

The Impacts of the Integration among Western-European Countries in 1950s-1970s

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Introduction

After the World War II, many European nations suffered an economical, political, and social breakdown following the extended warring period. In the 1950s, the emergence of various groups such as the European Coal Community signaled the unification of the region regarding economy and politics. The war's contribution to the fall of economic and political stability sensitized nations on the need to unite as a way to secure friendly relationships and lasting peace in the continent. The first countries that showed the need for unity included Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Netherlands, and Germany (Lowe, 2013). The integration of the Western-European nations in this period led to the emergence of the European Union. Also, the unity among these countries produced many other benefits concerning development, security, and political stability and sovereignty especially among the minor nations including Latvia, Ukraine, and Luxembourg (Vinen 2010, 33). Leaders such as Winston Churchill, Walter Hallstein, Stalin, and Robert Schuman initialized the integration of countries in the region (Lowe 2013, 125).

Thesis Statement

The integration among Western-European countries in the 1950s-1970s did more good than harm through enhancing socio-economic and political development and ensuring lasting peace after a period of war in the region.

The Integration Benefits among the Western-European Countries

Before integration, the Western-European countries existed as states free from interactions with their neighbors. These countries considered unity in times of wars such as the World War I and II (Thody 2000, 4). After the occurrence of the horrifying incidence of the World War II, many nations found the need to integrate and work in unity. In Europe, the emergence of the Cold War which dominated the 1950s decade instilled more fear and mistrust among nations (Lowe 2013, 122). In this light, therefore, countries considered uniting as a way to control armament, achieve common development, minimize influence by regimes such as the Communism, and to ensure lasting peace in the region. Eventually, the integration of these nations benefitted them in a couple of ways.

Firstly, the integration played a significant role in the transformation of the democracy in Europe. According to Mazower (1998), many countries in the European region were able to adopt various democratic practices from nations where democratic governance continuously developed such as Greece and Italy (Mazower 1998, 290). The democratic transformation in the Western-European changed in various ways meant to benefit the citizens and to allow for proper leadership and friendliness in the region. These changes included the increase in the commitment to expand the political, social, and economic rights. All citizens in nations such as Germany, UK, Belgium, and Netherlands began to participate in the government through voting regardless of their sex and social status. With the end of the warring period, countries ditched their early political and economic practices which aimed at weakening their opponents, for example, dictatorship governance, expansion of territories for the development of economies, and the establishment of friendly relations with other countries on the same warring fronts (Vinen 2010, 61). As a result, they embraced changes especially in politics as an effective pave the way for economic and social development. Countries such as Greece, West Germany, Britain, and Italy

held referendums to change the non-democratic laws which excluded either all or a group of citizens from participating in national matters (Mazower 1998, 296).

Secondly, the integration in the Western-European enabled countries to secure lasting peace. After the World War II, the region was on the brink of achieving the long European peace (Thody 2000, 8). When the World War II ended, tension and mistrust did not end in the region. Nations in the Eastern area such as the Soviet Union mounted pressure on their neighbors with their efforts in armament, territories acquisition, and their failure to show the need for cooperation (Thody 2000, 9). Consequently, countries from the Western region combined their efforts in establishing various organizations aimed at ensuring peace. Through the Treaty of Rome, these nations created bodies such as the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Union (EU), and the Common Market (Thody 2000, 161). Mainly, the organizations were more focused on the political and economic development of the member states. Therefore, they were effective in preventing extreme political moves by the nations including imposing checks on armament and controlling political influences such as Communism regime (Thody 2000, 127). Also, significant focuses were laid on the reduction of the custom-duties, managing food production, and border protection (Thompson 1961, 53). This economic and political development took place primarily in the 1950s decade.

Thirdly, integration between the countries in the Western-European served as a channel to enhance reconciliation (Thody 2000, 11). The occurrence of the World War I and II revolved around the hatred and mistrust among nations, especially from the Eastern and Western sides. States lived in rivalries and conflicts with each other based on economic and political interests such as resources, territories, and colonies (Thody 2000, 11). Since the 16th century, many countries embarked on the development of armies, armament, and expansion of territories and empires to surpass the power and influence of their rivals. However, coming to the second-half of the 20th century, the conflicts and rivalries between states established a foundation for reconciliation and peace-building. By this time, nations knew the importance of peace and harmony as a result of the loss of lives, property, and socio-economic stability during the rivalry period.

Lastly, the integration among the Western-European countries resulted in a couple of harmful impacts despite being associated with numerous benefits to the member nations. Through working together, these countries created new international organizations which aimed at common development such as EU and EEC. The signing of various treaties such as the Treaty of Rome also enhanced peaceful coexistence and cooperation among the nations. However, the integration led to a couple of unfavorable results that jeopardized the stability of the region. The collaboration of the countries increased the level of illegal migration in the across the region (Thomson, 1961). As some people migrated in such of employment, others migrated for unlawful activities such as exportation of drugs and weapons. Also, the integration of some nations in the region of Europe intensified the rise of rivalry between Eastern and Western parts. Countries that did not participate in the reconciliation engaged in activities such as armament and also forming allies with other nations, for example, the Soviet Union. Thus, this increased tension especially during the Cold War era in the 1950s (Mazower 1998, 50). Nonetheless, the positive impacts that emerged after the integration of the Western-European nations surpassed the negative ones.

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