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European Union: An Audacious Pursuit of Integration (2010-2015)

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Abstract
This study examined the impact of war on Europe in the 17th Century and how this led to the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which brought succor to the warring European states. The outcome of the treaty was that Europe agreed to respect the external and internal sovereignty of every state and maintain their relationship on the basis of equality. However, this was not to be as Europe had to fight two continent-wide wars in three decades – 1914 to 1918 and 1939 to 1945. It was on the backdrop of these wars that European statesmen, politicians and noblemen thought it wise to establish institutions that will bring them together in peace than to be in pursuit of divergent aggressive nationalistic interests that often lead to chaos, anarchy and war. This was the impetus which led European leaders to gather at The Hague, Netherlands to tinker on how to ensure that they will never war amongst themselves again. The vehicle to achieve this noble ambition, they agreed, is economic and political integration. The actual first move towards integration was in 1950 when France and West Germany began to cooperate in order to protect their coal and steel industries. This later led to the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Two other organisations were formed in 1957 as a follow up to the drive for integration. These are the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). The study concluded that the integration effort by Europe through the establishment of European Union has largely been a great success. The study adopted Expo Facto as its research design. The method of data collection deployed by the study was secondary sources of data. It adopted relational content analysis as its method of data analysis. The study used integration theory as its theoretical framework.

Keywords: Integration, Nationalism, Sovereignty, War, Westphalia
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Introduction
War is often a function of excessive nationalism and/or the fierce pursuit of national interest. Europe was bedeviled by this phenomenon and dwelt in a gruesome warfare that lasted many years. War diminishes a people. It impoverishes a nation. It underdevelops a generation. And for many, war simply terminates their existence, as the case may be. The war in Europe was tearing it apart. European statesmen, politicians and noblemen had to come together to find a way of stopping the carnage and get out of the miasma. The outcome was the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 which brought peace and succour to the warring European states. They agreed to respect the external and internal sovereignty of every state and maintain their relationship on the basis of equality (Patton, 2015).

On the surface, there was peace and tranquility but internally, every state worked assiduously to protect its national interest. For many European states, there was fierce but covert nationalism to ensure that no external force came to dominate or control their individual states that had emerged from the shackles of domination of stronger and wealthier nations of Europe. While nationalism and/or active protection/pursuance of national interest was having European focus on the one hand, nationalism on the other hand, was having expansionist tendencies. It was after the European states had secured their independence or lost control and domination of weaker states in Europe, that they started the expansionist moves toward the underdeveloped worlds of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

There is a psychological variable in every expansionist tendency. First, the expansionist states have the psychological wellbeing of not being externally dominated. This is natural for if one is being dominated, one will not have the capability of forcefully dominating another state at the same time. Secondly, the states have psychological feeling that they must dominate others in order to assert their own strength. Italy's effort in 1934 to colonise Ethiopia which

was a member of the League of Nations like Italy itself, was more or less an ego trip. Itaty felt that it was wrong that she was the only major European country that had no African colony. Looking at European expansionism from the psychological perspective is in no way to underplay the importance of the crisis of capitalism as the major impetus that brought about imperialism and subsequent colonialism. All that is being said here is that beyond the economic factor, there is also the psychological factor behind an expansionist drive (Lumen, 2014).

When every land had been dominated and accounted for and there was no other place to hoist their national flag thereby extending their national pride, the Europeans started backward and inward again. Nationalism was no longer outwardly driven but rather inwardly focused. The Europeans once again started jostling for supremacy amongst themselves and before we knew it, we had the First World War that devastated Europe between 1914 and 1918.

The emergent League of Nations and all the diplomatic efforts by world statesmen could not save Europe and indeed the world from the catastrophe of a Second World War. Mankind was devastated but Europe was worse for it. There is indeed a relationship between psychology and expansionism and between nationalism and war. Appadorai (2004) puts it this way:

> *Nationalism has been throughout the modern era the most fruitful cause of wars, divided nations striving for unity, subject nations fighting for freedom, triumphant nations aspiring after domination. It has fostered national arrogance; each nation looks upon itself as the bearer of the only true civilization.*

This is especially true of Europe. Appadorai went on to state that nationalism has almost obliterated the sense that civilization is a collective achievement and common responsibility. Nationalism, he avers, becomes aggressive and regardless of the rights of other nations, and thus a menace to the peace of the world. This menace, it ought to be added, has assumed alarming proportions in recent times with the increase in the destructiveness of modern warfare.

Europe has seen war and its consequences. In 1648, European nations had to come together to sign a peace treaty in Westphalia. In 1948, three years after the Second World War and three hundred years after the Treaty of Westphalia, European states had to come together again to discuss the evil of warfare amongst themselves. This time, it was at The Hague, Netherlands that they gathered and vowed: "We will never war amongst ourselves again" (Awake, 2000). To achieve this, Russett, Starr and Kisella (2006) state that "the visionaries of a united Europe thought that integration was the best way to achieve peace in a region racked by two continent-wide wars in three decades.

The Concept of Integration

Integration is basically the coming together of smaller wholes to make a bigger and stronger whole. However, when we talk about integration in international relations, we look at it from the socio-political and economic context. Integration comes about as an economic necessity in a region or sub-region that wants to harness its potentials. Examples of such regional or sub-regional economic integration include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Communaute Economiques de L'Afrique de L'Ouest (CEAO), and the European Economic Community (EEC).

Economic integration is often the precursor of political integration. The fact is that for economic integration to really come to be, there must be an element of unity in that region. The integrating nations must as a matter of necessity surrender some of their political sovereignty if they really want to succeed. Haas (1970) supports this stand in his definition of integration. He sees integration as

> *The process whereby political actors in several districts of national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre where institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over pre-existing national states*.

Deutsch (1975) also sees the socio-political element of integration when he states that integration is:

> *The attainment within a territory of a sense of community and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful change.*

Integration starts with preferential trade agreement among the member countries and progresses toward political unity with common currency and parliament. This political variable in integration is very important because the integrating nations understand that behind every quest for economic and political community is the need for security and welfare and it follows that if a moderate sufficiency of what people want and ought to have, is given to them, they will keep peace (Onwuka, 1982). Europe was in search of peace.

Theoretical Framework

The study derives its bearing from a theoretical construct known as Integration Theory. Palmer and Perkins (1999) state that a functioning international system needs a high degree of integration, and that this is most effective if it is ungirded by a supportive community structure. They aver that the studies of past and present tendencies towards integration as well as towards conflict in the international community tend to suggest factors that have an important inclination on contemporary diplomacy and political behaviour.

Many scholars have analysed efforts and experiments in integration. Notable among them are Karl Deutsch, Amitai Etzioni and Ernst Haas. Even though Deutsch, according to Palmer and Perkins, thinks that most cases of unsuccessful integration occurred in the pre-modern era and is rather dubious about the possibilities of integration under existing conditions, Etzioni, on the contrary, believes that conditions are best in the modern era for the formation of transnational structures such as integration (Palmer and Perkins, 1999). In line with this, Russett et al (2006) state that:

> *Many state leaders have concluded that larger economic entities typically fare better in the modern world economy than smaller ones…The immediate goal of economic integration is the creation of a single market out of a number of separate markets previously defined by national boundaries. Multilateral economic cooperation and policy coordination is designed to enable the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital across state borders which will promote economic competitiveness and prosperity in the region.*

Schmmelfennig (2010) states that in the early days of European integration, integration theory was seen as equivalent of political science theorizing on the European Community and neofunctionalism was the theory of European integration. Things have changed since then as theorising has strongly diversified. This notwithstanding, the theories of economic and political integration are European focused. This is probably because the European Union is the most successful attempt at economic and political integration.

Even though the theories of integration are Eurocentric, earlier scholars of this concept such as David Mitrany, Jeffrey Alexander and Jean Monnet saw it in broader perspective. These scholars of neofunctionalism try to describe and explain integration as the process of regional integration based on empirical data which is an inevitable process rather than a desirable state of affairs that could be introduced by the political elite of the involved states (Garza, 2006). Nonetheless, the focus of this study is the European Union, and most economic and political theories of integration seek to explain how and under which conditions new policies come

under European regulations, how competencies are devolved from the nation state to the European level, and how European rules expand in space (Schimmelfennig, 2010). The study is embedded in this perspective.

The Forerunners of European Union

Even though we have stated that the coming together of European political actors in The Hague, Netherlands, in 1948 gave the first indication at integration, the actual concrete move towards it was economic. This was in 1950 when France and West Germany began to cooperate in order to protect their coal and steel industries. More countries thereafter joined them and this led to the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The ECSC began operating in 1952 and included Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany (Awake, 2000). This new economic bloc continued strongly in their protectionist endeavours until 1957 when they decided to form two other organisations. These were the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).

Awake (2000) states that ten years after experimenting with three distinctive but related bodies, that is, the European Economic Community, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), the integrating European states decided to fuse the three into one encompassing body - the European Community (EC). That was in 1967. Between 1973 and 1990, seven more European states were admitted into the Community. These were Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom in 1973, Greece in 1981, Portugal and Spain in 1986 and East Germany in 1990.

The Birth of European Union

The forty-two year period between 1950 and 1992 could be seen as the gestation period of the European Union. The birth of the union was on 1st November, 1993, following the Treaty of Maastricht. The European Union (EU) which is a political and economic union of twenty seven member states was established upon the foundation of the pre-existing European Community (EC). The union has almost 500 million citizens.

The twenty-seven states that make up the European Union are Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, and The United Kingdom. Turkey is an official candidate country which may soon join the union. For a country to qualify for admission into the European Union the country must meet the Copenhagen criteria which was defined at the meeting of the European Council at Copenhagen in 1993. The requirement includes that the country must have stable democracy which respects human right and the rule of law. It must have a functioning market economy capable of competing within the European Union. The country must accept the obligations of membership, including the European Union law. It is the European Council that is charged with the responsibility of evaluating whether a candidate country has fulfilled the criteria for admission into the union.

The Objectives of the Union

Basically, as has already been said earlier, the objective of integration is economic. The political aspect is often a follow up. However, the political dimension which comes later is what actually gives the union an enduring character. Political unity is often at the mind of the founders of economic unions. This is especially true of European Union. The broad objectives of the European Union according to *Awake* (2000) and Blanke (2013), are:

(a) To create internal market
(b) To promote technical cooperation, which would in time lead to political union
(c) To maintain tariff wall for non-members
(d) To eliminate cross border trade barriers.
(e) To harmonise monetary currency union

(f) To promote common foreign and security policy
(g) To offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice

One would say that the European Union has really achieved these objectives. However, one will be quick to add that the third objective, to maintain tariff wall for non-members, is really a big problem to the underdeveloped economies of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The developed economies outside the European Union like those of the United States and Japan could contend with this but definitely not the underdeveloped economies who would want their goods to enter the European market without restrictions.

The Coming of Euro

The Euro, the new single currency for the European Union was officially launched on 1 January, 1999. It came with a lot of champagne popping. There was jubilation in Europe. Why? Because Europeans saw it as the crown upon European unification.

It took thirty years to achieve this objective. The creation of a single currency for Europe became an official objective of the European Union in 1969. This, however, could not be achieved until the advent of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 when member countries were legally bound to start the monetary union no later than January, 1999. It must, however, be noted that not all member states of the union are participating in the monetary union. Participation in this is optional. The United Kingdom and Denmark are at the moment not part of the monetary union. The Euro is under the control of the European Central Bank which was established in 1998 and located in Frankfurt, Germany (Pollard, 2001)

The coming of Euro has not been without skepticism. Some felt that the Euro will put the European economy in a straitjacket, giving its flexibility a hard blow and thereby stifling its growth. They maintained that a single currency will increase unemployment in Europe, cause massive speculative attacks on the monetary markets, and bring about political tension. The poorer nations of Europe have their axe to grind. They think that the rich members of the union are not sharing enough of their wealth with them. Every member nation agrees that there is need to offer the poorer European member states extra financial support, yet, they feel that they have good reasons not to (Dylla, 2011).

Germany for instance would have been happy and willing to help out but the cost of uniting East and West Germany has been enormous. This amounted to almost one hundred billion dollars a year which is a quarter of the national budget. The effect of this on the German economy is that the national debt skyrocketed to such heights that the country had to make sacrifices to meet the admission requirement set by the economic and monetary union (Aja, 2001).

Some people also stressed the point that even though there is enough political will for a single currency, Europe's economies are not cohesive but rather fragmented as its people stay tight in their home countries, and its culture and traditions quite different. They maintain that unlike people living in the United States of America, people in Europe who lose their jobs may not likely wake up and go long distances from their towns to find new jobs. This kind of fragmentation, they say, will deprive the Euro nations the shock absorbers needed to share an economy and a common currency. There was further argument that under a single currency system, the individual government will lose their flexibility in dealing with economic problems. They maintain that the Euro will shift power from individual states to the new European Central Bank located in Germany. This situation will increase the pressure for coordination of tax rules and other economic policies throughout the European continent.

The skepticism and criticism notwithstanding, many people believe that Europe is on a good track. The single currency has its advantages for an economic and political union. The Euro will help build a single market by easing travel of citizens and goods, eliminates exchange rate problems, provides price transparency, creating a single financial market, bring price stability and lowering interest rate. In the same manner, it will provide a currency used

internationally and protected against shocks by a large amount of internal trade within the Euro zone. Again, the Euro is also intended as a political symbol of integration and stimulus for things to come (*Awake*, 2000).

The Weight of a Union

Awake (2000) and Bank of International Settlement (2014) both agree that the European Union as an economic, political and monetary entity cannot be ignored in international affairs. It really has a big weight. It is noteworthy to state that 163 of the world's largest corporations are headquartered in the European Union countries. The European Union as a single economy has generated an estimated nominal gross domestic product (GPD) of US $16,830 billion in 2007, amounting to 31% of the world's total economy output which makes it the largest trade bloc in the world. The European Union is also the largest exporter of goods and the second largest importer of foods.

Political Harmony

Politically, the European Union was set up to ensure that European states do not war among themselves again. The devastation of the First and Second World Wars was still fresh and should not be allowed to repeat again. Some institutions have been established to ensure this. These include those in charge of common foreign and security policy, and justice and home affairs. It also has the European Parliament, the Court of Justice, Council of Ministers and the European Council. The activities of the union are regulated by these institutions. They handle the tasks and policies set out for them by the treaties establishing the union. The political leadership of the European Union comes from the European Council which is made up of one representative per member state, either its President or the Prime Minister as the case may be, plus the President of the Commission. The representatives are assisted by the Foreign Ministers. The Council as the apex body of the Union uses its leadership to sort out disputes which have arisen between member states and the institutions and to resolve political crises and disagreement over controversial issues and policies (Awake, 2000). This, of course, is the crux of the union.

The European Council is headed by a rotating presidency. As such every member state takes its turn at the helm of the union for a period of six months only during which period that country's representatives chair the meeting of the European Council and that of the Council of Ministers. The Council meets four times a year at European Summit. It must be noted that the effort at political harmony or even union by the integrating states does in no way mean Europe is trying to form a single government. There is no attempt to make the individual states surrender their entire sovereignty to a new superordinate body. It is not really a case of trying to form a United States of Europe. Efforts, though, have been made in the past for such a grouping. Watchtower Online Library (2000) puts it this way:

> *The famous French writer Victor Hugo served as president of a congress held in Paris in 1849 that pleaded for a United States of Europe to ensure universal peace. Later Count Richard Condenhove-Kalergi, an Austrian, founded what was known as the Pan-European Union with a similar goal, but it too met with little successes.*

There is no evidence to show that Europeans will accept a single government. Economic and political cooperation for the benefit of commerce and regional peace is one thing but surrendering a national sovereignty is another thing altogether. The gain of total political unity is known but nationalism will always be a stumbling block. Way back in 1978, the then British Foreign Secretary said,

> *The fully fledged federalism to which some people remain committed, was a noble goal but one which for most of us in Britain is unrealistic, and to some mythical We cannot see in concrete terms how nine nations with very different political, social and cultural traditions can possibly become federated over any*

time-scale of political activity on which it is realistic to focus (Watchtower Online Library, 2000).

Europe is aware of this strong sentiment and is very cautious about it. Its effort is rather more on political harmony than political federation

The Dark Side of European Integration

It would be wrong to think that the European Union has been achieved without a cost. In every integration process, something must give. In the case of Europe, the problem revolves around the travelling restrictions that have been relaxed. Relaxation of visa restriction in a regional integration should normally promote trade across international frontiers. It has definitely done so in Europe but it has also promoted smuggling and organized crime is happy for it. One of the items being smuggled is art treasures of Russia. These were not available to Western collectors before Eastern Europe opened its borders. Now the smuggling of stolen artwork across the European continent is believed to be one the most profitable and enduring crime in Europe.

Another smuggling operation that is even more dangerous than the artwork is the one on toxic waste. Why would someone go into such a dangerous job of smuggling toxic waste out of a country? This is because it is very costly to legally dispose of toxic waste. Many corporations are now in the habit of paying criminals to dispose them abroad. These toxic wastes like old car batteries, solvents, paints etc. are moved from Western Europe to remote places in Eastern Europe. Some have even found themselves in Africa. Of course, no one can deny the health hazard it will cause for many years (Pavone, 2012).

The most frightening smuggling operation in Europe, however, is the one involving radioactive matter. If this one is not checked, it could really lead to catastrophe in Europe. There is no way one could calculate the damage that would be brought upon Europe, nay, the world, if a radioactive matter falls into the hands of terrorists. There is also the problem of unemployment which is up to 10%.

Conclusion

We have just looked at some problems that confront European integration. These are mostly related to the issues of unemployment and smuggling. Be that as it may, the gains of European integration far outweigh the problems inherent in it. The economic gains are enormous but more important are the political gains.

From 1948 when Europeans came together in The Hague, Netherlands, to vow never to war among themselves again, and 1950 when they started the process of integration to 1993 when the European Union was born, European countries have not had any particular problem that could lead to inter-state warfare. With the coming of Euro in January 1999, the fate of Europe is so tied together that disruptive warfare is arguably a thing of the past. At least, we can afford to be positive. The institutions set up by the Union are really working hard to ensure that all issues that can lead to immediate and future problems are harmoniously resolved. The individual states and their citizens are keeping fate with the Union knowing the gains of cooperation compared with pains of conflict.

Some of the problems associated with European integration are being worked on and with the way they are being handled they will be resolved. All in all, one can make bold to say that European integration as culminated in European Union is a huge success. If not, why are the other European states not yet members clamouring to join? The success of European Union is a lesson to all, especially Africa. If a region does not want to war amongst itself, if a region does not want the destructiveness of modern warfare, then that region should go for meaningful integration. In the process of achieving such integration, they are expected to build institutions that will resolve disputes which could lead to fierce confrontations and warfare. If nations do not want war, they are obligated to build institutions that are geared toward peace.

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