EU in Transition or a Failed Project?

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Abstract

[The European Union (EU) has come a long way since its inception in late 1950s as the European Economic Community, now regarded as the most notable example of regional integration in the world. Yet, the union has witnessed several challenges – among them economic crisis, the dominance of large members within the Union and seemingly less favorable treatment towards new and aspiring members – which, to many, have casted doubts over the future of the arrangement, particularly the common currency and the monetary union. Nationalist tendencies have also risen across the members. Nonetheless, the EU remains far from an imminent failure. What is needed is to make the EU more democratic in its decision making and functioning. - Editors.]

Introduction

More than fifty years down the passage of history, the EU enjoys the credit of being the model of modern regional organizations though not without challenges that put the union at peril. In 2009, the Lisbon treaty brought together EU leaders with the vision to offset the constantly changing, ever more interconnected world, globalisation, demographic shifts, climate change, need for sustainable energy sources and new security threats. Prior to and following the Lisbon treaty, EU moved from one challenge to another and most traumatic of all was the Eurozone menace that has shaken the EU right to her root. The aftermath of the financial crisis implicated the EU as being vulnerable; even though the vulnerability of the EU has always been silent but easily ignitable. In the wake of the crisis, nationalist tendency gripped and swept through the region and thus further showcased the extent to which the EU could be susceptible to foreign influence, particularly in the case of China. The traumatic situation surrounding the Eurozone crisis, the rise of right-wing politics/nationalism, the discourse over erosion of state sovereignty for institutional sovereignty and the debate on the extent to which the EU is democratic was further exacerbated by the level of distrust among the EU citizens, especially the youth bewildered by joblessness. These among other variables culminated and buttressed the sensational argument of the 'end of the EU'.

Interrogatively, the supposed EU failure demands a great deal of empirical evidence, otherwise it will simply be contemptuous of the organization that has survived more than half a century and is considered a model for many modern regional organizations. Even if we

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partially consent to the critics of the EU, any supposition and argument of a failed European Union project independent of global socio-economic and political factors will stand no less an incomplete analysis.

It is safe to hold that the present state of affairs in the EU has generated two competing debates, between the protagonist-transitionist and antagonist-failure respectively. Be that has it may, this piece takes an analysis of the EU through the challenge and response paradigm on one hand and the efficiency of the key EU institutions on the other.

Why supposition of Failure?

The founding fathers of the European Economic Community realised but contained their differences for something greater beyond politicians and states’ egoism. The long-term objective of the community was cognitive-politico-economic regionalism, European nativity and cultural integration tailored at fostering collective responsible. The idea of the community following the war was a calculated effort by the European powers to prove to their respective citizens that Europe is not all about war and importantly European leaders can have a round-table deliberation and would not be snared by their differences to resolving exigent issues.

As to the recent fallouts of the Eurozone crisis, these delineate a unique scenario since the creation of the European Union. The Eurozone crisis was a trauma having a snowballing effect. Inactive issues became active and the future of pending issues became gloomy, with particular reference to the possibility and plausibility of further enlargement of the EU.

The crisis gave life to ideological tussle, political difference, EU member scepticism and nationalist propensity ensnared the Union from finding a swift solution to her problems. Such inability aggravated the discontentment of European citizens for EU institutions, a state of mind complicated by rising unemployment amongst European youth across the continent. The cracks in the union gave-in to external interference (in terms of IMF and China involvement) and confidence of few EU member-states to openly challenge union principle and threat of exiting the Euro on their own accord. It may be argued by some that the EU is more or less falling apart, thus a failed project.

Such multidimensional issues confronting the EU generated mixed feelings and reactions, partially reflected in the outcome of recent EU parliament’s election. In the opinion-making corridors, street level discussions and outside Europe, the debate was more or less of a failing institution that lacks the prowess to right itself at the most crucial time, though that does not exempt the most cynical position of EU disintegration.
Differences/Challenges in the EU

It might interest us at this juncture to shed more light on why the EU seemingly looks moving but inherently trapped by European-styled political schism. European politics is structured along an aged and rooted political system, though dynamic in its own right. Recent most debates on the continent depict politics that can be characterized as per the following discussion.

Foremost of all is the perennial debate over state and institutional sovereignty. The founding fathers resolved to create a community, powerful enough to integrate state sovereignty into more powerful authority for effective regional operation and as a common voice for Europeans beyond the continent. Classical realism reminds us that regardless of the necessity for co-operation and integration leading to a regional organization, state’s tendency to totally forfeit sovereign power is less likely (Hoffman 1987). Although such tendency has been part of the EU all along, but the fallout of the Eurozone crisis has raised the tempo. There is a growing feeling that the EU has encroached and will further impinge the autonomy of state in certain areas outside the purview of the regional organization.

Secondly, the right rising tide of rightist and nationalist parties across the continent draws inspiration and strength from prevailing anxiety about the EU. In fact, rightist politicians have capitalised on such misgiving and have tapped into public sentiment against the EU to foster their view. The truth is that rightist mantra won’t have gotten any audience if there was no forerunning anti-EU sentiment or suspicion about the whole project of the EU. The mantra of nationalism and rightist tendency has become a phenomenon amongst rich and relatively rich EU countries. Rightist agitation has been very clear; supporting the idea of confederation of the EU instead of federalism. Two, believe continental Europe should be rebranded as truly European, hence against any foreign intrusion in terms of ideas, ideologies, philosophies, persons that either do not appreciate or share the (intellectual, cultural, socio-political and economic) heritage of Europe. They are nothing less than the ‘neo-nativist’. This group of European opinion makers never hide their feeling for the disintegration of the EU and thus against further EU enlargement.

1Hoffmann, “Hans Morgenthau: The Limits and Influence of "Realism," 70-81.
Thirdly, elements of democracy includes equality for all, fair level ground and free environment for different political ideologies to showcase their worth. The EU parliament is undoubtedly punctuated by variety of political parties mostly in the shape of alliances, but to what extent has such political diversity aided common and right political decision for the citizenry. The political divide was clearly indicative to the ‘decision making delay’ that plagued the EU, following the Eurozone crisis, the mostly challenging of EU crises.

The worth, essence and efficiency of an institution can best be measured during the period of crisis, the expediency of an institution to matters of exigency. The fallouts of the Eurozone crisis almost resulted in the disintegration of the union due to the lack of swift expedient decision to resolving the crisis. Exit threat from the EU by certain member states adds to the debate of solidarity and sense of collective responsibility.

European Parliament

The Lisbon treaty was signed arduously with the aim that the European Union will begin a new phase with a common and unifying voice in global politics, and a greater level of cooperation and integration. But since the birth of the treaty, the union has witnessed continuously unfurling realities ranging from institutional and structural changes. Most recently, the Franco-German proposal for overhauling the Lisbon treaty is indication that the EU has not reached the juncture of perfection but instead is in transition, which in some view is a warning of the end. Instead of consolidation, the treaty marked the bifurcation of powers in the whole structural arrangement of the EU. It has empowered the European Parliament and Council, whilst disempowered the Commission and Council of Ministers.

Besides, Paul Pierson reminds us of the realist narrative as he reiterates power politics within the European institutions “they recognize, however, that these crucial collective organizations cannot function without significant power, and that the authority required must grow as the tasks addressed at the European level expand and become more complex. For their part, European institutions such as the Commission, the European Court of Justice, and the European Parliament are always looking for opportunities to enhance their powers.” (Pierson 1996, 22)

The European parliament is replete with incompatible bedfellows, divided ideologically, often espousing and raising nationalist instead of unionist rhythm and thus a crack within the EU. Such schism

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2Barrett, “First Amendment?”
3Craig, The Lisbon Treaty.
4Horspool and Humphreys, European Union Law.
5Pierson, “The Path to European Integration,” 22.
is in contradiction to the vision of the founding fathers of the union; the union envisaged by the fathers should stand above ideological cleavages and against blanket ambition, devoid of vain words, but a "bold act-a constructive act." The momentous rise of nationalist cum rightist parties endangers the union. Reasonably enough, the Eurozone financial trauma did not simply "exposed the deep disconnect between voters and the institutions trying to resolve the continent's problems," but also gave a muscular support to the clamour of the nationalist cum rightist parties, whose purpose to gaining significant position in the EU parliament is geared at jeopardizing if not the eventual freezing of the process of European integration. The outcome of the recent past European parliament elections (please see the table below) speak volume, though the centrists still made it as champion, but equally delineates the footing of anti-EU parties.

Table 1
Outcome of the EU Parliament Elections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Eight Alliances in the EU Parliament</th>
<th>Numbers of Seats</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)</td>
<td>42 seats</td>
<td>5.59 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists and Democrats (S&amp;D)</td>
<td>190 seats</td>
<td>25.30 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)</td>
<td>52 seats</td>
<td>6.92 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)</td>
<td>64 seats</td>
<td>8.52 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>European People's party (EPP)</td>
<td>213 seats</td>
<td>28.36 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)</td>
<td>46 seats</td>
<td>6.13 percent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)</td>
<td>38 seats</td>
<td>5.06 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-attached Members (NI)</td>
<td>41 seats</td>
<td>5.46 percent</td>
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6McAllister, From EC to EU.
Disturbingly, EU parliamentarians are entranced in struggle over a commonly acceptable constitution to all members. The problem with such constitution is the extent to which the legal processes will resonate with the interest of both old and new members and more particularly the dominance of the EU powerhouses. This natural yet troubling parliamentary dilemma was conspicuous and unpreventable over the recent past crisis in the EU. The recent financial crisis carries no indication of strengthening the EU, rather made vivid the inherent vulnerability of the union, and seems to be strengthening the position of the EU skeptics.

Through constitutional amendments, the European parliament grabs more power, becomes unitary, confronted by ideological schism yet bewildered by the discontentment of European citizens who see the institution as losing its legitimacy. Invariably, European constitutionalism and democratization have been largely tagged with certain degree of contradiction and complex paradox and dichotomy, which often time challenges the position of national parliaments and EU legal institutions.

Nationalism

The foundation of the EU was laid on the vision of transforming state's nationalism and sovereignty into institutional sovereignty, but crisis within the EU depicts that primordial sentiments are somewhat efficacious than the vision of the founding fathers. The progressive manifestation of rightist and nationalist tendency is not unlikely jeopardy for further EU enlargement and integration. Upon the growing propensity of nationalism and EU-scepticism, integration aspiration of Western Balkan is evidently endangered and hence further disenfranchisement of the region.

The wave of rightists/nationalists and rejection of further EU enlargement stands contrary to Francis Fukuyama’s prognostic thesis of the union, "the European Union more accurately reflects what the world will look like at the end of history than the contemporary United States. The EU’s attempt to transcend sovereignty and traditional power politics by establishing a transnational rule of law is much more in line with a "post-historical" world than the Americans' continuing belief in

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12 Petersen, et. al., Paradoxes of European Legal Integration, 12-16.
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God, national sovereignty, and their military.” ¹⁴ It is hard to pin down if Fukuyama’s argument stands the test of time, giving the present scenario in the EU, wherein member states are in acquiescence to traditional nationalist sentiment.

On account of the recent Eurozone financial crisis, EU political landscape was not merely disturbed but challenged as the spirit of unity and integration trembles and by extension an affront to the rationale behind the formation of European Community.

The crisis exhibited the hibernated, implicit yet intrinsic weakness and crack within the union, as member states allowed nationalist tendency to becloud the original vision of the union and its collective responsibility. The nationalist propensity dragged the union against finding a swift solution to the imminent economic and financial trauma as the latter lingers on; reasons for why some observers nurture the sentiment of an eventual end of EU’s common market and currency, if serious mechanisms fail to be instituted.¹⁵ Any eventual collapse of the Euro, evidently shoulders a far-reaching ramification that will transcend the EU, though not without a global consequence.

The rising strength, tide and clamour of rightist narratives across the continent and most particularly amidst EU member states exacerbate the tension over EU integration. Wave of nationalism is increasingly gaining roots across Europe, a phenomenon not exclusive of the rich Western EU and non-EU countries like Switzerland that recently shot a bow and sent a chilly wave across Europe.¹⁶ Similar violation of European laws and anti-EU actions was flagged by the expected Lithuania’s Land Referendum.¹⁷ Complementing the trend, CEE countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary) and Western Balkan countries, all former communist countries are not absolved from

the frenzy nationalism. The Hungarian communication legislation (which played into the hand of China) violated EU principle of collectivity and freedom of expression, a vital component of EU definition of democracy. One point of analysis is the growingly existential struggle between national sovereignty and supranational hegemony.

European Citizenry

The European Union as a supra-national body accords second level of citizenship to all citizens of the member states. Being a citizen of any of the EU member states insinuates an automatic citizenship status of the EU. Therefore, a French and German hold political commitment and attachment to their countries respectively as the first constituency and as well to the EU. The idea of European citizenry is inextricable to the notion of civic culture. Expectantly, there should be political trust and reciprocity amongst the political elites, institutions and electorates. However, recent developments in the EU have generated two serious concerns amongst European citizens, one, the extent to which the EU is democratic and two, the readiness of the EU citizens to express their democratic duty. The laxity of EU citizens is tightly associated with the narrative of whether the EU is still democratic, relevant and accountable to its citizens.

The faltering interest and misgiving of European citizens is captured in the recent WIN/Gallup International Association polls, "Despite an unstable economic situation, our happiness index is extremely high all over the world except in Europe,"

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21 Mayoral, "Democratic Improvements in the European Union under the Lisbon Treaty."
22 WIN/Gallup International Association, "Global Result: Optimism is Back in the World."
The European economic and financial woes add to the resentments and discontentment of European youth trying to make sense out of the increasing unemployment that plagues their economies. The report of EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom presented to the European commission creates more alarming scenarios and not unlikely to accentuate the discontentment. The report focuses on the depth and cost of corruption with 28 EU countries. According to the report the true cost of the corruption and misuse of office was breathtaking, injurious to the EU economy and almost equivalent or "probably much higher" to the EU’s annual budget (120bn). What sense do we make out of this, if not adding salt on injury and as Malmstrom puts it "corruption was eroding trust in democracy and draining resources from the legal economy," meanwhile "The political commitment to really root out corruption seems to be missing." 23 This wholly justifies the assertion of José Manuel Barroso blaming EU (national) leaders for the deficit of trust against the EU institutions. 24

In similar token José Manuel Barroso blames EU leaders for the disinterested attitude of European citizens, accusing national leaders of not well representing the EU in their respective nations. "I admit that we should do more together in order to give confidence to citizens and consumers. But I also want to tell the truth: We won’t solve the problems unless each nation sees the European project as its own," 25 He further argues that the Euro experiment was a success and even at heart of crisis, the onus rest on national governments to support the stability of the common currency, without which individual states would have been deeply consumed by the financial crisis. "Without the euro and the internal market none of the member states would have managed to get out of the crisis ... all governments should now defend the euro," 26

The level of corruption and fraudulent practices in the union is increasingly weakening trust of European citizens; hence such
propensity reinforces the necessity for the proposed European Public Prosecutor, an office aimed to contain the misappropriation of union fund in member states. Although the office of European Public Prosecutor as proposed by the Lisbon treaty has generated objection amongst certain EU members, nurturing the fear that such office will overstep into national judiciary realm.  

In addition, the continent is growingly expressing a trend of disinterested and disgruntled citizenry. Understandably, the trend is accentuated on account of citizens’ dissatisfaction towards the parliament and failure by the latter to swiftly resolve the Euro-zone crisis.

In perspective, a decade trust analysis of EU citizens conducted by Eurobarometer further suggests a striking concern about the future of the EU, particularly from the perspective prism of EU citizens. Distrust is undoubtedly a major trend from 2003-2012, although there were certain fragment of optimum along the decade. Between 2008 and 2010, acute distrust became prominent, supposedly attributed to the shock of the global financial recession and the Eurozone financial trauma.

**Figure 2**

*Trust in the European Union 2003-2012*

EU citizens’ low confidence level in the union reached an astronomical height as an estimate of only 49 percent consider their country’s membership of the EU as good thing. Trust in the EU

27Stratfor, “European Public Prosecutor Controversy Raises EU Sovereignty Issues.”
The outcome of the European parliament election is indicative of the growing tendency of anti-EU sentiments amongst the European citizenry.\textsuperscript{28} Although, the centric parties alliance stood top in the recent past European parliament election, but the anti-establishment sentiments amongst the citizenry coalesced with the grudges of anti-establishment parties in EU powerhouses. The consequence of the election outcome was not hidden from the EU establishment to the extent of French President Francois Hollande, holds that the votes point to the "distrust in Europe and a fear of decline".\textsuperscript{31}

From the prism of electorate trust and participation, the election turnout was estimated around 42.54 percent a little bit below forecasted 43.1 percent. The implication of such turnout explains a lot about EU Parliament's democratic legitimacy. The latter is seemingly on the declining slope, from 62 percent in 1979 to 43 percent in the 2009 election.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{29} Boros and Vasali, “The Rise of Euroskepticism and Possible Responses prior to the 2014 European Parliament Elections.”
The Project of the EU and the Euro

The creation for a common market and single currency strengthened the project of the EU, whilst portrays how nations seek protective shield and trust through a common monetary institutional platform (Krugman and Maurice 1991). Such bandwagon is an indication and the extent to which regionalism could bolster state’s monetary interest and achieving goal through collective mechanism. Following the outbreak of the Eurozone financial crisis, traumatic climate ensued and the fear of whether or not the zone is worthy of joining became a mantra.

Regardless of the disturbing financial environment, certain aspiring Eurozone states could not compromise their integration intention as in the case of Estonia though the trauma remained one of the reasons for the broadened EU-scepticism and Euro-scepticism respectively amongst EU new members.

A nation is not unlikely to opt out from a regional organization when anticipated expectation fails to be accomplished. This is not untrue for EU-sceptic countries like Britain grappling with the notion of exit from the regional organization and same is true for other nations contending with the view that the institutional arrangement of the EU somewhat undermines their sovereign integrity. The political saga following the Greece financial breakdown vividly delineates the political fallout that engrossed the Southern Europe country.

One of the most documented aspects of European history is the protracted tussles and wars among European powers. The events of two World Wars are indelible historical facts supporting how nationalism and power-politics brought European powers to confrontational juncture. This propensity was very much visible within and without European in the shape of scramble and partition for the continents of Asia and Africa respectively.

The Second World War resultantly contributed to the political and economic exhaustion of the Europeans. The unrewarding outcome of the war was itself a realisation and a catalyst that forced European powers around negotiation table. The new realisation was an incentive for strategic cooperation beyond national borders, hence the creation of the European Economic Community.

The long standing enmity and strategic fear between Germany and France got fixed through the economic community on one hand and ultimately a common ground against Russia’s strategic interest (Friedman, 2011). The European Economic Community sealed an

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33 Krugman and Obstfeld, International Economics, 601-602.
34 Economic and Financial Affairs, “Estonia and the Euro.”
35 Pierson, “The Path to European Integration,” 133.
36 Friedman, “Germany Strategy.”
agreement between Germany and France at first against Britain following the post-World War American geo-political code, and at same time an attempt to craft a niche for devastated Europe in the new world reality.

Since its inception, Germany’s economic viability and export-oriented market remains outstanding within the union, though often times a source of concern for the rest of the union member. The fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of the Germany initiated the first concern of a powerful Germany and that was further accentuated by the mutual decision to benchmark the Euro on the German Deutschmark. The latter merit such consideration given the characterisation of German economy which outmatched its counterparts in all ramifications.

Invariably, an eventual disintegration of the Eurozone and the EU will do more havoc to the economy of Germany, "heavily dependent on exports and the European Union is critical to those exports as a free trade zone". Thus, being an essential core of the European economies, Germany’s economic hegemony and sustainability depends heavily on the survival of the EU. Any attempt of fragmentation in the EU or total collapse could be ominous to Germany’s hegemony and the rest of the region.

The wave and frequency of EU-scepticism across Europe is not just a sheer concern for the project of the EU but a tool fanning political fragmentation and sectionalism. The outcome of the recent EU parliamentary elections clearly states the intention of the anti-EU parties. Opting out of the EU resonates more with the UK Conservative party and Independent Party led by Nigel Paul Farage, than the Labour or Liberal party. Such tendency is no less incentive for EU sceptic attitude across the region especially for state, perturbed and sickened by losing much of national sovereignty to institutional sovereignty.

The manner with which Cyprus was treated is another case for analysis in the context of the EU and Euro project. Unlike other Southern countries, Cyprus, though, with a relatively small economy was singled out and treated separately, an indication that ‘all are not equal within the EU or the Orwellian prism ‘some are more equal than
others.\textsuperscript{39} Such scenario does not delineate any encouraging picture to other EU or Eurozone members, with the assumption that EU does not represent convergence of similar interest.\textsuperscript{40}

The project of the EU presented a golden opportunity to elites in the Balkan and former communist countries to re-project their countries, propagate cognitive-regionalism and reconstruct local narrative in the context of Europeanism and Europeanisation.

The anticipation of sitting in Brussels as integral decision makers of the EU is an added incentive for the western Balkan countries. Besides the political and economic benefits of the EU, decision making role remains an implicit and impetus driving the western Balkan countries towards attaining European Union Model. But the actualization of such ambition has been murky.

Though given the protracted processes, sacrifices and compromises of EU accession and integration, the former communist countries would not contemplate disintegration to say the least, although the project has estranged Romania and Bulgaria as second class states of the union.

Having the EU and Eurozone live the test of time is paramount and of strategic interest to the German. Historically, the Germanic race of North-Western Europe is synonymous to threat and fear, even the history of the mighty Roman Empire documented how tedious the subjugation of this race was hard to attain. The causative role of the Germans in the First and Second World Wars remains indelible in documented modern global political history.

**Why the EU can’t die easily?**

The evolution of the European community in the last six decades speaks a lot about a transitional, steady, resilience and formidable community paddling through developments and crises, supposedly sinking but resurfacing formidable. The EU economic and financial edifice (economic and monetary union (EMU) was structured around the German economy for certain competitive and pragmatic reasons. Ever since the union became functional and operational, there has been sizeable dependence of European market on Germany’s export economy. Invariably, the heart of the Eurozone lies in Germany and that conspicuously explicates why Berlin will cease not to muster all at her disposal to save the union from falling apart. Although, shouldering the burden of eighteen Eurozone members carries certain degree of detriment, nonetheless EMU arguably is not simply a German experiment but how the Germans draw and pull their leveraging string. The survival of the Eurozone and Germany is analogous with the debate

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40}Little, “International Regimes,” 302-305.
of China and the liberal market economy. The rise of the Chinese economy at some point generated considerable debate whether or not the emergence of China will be game changer. Would the emergence and growth of the Chinese economy perilous to the liberal economy, would China fashion out alternative system to existing liberal market system.

The overarching debate exonerates China from such propensity on the ground that the Chinese would never bite the finger that feeds them, they are currently whatever they are due to integration with the liberal market system, hence simple logic suggests that the survival of Chinese economy and maintaining existing economic tempo ultimately demand China to safeguard the liberal system. Same could be said of Germany; its surplus-export economy would have no footing let alone rooted stamina independent of the support from other Eurozone members. Understanding how much the Eurozone is to the German economy and the implication of German parliament’s failure not to act well, the German Supreme Court threw her support behind the European Stability Mechanism.41

Following her defeat in the Second World War, Germany’s strategic and political clout within the continent was not merely smashed but in addition had to face the reality of national demoralisation. The European Economic Community which steadily metamorphosed into the EU is arguably the resuscitation of German lost glory and strategic clout. From all indications, Germany has regained her strategic clout and the survival of such influence is measureable on the extent to the Germans can save the EU from disintegration. Explicably, there is an intertwine between the EU and the Germany’s economy, on one hand, the lifeline of the EU depends on Germany’s economic growth and Frankfurt/Deutschmark diplomacy and on the other, Germany’s economy will ceased to be European champion independent of the EU. Since the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Berlin wall, political hegemony has been out of the question, thus, through it stronger economy Germany has continuously pursued its strategic interest as undisputable European powerhouse.

The Franco-German centuries old enmity is an essential part of Western European history and experience. The importance of understanding the centuries old relations is akin to the extent to which the Greco-Roman history is taught as an integral of Western civilization political history. National currency has always been a symbol of sovereignty; it is absolutely unthinkable and implausible before the mid of the 20th century that the French will forfeit (currency) an element of France’s sovereignty to any institutional arrangement for peace, let

Amidst a growing and adamant Russia, the disintegration of the EU will serve a strategic defeat for Franco-German co-operation. The disintegration will reopen the vulnerability of countries that joined the union as shield against Russian influence and shattered the hope of countries waiting in the pipeline to be integrated. Any eventual dismemberment of the EU will be analogous to the fragmentation of the Soviet Union. Russia has tested her clout in Georgia and Ukraine respectively and both events had literally little or no pragmatic, far-reaching reactions from the EU. On one hand, the Europeans are fatigued of American lecturing and directing their foreign policy. Two, the Europeans are weary of war and wary of what sort of conflict to dive into. Picking a fight with Moscow is strategically fruitless, though taming Moscow from outstepping its boundaries is economically and strategically plausible through an integrated and formidable EU.

From the 14th-20th centuries, the Europeans commanded ruthless, selfish, economic, political, racial, and developmental

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hegemony. The notion of development was altogether understandable from the European lens. The Europeanisation of the world was arguably the reincarnation of the Roman dominance over the known world. The mighty Muslim Empires of the East were shattered by the development and erosion of European powers into the rest of the world. The known and formidable kingdoms and empires in Africa and Asia were not absolved from the process of Europeanisation. But the events of the 20th century halted the Europeans from further enthralment of the world. Since the creation of the EU, Europeans have somewhat resuscitated lost global hegemony, this view is resonated in the Lisbon treaty. Hence, the collapse or eventual death of the EU will insinuate a second blow to the process of Europeanisation of the world.

The blow of the 20th century saw the emergence of US-Russia world order, in the event of the second blow, the arena will not merely be conducive for Russia but it will facilitate a non-Western power full incursion on continental Europe. Indication of the incursion is already in the making but can be culminated upon the disappearance of the institution that has been guarding against full penetration. The Eurozone financial crisis exhibited the silent misgiving of countries within the European club. The crisis featured individual countries were more interested to saving their countries than the Union. Such vulnerability was noticeable to China and was easily exploited. China was ready to individually negotiate with countries on how best Beijing can help resolve their financial trauma, a step that was relatively successful. During the crisis, fear factor revolving around China economic expansionism sent threatening signal to Brussels, resounding the question whether or not China is an angel or devil.

To a considerable degree, since the initial stage of the European Union, economic co-operation and fraternity has proved to be effective in dissuading war and conflict amongst nations. Hence, the new nurtured nationalism following the Eurozone crisis could only serve a destructive purpose and therefore a challenge to the institution that changed the course of European history in the 20th century.

Conclusion

This piece subscribes and consents with the assertion that crisis is an engine of progress in European integration history.\(^{43}\) The absence of crisis somewhat suggests all is well and thus it is pointless to think of improvement. The efficiency of an institution cannot simply be measured by its productivity level but the extent to which it can absorb crisis. Therefore, Pottering argues "the very perception of crisis is a necessary condition........to mobilise the will for change and to allow progress to happen".\(^{44}\) Hence, EU resilience has always been a manifest reality and measureable on the extent to which it confront and

\(^{43}\)Kuhnhardt (a), *Crises in European Integration*.
\(^{44}\)Pottering, "Frontiers and Chances for the European Union," 132-142.
surmount challenges since its inception. Such assertion is echoed by Ash “the European project has many times moved precisely through an out of crisis”

The formative and normative periods of the EU needed to be comprehended as part of its transition, evidently not without degree of crises, challenges and adequate response to her challenges. Right from the historic summit of 1950 that brought European elites together on one platform, the Treaty of Rome and formation of the European Economic Community in 1957, the first and second enlargement processes, followed by the inclusive eastward integration that moved former communist countries closer to Western Europe democratic and economic mores, the consequential tussle between the old and new Europe, the 2004 European constitutional treaty, constitutional debacle of 2005 thrown by France and The Netherlands, the drafting of the Lisbon treaty, the debate over the creation of European presidency and foreign policy offices, “crises of” and “crises in” integration, and more recently the European financial crises, all are undisputable testimonies to the long transitional trek of the union. Undoubtedly, the EU is financially more matured following the recent past Eurozone crisis. The crisis bore out prudent and stringent financial and economic precepts that can repel the repetition of similar crisis. Consequently, crisis draws the EU towards maturity, foresight focus, deeper and convincingly integration.

One way to drive the EU out of its troubles, particularly that of the elected scorned representative is making the union more democratic. The EU can save itself from collapse through the adoption of conventions or large referendums as platform by which European citizens can really express their political liberty and acumen. This was true for the rejection of the 2005 elitist European constitution followed by a profound, inclusive participatory referendum by French and Dutch citizens and thus the existence of the Lisbon treaty. Such inclusivity offers the EU true federalism as conventions or large referendums in all EU states will reflect not just true federalism but participatory democracy, hence the actualisation of Rousseau’s principle of collective decision making and participation. In the same token, such propensity shall save the union from any sort of unnecessary criticism as being technically institutional and bureaucratic aimed at sideling national interest.

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Poettering, “Crisis as Opportunity: Problems, Challenges.”
Kuhnhardt (a), Op.Cit.
European public debate is expected not to be politicised as compared with the tendency of politicisation of issues by politicians standing as representatives of European citizens in the parliament. It is clear enough that Europe has come of age and reached that juncture, where common European sentiment is reflective almost in every EU states. One has to remind the EU aspirants that former PM of Britain, Tony Blair once said before the European Parliament (June 23, 2005) that enlargement is not a ‘a zero sum game, in which old members lose as new members gain,’ rather a compromising processes that does not end when a state ascend the union but continues for the promotion of democracy, growth in all sphere and projection of security.\(^\text{47}\)

\[^{47}\text{Duff, The Struggle for Europe’s Constitution, 203.}\]
References


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