

European Union and United States of America a Troubled Coexistence

by

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Europe's major powers such as, Britain, France, Italy, and Germany were severely devastated by the end of World War II, the vision of a united, democratic, and peaceful Europe obtained greater momentum in the aftermath of the war. European leaders started thinking to create an economic cooperation that can bring the various European nation-states together. This idea was nothing new. Previous attempts to European unification can be traced back to the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, Charlemagne, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Adolf Hitler. Despite severe religious, political, and cultural divisions in Europe, the idea of a unified Europe appeared stronger in a post war European continent. The idea of a potential European unification was strongly supported by the Truman administration. The Marshall Plan that was established in June 1947 and the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949, focused how to bring Europe together in economic and military matters. Moreover, NATO played a significant role to contain the Soviet Union's expansion beyond Central and Eastern Europe. The new military condition in Europe created the economic conditions for a free Europe to establish an economic common market.

The founding fathers for the modern unified Europe were, Konard Adenauer, Sir Winston Churchill, Alcide De Gasperi, Walter Hallstein, Jean Monnet, Robert Schumm, Paul Henri Spaak, and Altiero Spinelli. In 1951, Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg established the coal and steel common management. Despite that various American governments supported the idea of a unified Europe; some American statesmen had serious concerns regarding the evolution of a unified Europe. Specifically, European unification heightened the American worries about the creation of a "fortress Europe" that would potential exclude American products and even rise as a superpower to significant challenge the U.S. national interest in the European continent. The American-Franco rift of 1966 strengthened these fears.

Despite these concerns and challenges various European countries managed to create the European Union in the end of the twentieth century. Simultaneously, several factors developed the idea that America and Europe are growing apart. First, the Cold War serious reduced European military and psychological dependence on the United States and directed the various American governments to focus in other areas such as, the Middle East and Asia. Second, Europeans are becoming more conscious of their European identity and more willing to deviate or even differentiate themselves from American influence. The current financial crisis even more has strengthen local European national identities a division between north and south has created new lines of cultural and ethnic cleavages ready to tear apart Europe and create a chasm between EU and the USA. Third, there are extensive fundamental schisms about the concept of state power on each side of the Atlantic Ocean. Whereas the United States supports and promotes a

Westphalia idea of state sovereignty and unilateralism, European leaders strongly promote a less sovereign nation-state and support multilateralism. Fourth, America's unprecedented economic and military power created a tenuous cooperation with her European counterparts. Europe perceived USA as an arrogant power ignoring the political and economic worries of the European continent. Especially, under President George W. Bush the rift became wider due to the Iraq war. Finally, Americans and Europeans statesmen have completely and totally different positions on major socio-political issues, including the utilization of military power, the power of the International Criminal Court, the role of the United Nations, the environment, the treatment of terrorists, the method of fighting terrorism, and the death penalty.

The financial crisis that challenges Europe since 2009 vividly indicates that the EU is a huge welfare state and its member states such as Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland overspent and over borrowed money to sustain their corrupt welfare state. Europe as economic power is in serious troubles. The Eurozone has significantly failed. Moreover, Germany utilizes the Eurozone for the only economic/political purpose to dominate Europe. Specifically, Germany is the eurozone's largest economy and the most important to the stability of the euro. Germany is one of the four remaining AAA-rated countries in the eurozone region (the other member states being the Netherlands, Finland and Luxembourg) and the largest guarantor in the two European bailout funds towards Greece, Portugal, and Ireland. In the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), Germany guarantees closely 30 percent of the total 726 billion euros (\$957 billion). Berlin has agreed to guarantee 27 percent of the paid-in capital (80 billion euros) and the Merkel administration agreed to guarantee (620 billion euros) in the new European Stability Mechanism (ESM). By spreading its economic influence across the rest of the European continent through the common market and common currency, Germany generated more domestic wealth and drastically weakens less-competitive European economies such as, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland.

Berlin needs the rest of Europe as an export market for its industrial base. Ensuring and safeguarding the survival and continuity of the European Union and the euro is a top priority, and so the German government must continue supporting the European periphery financially -- by serving as a destination for workers and goods and by stabilizing and protecting the common currency through its economic power and influence -- in order to permit peripheral countries such as Greece and Spain to continue consuming German goods. This German economic policy has to some extent recreated the Europe of 1870. A new era of ethno-nationalism has reemerged between North and South. The United States needs to show leadership and direct the EU to a true free market spirit away from ethno-nationalistic antagonism. One option is to disengage the EU from the German economic and political domination. The United States needs to support politicians who want to adopt pro-capitalist policies in Europe. For many Europeans the EU has stifled economic development due to heavy taxation and austerity financial measures emanating from Germany to protect her economic interests. It is unclear if the EU will survive. It is evident that the EU and mainly Germany has failed to unite the various European countries. It is a utopia to believe that North Europe can be uniting with Mediterranean Europe and the Balkan Europe. These three European branches exhibit totally different European cultures. The United States manages to keep Europe together under NATO a military alliance not an economic union based on heavy state influence and taxation. If Europe wants unification needs its member states to share the debt, and create federal ministries of defense, foreign policy, and finance. A Federated Europe needs realism not idealism and phony promises. It is a utopia to accept that Europe can

become a dominant economic and military power. The current economic crisis vividly indicates that despite Britain, France, and Germany have the economic and technological means to drive EU to a superpower status, local national interest serve as a catalyst to curtail a unified and powerful EU.

Recently, the French and Greek presidential and parliamentary general elections respectively are seen as a potential political game-changer for the political and economic survival of the EU. If France turns left after fourteen years of center-right political monopoly, the political domination of the European People's Party in Europe will be fragmented. In case of another electoral mandate for French President Nicolas Sarkozy, Europe potentially will move faster towards a two-speed Union and a remake of the bloc's Schengen region that could see Greece excluded from the passport-free travel zone and freeze EU enlargement.

President Sarkozy has repeatedly called the Greco-Turkish border line a "sieve" and stated that a country that has difficulties monitoring and controlling its borders should be excluded from Schengen. The Greek-Turkish land border that spans 80 miles is fairly secure except an area roughly 12 miles near the Greek town Orestiada and the Turkish town Edime, at the location that the river *Evros* in Greek, *Meric* in Turkish and *Marits* in Bulgarian crosses the border. In Brussels, various European diplomats and the European Commission downplayed the issue of illegal immigrants crossing to Greece, stating that the number has decreased from 2,000 to 500 a week. Despite the potential decrease still the problem remains a serious challenge for Europe's economy and demography.

Greek elections could create new economic and political turmoil that will shake the existence of the EU. Various polls indicate that the extreme right and left wing political parties in Greece will achieve representation in the Greek parliament. Also, surveys show that New Democracy (conservative party) and PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) cannot achieve outright majority. All these evidences indicate that the Greek political system is fragmented. Thus, Greece walks to a political abyss. Germany and EU have strongly said that if Greece wants the bail out money needs to execute the austerity measures, move to extensive privatization policies, cut public spending, and reform the bureaucratic and public sectors. A weak coalition government cannot execute the European wishes. Therefore, Greece and EU move to a precarious politico-economic relationship.

The American government eagerly monitors the European situation. President Obama prefers a stable and vibrant EU. Specifically, he indicated that the EU debt crisis has damaged the U.S. and global economy, which in turn menacing to ruin Obama's chances to be reelected. Moreover, the US president stated that the leaders of the EU need to create the mechanisms and deal with the financial crisis. The future will show the evolution of the sensitive economic relationship between EU and USA.