

# **EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE:**

**- Historical-Political Frame and its Evolution  
- The Issue of the "European Identity"**

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## **Abstract**

*This article discusses the theme of the integration in Europe and more specifically: the manner in which the European Constitution will influence the future of Europe and the way the enlargement of the European Union from 15 to 25 members is influencing this process of integration.*

Some specific aspects of these subjects shall hence be explored: the Constitution of Europe, the foundations of a common foreign and security policy, the implications of the enlargement on the cohesion of the Union, on the distribution of Europe's structural funds, on the process of economic globalisation.

To be able to correctly and systematically organize all these issues of diverse nature, I would like:

- 1) to make a preliminary assessment on the historical-political frame into which the integration process was born and has developed through the years;
- 2) to evaluate if the E.U.'s expansion has affected the hard process of building up a "European identity".

### **1. Historical Political Frame:**

According to the common wisdom, the wish to unite themselves manifested by some

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European States at the end of the Second World War, was largely the result of the cold war and of the necessity to build up a common front against the political, ideological, military, economic and cultural threat posed by the Soviet Union. The truth is of course more complex. Europe, with two world wars, which in fact were a single civil war, had committed a collective suicide thus irremediably compromising the concept of national State itself. Formulas of the type of super national and federal seemed more adapted to promote peace and economic development. In fact, even those European countries that had won the war owed their victory to two powers, one which is absolutely extra-European (the US) and another which is partially extra-European (the USSR). The European unity was therefore born to a defeated continent as a design to re-balance the supremacy of the two "big" victors, which became the two leading actors of the bipolar

system during the cold war: the USA and the USSR.

It is therefore true that "project Europe" was born out of the necessity to confront the Soviet-communist menace. However, on the other hand, it is also true that many European politicians had conceptualised this project to re-balance Euro-American relations. A permanent imbalance of power would, in the long run, harm these very relations within the great transatlantic community itself (West Europe and North America).

However, in 1954, the initial attempt towards a full political and military integration, with the creation of a concrete Defense Community and its own European armed forces dependent on integrated commands, failed: time was not ripe yet to renounce national interests and to proceed towards the establishment of a true Federation.

As a consequence, it was necessary for the time being to satisfy our great ambitions by

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moving along the path of economic integration only. Thus, the problem of political-military integration was postponed, in the awareness of the Soviet threat, the inevitability of American military protection and the persistence of national traditions. I say postponed since this plan of political union was never fully abandoned.

The choice of an economic type of union facilitated the enlargement of the original European Community. Countries like Great Britain would have not certainly accepted a political union. It appears therefore that Britain's entry has slowed down each progressive step of political integration while consolidating the economic approach adhered to since 1957 (Treaty of Rome) by the six founding Countries.

The process of Europe's integration from 1951 to 1990 was made possible by the existence of happy relations between the two major continental powers. Germany, with its

economic power and France, with its political power.

What happened after the end of the cold war and the reunification of Germany in 1990?

The united Germany ended up being the frontline State exposed to the threat of the Soviet "empire of evil" (as Reagan called it), an empire that after 1989 had begun to disintegrate. The old communist Countries of Central – Eastern Europe, liberated from the Soviet dominion, emerged instead and became natural areas of economic expansion for the united Germany.

It is for these reasons that the Countries of the European Union looked at the German reunification with some apprehension.

There remained just one solution: to strongly and irreversibly bind Germany to the rest of the European Community and Chancellor Kohl, with great historical far-sightedness, accepted this solution. As to the former communist European

Countries, almost paradoxically, they decided to abandon their recently regained sovereignty in favour of European integration.

The Union faced a formidable challenge: fill-in the geopolitical vacuum that opened up in the Continent after the fall of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet empire. This vacuum was not just political but economic, cultural, ideological and social as well. But the high number of candidates to Europe's membership rendered even more evident the institutional deficit of the Union: a great economic block equipped with an insufficient political guidance and governance. On the one hand, it was noted the strong requirement for a European Constitution that should provide a solid institutional base to a Europe established with a certain casualness, through successive waves of enlargements. On the other hand, it is necessary to re-equilibrate the unequal relations with the United States.

Yugoslavia's secession wars between 1991 and 1999, have brought in evidence the dangerous military weakness of the European Countries, which were once again forced to seek for American assistance in restoring order and peace in the heart of the continent. In the meanwhile, America had insisted to integrate three former enemy Countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary) as new members of NATO: it was therefore necessary that a parallel enlargement be also applied to most of the former communist Countries, thus allowing their accession to the European Union.

At the end of the decade of 1990-2000, we still had a lame European Union: it had a single market, a single currency, a single frontier. But it did not yet have an institutional asset that can politically guide it with regularity.

We must by now accept this reality: the old national State seeks to survive but at this point,

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it has lost much of its prerogatives.

For the Union, only one obligatory path remained: to provide itself with a Constitution and resume the road to political integration that historical events constrained us to abandon 50 years ago. This is the path that we undertook starting in 2004, albeit laboriously, with the signing of the new Constitutional Treaty.

## **2. Toward a European Identity: Enlarging vs. deepening the Union?**

It is evident that the Unions' enlargement to 25 nations has entailed if not an "identity crisis" at least a relative slowdown in the process of consolidating such identity. And these difficulties have arisen at the beginning of the ratification process. The Constitutional Treaty has already been ratified by different countries, among which Spain and Italy. But in a couple of weeks we are undergoing a crucial test with the referendum set in France

for May 29. Unfortunately, the result of this referendum has little to do with the Constitution, which few have read.

In fact, the Constitution's approval has been turned into a referendum on issues that have little or nothing to see with the Constitution itself: among them the debate on the "Stability Pact" which binds the Member States to a rigorous budgetary policy or the Turkish membership of the Union. In all the Countries planning a referendum instead of Parliamentary ratification of the Constitution all these anxieties about Europe and about domestic matters have been transferred into the vote.

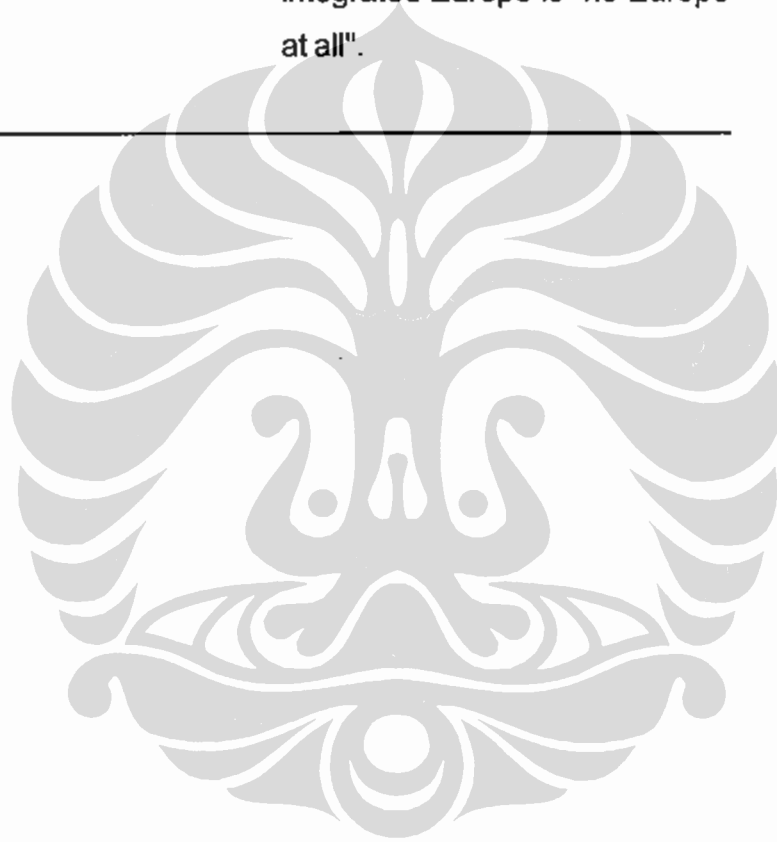
At least one specific and controversial point should be mentioned: Europeans are deeply divided on whether their Union should pursue the American free-market model or defend their established social market systems.

The old EU expanded to 25 because it deemed imperative the historical mission of the

reunification of Europe, whatever the consequences. A single market, a single currency, free circulation of individuals and commodities have all worked in a Europe at 15. Our strong commitment is required now to let them work in a Europe at 25.

By my nature I am all but pessimistic!

But we must plan our future also in the worst case scenario: accepting the idea that if the ratification process is not fulfilled, the alternative to an integrated Europe is several "Europes" with different levels of integration. In other words, we must reject as absurd the idea that the alternative to a constitutionally integrated Europe is "no Europe at all".



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