

Ideas, Challenges and the Future of the European Union

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Abstract:

Ideas for a united Europe date back too early and were of different nature, but the main purpose was seen mainly as the outcome of conflicts between peoples living in Europe. These ideas emerged particularly from prominent philosophers and intellectuals and they were later to be implemented after the Second World War. Seeing the tremendous destruction of the First and Second World Wars, intellectuals, philosophers and rulers of this time advocated all the ideas intended to outcome conflicts once and for all on the continent of Europe. As their only option to avoid a future conflict between France and Germany was the cooperation in economy which would create a dependency between these two states. The first agreement was signed in 1951, known as the European Community for Coal and Steel, and the European Union is considered to have originated from this agreement. After this, in the following years and decades, there followed other agreements and ongoing European Union has progressed towards unification, expansion, and continued strengthening of its institutions.

Key words: European Union, Integration, supranational, Equality, Freedom, Democracy, Principle etc.

Introduction

Ideas for a united Europe proclaimed during the years began to

be implemented after the end of World War II, when French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman presented his proposal on the creation of an institution by national governments and non-national or intergovernmental (Mile 2007, 9). In reality the creation of a supranational government is still not achieved, as originally thought, but nevertheless, by the ECSC treaty, we can say that Europe has achieved an enormous amount, at least the maintenance of peace has been a great achievement for Europeans. Without doubt, a complete fusion of the powers of the Member States of the EU is not easy, because states are hard to give up their sovereignty, but "Member States have given up some of their sovereign rights in favor of the EU and the EU have handed power to act independently. In exercising this power, the EU has the ability to issue sovereign acts that have the same power as laws in individual states." (Borçard 2010, 11) and this of course is an achievement that deserves to be evaluated. For these achievements a long time was spent. To achieve the integration of the countries of Europe as a whole, including the Balkans, there is no doubt that some time must still pass, because there will be the need to merge multiple nationalisms and forget past conflicts, which were plenty in this region, especially the former Yugoslavia.

Ideas for EU

International organizations and institutions that were created after World War II had as a primary goal the maintaining of peace, protecting human rights, respect for international law etc (Salmani 2006, 48). European countries, seeing the danger that was threatening from the two superpowers emerged after the war, stepped up the idea that the goal of returning military prestige, political, and economic development of these countries is a necessity (Limani 2004, 10). From here comes the idea of the European Union having been constrained by various factors such as political, strategic, economic, etc.

Ideas for a united Europe were very early, but "the new trends that were happening in Europe after World War II gave a powerful boost to projects to create a United Europe, able to save on peace between European countries themselves, to be protected from the risk of communism, which at this time was in expansion, to restore the old continent and strengthened to play its role again as a world leader" (Milo 2002, 18).

EU challenges to build a common future political, economic, etc. playground are still not completed. To understand Europe after World War II, the story of integration is the key. What best explains the issue of war and peace in the old continent, the traditional European hostilities, but the truth of the twentieth century? In the name of peace, stability and prosperity of Europe one should build a new, free, integrated, equal, unique and democratic conglomerate (Blerim and Arta 2004, 43).

Implementation of the European idea is a process that is developed through various stages, and even today is continuing, because that goal to be achieved is far despite the many achievements that have occurred in the European Union (Bashkim 2003, 10). During her journey EU has had enough problems of different nature as political, economic, expansion etc., problems that still remain present in the European Union. But "despite all the difficulties the European integration process with all its ups and downs has managed to maintain its continuity by approaching ever closer to his ideal, then complete the whole European integration" (Bashkim 2003, 11).

What is the European Union?

Since the beginning of human history, there has been cooperation between people to deal with problems that were present and to avoid risks. With the development of human thought and the emergence of the state, cooperation between people has taken shape and special features and relationships

between people are now institutionally regulated by the state. While the state as an entity cooperates with other states for various needs such as a greater security for a better economic development etc. the European Union in this case "represents a new form of relations between states and can be considered as an international organization of special type - sui generis. The legal basis of its operation can be called above the national, respectively supranational" (Bedri 2006, 48).

Relying on the past is not good, the EU has set as "aim to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples. The Union shall offer its citizens freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers in which the free movement of persons is guaranteed in accordance with appropriate measures regarding external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating crime" (Borçard 2010, 19). In Article 2 of the treaty founding the European Union there has settled that the EU establishes the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society dominated by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men¹. On the basis of these principles the European Union operates today, also obliging the states aspiring to respect these principles.

It is important to note that the European Union is part of the most important *projects* in the history of *peace*. After countless wars, within a very short period of time, it was possible that the small continent was at peace, moving through integration. Those who were once enemies, now cooperate closely with each other in almost all areas. Conflicts are resolved through negotiations. This is one reason that the EU has found worldwide evaluation of an example for regional

¹ Article 2 of Maastricht Treaty, 1991/93

cooperation and policy model for the XXI century².

Challenges for the future

The whole journey so far has gone through various challenges, political problems having been most pronounced in the EU, but also other economic problems or social ones. However, their excess was achieved through wise policy of joint development for a better future for the citizens of these countries. Today the EU operates on the basis of three pillars: the first pillar refers to the European single market and the common agricultural policy, otherwise known as "the three European communities," the second pillar constitutes a common foreign policy and security and a third pillar, which includes internal affairs and justice (Blerim and Arta 2004, 66). On the basis of these pillars EU works and works on solving common problems of member states.

Without doubt one of the major challenges still remains, namely foreign policy and security, as Javier Solana stressed: "Europe in this field is still looking". Foreign policy and common security presented difficulties in formulating the Maastricht Treaty because European countries, community members, were reluctant to give up their sovereignty in the field of foreign policy (Milo 2002, 239). Foreign policy in the case of Kosovo was not unique, though requests to create a common European defense presented early in the 50's and the 60's. European Union, as Milo stressed, tried to remain unique and solidarity throughout the conflict in Kosovo, although differences were more pronounced in his bosom, but also in relations with the U.S.A. This conflict served as the basis for profound reflections on the member states of the EU, to take more responsibility and to prevent and resolve conflicts with European funds and European forces (Milo 2002, 257).

This shows that the differences between EU member

² See: <http://www.dadalos.org/>

states are evident, as well as non-recognition of Kosovo's independence by the five member states is an additional proof that the EU still has not a unique foreign policy, it certainly presents a challenge the EU will face in the future. To strengthen EU cooperation, solidarity should exist between the largest states and peoples living under this common roof called the European Union, as Fontaine writes: "solidarity between peoples and nations of Europe must continually adapt to dealing with the new challenges presented by a changing world" (Fontaine 2010, 71).

The integration of the Balkans

Today in the world there are various forms of cooperation and integration between states, organizations, etc. regional as well as global, relying on a more secure economic future etc. In this context, the European integration occurs, seeing it as an economic development perspective and versatile country. All Balkan countries have created their own strategies to integrate into the European Union, but the integration is not to your satisfaction "Europeans for centuries had proposed closer ties and mutual cultural, economic and political, but because of nationalist rivalries and territorial disputes that had not succeeded (Arta 2009, 15).

The Balkans was the most problematic for Europe, "until the beginning of the XXI century, the Balkans, for the Western diplomacy, remained a constant source of destabilization of Europe, or as otherwise called "tinderbox". Balkan wars continued throughout the century-long history of the peninsula: the Balkan wars, through the first war and the second world then the "cold war" to ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia (Arta 2009, 57).

Without doubt this has been the most problematic region and still continues to be problematic for the European integration, although it is considered that the conflicts have

ended with the intervention of international forces in Kosovo in 1999. Especially the breakup of the former Yugoslavia was followed by transnational conflicts, having left political consequences and economically devastated countries in this region. Also "undecided policies and solutions halves against this region had a high cost for the overall EU throughout the 90's" (Milo 2002, 276).

From the former Yugoslavia, only Slovenia (2004) and Croatia (2013) have become part of the European Union, the other countries such as Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Macedonia still finding themselves away from accession.

European aspirations to build economic stability and a lasting peace must be met by countries that are not part of the European Union, but which aspire to become part of it. Although there is still long way, membership of the Balkan countries will be a reality in the future of this region; given the past, these countries have already begun to realize that they must be "open and tolerant towards each other and that overcoming the tragic conflict between the people of the region is a prerequisite for membership in the European Union" (Reka and Arta 2004, 253). Undoubtedly, the European Union has come to understand that "the European future can not be sure when a part of Europe generates uncertainty. Bangladesh was a challenge that had to cope with urgency and with a long-term strategy and worked out well" (Milo 2002, 276). It also became clear that "progress in EU integration will depend on the performance of individual states in a wide range of economic reforms, democratic standards, human rights, good governance and respect for the law" (Arta 2009, 54).

The role and importance of the EU

There is no doubt that the role of the European Union is very important, especially in consolidating peace and promoting the

values of democracy throughout the continent of Europe and beyond. The foundations of a united Europe were based on fundamental ideas and values, which have been adopted by the Member States and which are turned into practical reality of operating by the Community institutions. These are: permanent peace, unity, equality, freedom, solidarity and security (Borçard 2010, 20). These principles and values have been proclaimed the Magnetic factor for other countries that aspire to join the EU, as rightly emphasizes Professor Klaus: "no greater motivation than the desire for European unification for peace" (Borçard 2010, 21).

These values and principles which were proclaimed in the founding treaty of the EU, and which continue to be fundamental principles, demonstrate the value and importance of the EU in the XXI century. Maintaining peace and its contribution to building up a continent that has experienced several wars and where national conflicts have been over-emphasized, indicates that this part of the world was in need of such a union of states.

This has prompted the European Union to play an important role today in the world, both in the political and especially in economic aspects.

The realization of the idea so far

The initial goal was the removal of centuries-old controversy between France and Germany as mentioned in the statement by Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950, when, among other things, Schuman highlighted that the secular opposition between France and Germany was eliminated and that should affect primarily the two countries involved³; through this, Schuman also foresaw that the economic relationship between the two countries and the accession of other states would later create a

³ Declaration of 9 May 1959 Robert Schuman, quoted in the book by Maurice Durousset 2004, 14.

Europe where the dominant values should be peace and comfort. In his statement Schuman further claims: "The establishment of industry-based products and the creation of a new high Authority, whose decisions will bind France, Germany and the countries that will join in this proposal, will implement the concrete foundations of a European federation indispensable to the preservation of peace."⁴ Starting from this idea, and continuing with solidarity, with clear economic objectives and in pursuit of peace and prosperity, Europe managed to keep the peace since the end of World War II, and has also become one of the world's economic giants. As Durosset highlights, "in the beginning of the XXI century there are certainly very positive results despite some limitations, shortcomings and problems. Little by little the European Union, with a geographically unified European continent, has become one of the world's main economic communities. Never, since centuries, had Europe known so long a period of peace" (Durosset 2004, 14).

Conclusions

The European Union is a union of independent states and democracies of Europe, with the aim of increasing its integration with the other countries of the continent of Europe and continuously empowering the common institutions. The common market of the EU today is regarded as one of the largest markets in the world. The European Union has managed to keep the peace and promote the values of democracy in the last fifty years, and to urge that these values also serve other countries as fundamental principles for contemporary societies.

Despite the many achievements of the European Union there are many challenges ahead, one of them being the integration of the Balkans, a region that is still not entirely

⁴ Ibid. 14.

smooth because of the nationalisms that have been tense for decades. The future of this region is undoubtedly its integration in Europe, but to achieve full accession of these countries to the EU there still seems to be a long way, especially in the democratization of these countries and the establishment of the principles of freedom, equality, respect for the human rights etc.

Nowadays the European Union has become a major magnet, of which all countries of the European continent are interested to be part. This is because the EU has managed to create economic stability and be the guarantor of peace, democracy and fundamental human rights.

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