecution of difference infamous in history. Whether Europe follows the path of federalism, or perhaps the ideal of “Europe of Fatherlands,” as envisioned by the former Polish president Aleksander Kwasniewski, remains to be seen. It can generally be understood that an overwhelming majority of Europeans would strongly oppose the rise of any individual country within the European Union as a continental great power, which could precipitate a motion of catastrophic events witnessed by Europeans in the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, an overwhelming number of people across the continent see the European Union as a promise of hope and better days, for a continent that has historically experienced a shortage of utilitarian categorical imperative. That the world economy would prosper from the existence of a united, peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Europe is unquestionable, and it remains to be seen whether the European Union can fulfill the promise of supranational co-existence, formulated earlier in the former Yugoslav federation, and whether it can learn from the experiences of the past and create a prosperous, progressive European future.

Footnotes:**“Europe Unites: The EU’s Eastern Enlargement” Poole A. Peter**

[i] Page 7, “The Process of Enlargement”

[ii] Page 4, “EU Institutions”

[iii] Page 5, “EU Institutions”

[iv] Page 5, “EU Institutions”

[v] Page 5, “EU Institutions”

[vi] “The Central and Eastern European Countries and the European Union” Michael Artis, Anindya Banerjee, Massimiliano Marcellino. Page 74.

[vii] “Europe Unites: The EU’s Eastern Enlargement” Poole A. Peter. “Copenhagen Criteria” page 8.

[viii] “Europe Unites: The EU’s Eastern Enlargement” Poole A. Peter. “Ratifying Accession Treaty” page 10

Bibliography

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