TOPIC B: THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

The further integration of the European Union into a single, cohesive entity has been a matter of fierce debate between its different member states. In this following section, we will examine the development of the EU as an intergovernmental and supranational entity, alongside the different possible outcomes of such a development.

Before we can begin, we must define some key terms.

DEFINITIONS

Intergovernmental Unions: Intergovernmental unions are bodies in which governments from several countries are represented. These unions' large effect on international politics stems from their very nature – a treaty signed by a number of countries is likely to be upheld because it is within their interest to do so. However, these bodies cannot force a country to comply with a treaty. An example would be the UN: if 110 countries sign a DISEC resolution, they are likely to comply with it. The 83 countries that didn't sign it, however, cannot be forced by the UN to do so.

Supranational Union: Supranational unions are political and/or economic unions of multiple governments with shared interests, separate from these governments, which enforce certain laws across member states. This means that unlike intergovernmental unions, a supranational union has power over its member-states, and can decide upon certain matters that would usually be within the sovereignty of a country.

Federation: A federation is a decentralized country. This means that the central government of a country forfeited some of its powers to regional governments. Germany, Russia and the USA are all examples of federations (with the USA being the most centralized of these examples). Federations are much closer to a single, cohesive state than supranational unions: they have a federal government that is nearly limitless in powers, either in the executive, legislative or judiciary branches; they have one military and one foreign policy and they have near-complete economic cohesion.

HISTORY

THE EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY (ECSC)

World War II left Europe devastated: Over 70 million people were killed in the war, most of them European. Civilians were often targeted, as more than half of the casualties of the war were civilians, and production sites and infrastructure were a strategic target. This led to a sharp decline in European economies, which lost roughly 70% of their pre-war industrial infrastructure.

GDP per Head Relative to US GDP per Head

Country	1938	1950	1973	1987
UK	.98	.72	.72	.73
Germany	.84	.45	.79	.82
France	.72	.55	.78	.78
Italy	.53	.36	.63	.70
Japan	.38	.20	.66	.77
USSR	.35	.30	.36	.33

Source: Harrison (1998), Table 1–10.

The war left such a great toll on Europe that efforts were made to ensure such a catastrophe could not repeat itself. In 1950, Robert Schuman, then foreign minister of France, brought up the idea of a supranational union among European countries that would "make war not only unthinkable but materially impossible". Seeing that the rivalry between France and Germany led to countless wars, Schuman proposed placing the production of coal and steel (the two primary resources needed for war) of both Germany and France under a common High Authority, and further suggested that more countries could join in. Pooling the production of coal and steel of both France and Germany under a common market meant that neither could physically declare war upon the other, as they share control of the vital resources for war. The proposed European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) would increase employment and through that, expand the economies and improve the standard of living of the people living under it. More importantly for this section, the ECSC was the world's first supranational body, and aimed to provide a framework which will enable a united Europe in the future, during which the common market would expand to all aspects of the economy. It also created the European Court of Justice (ECJ), which is the body that judges whether members adhere to the ECSC law. After great diplomatic efforts, the governments of France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium and The Netherlands signed the Treaty of Paris on 18 April, 1951, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC); the common market for coal and steel began functioning in 1953.

THE TREATY OF ROME (1957) AND MERGER TREATY (1967), AND EXPANSION

The further integration of the countries of the ECSC was discussed throughout the 1950s, and resulted in three major proposals: the creation of a European Defense Community, the creation of a general common market, and the creation of a European Atomic Community (Euratom). French resistance to the Defense Community led to the withdrawal of the proposal, and nearly blocked the creation of the common market. In order to avoid the common market being annulled, it was suggested that it should be created as a separate community, just like the ECSC. However, these so called 'communities' were more intergovernmental in nature than the ECSC, and so had less power over the participating countries.

The Treaty of Rome that was signed in 1957 established the European Communities. This was a set of three communities: the existing European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and the new European Economic Community (EEC) and European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom). Moreover, it established the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy, which unified the policies of all signing countries in those fields. Most importantly, it expanded the role of the ECJ to judge matters involving all three Communities.

The EEC, which was greatly limited in powers upon creation, provided a framework for the creation of a common market and a customs union. However, it quickly expanded and became the most important community out of the three. The enactment of common policies under the CAP and the Common Fisheries Policy was done under the EEC: by 1962, there were fixed prices for agricultural products among all member states. When the Merge Treaty, that proposed unifying all three communities under one institution, was signed on 1967, it unified the ECSC and Euratom under the EEC.

Seeing the great success that was achieved by France, West Germany, Italy, Luxemburg, Belgium, and The Netherlands; The United Kingdom, Ireland, and Denmark also decided to join and the treaties were expanded and resign to include these countries as well. This also led to the European Election of 1979, the first European Parliament elections held around the continent. Similar trends continued in the 1980s and early 1990s, which saw the addition of Greece, Spain and Portugal, and East Germany to the EEC in 1981, 1986, and 1990 respectively.

FURTHER INTEGRATION AND THE CREATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Tensions between countries regarding the unity of the Union, while present in almost every field, were always higher when it came to border control. The Treaty of Rome enabled citizens of the EEC to move freely between its member-states; this was done, however, with passport checks.

True free movement of people, with no border checks at all, was rejected by many members on numerous occasions, as it was seen as a gross violation of national sovereignty. In light of the situation, 5 out of the 10 members of the EEC signed the Schengen Agreement in 1985, abolishing border checks between their countries. The economic advantages of such a move – freely moving people improve trade between two countries by around 2%, and the removal of border controls can save a lot of money, especially for large countries – resulted in the expansion of the Schengen Area: by 1997, all member-states except the UK and Ireland were a part of the Area.

The success of Schengen led member-states to seek further integration. In an effort to do so, all 12 members of the EEC attended a conference in Maastricht, which aimed to further integration. The result was astounding: the treaty that was signed into force was the Treaty on European Union, which created, among other things:

1. The European Union;
2. The Euro as a common currency and enacting common currency policies;
3. The Common Foreign and Security Policy;
4. A Common Police Strategy.

This was a huge shift towards integration: the newly established European Union had one currency (the Euro), a clear sign of a sovereign country, and had one foreign policy. It had exclusive competence in these fields, meaning that all member-states must comply with the Union. The EU would see unprecedented growth in membership: in just 20 years, membership would grow from 12 member-states to 28. It seemed as if all was well for the European Union. The one true threat that remained was the question of further integration.

CURRENT SITUATION

The European Union of the present is a mixture of an intergovernmental and supranational union. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) outlines in detail whether the EU has exclusive competence to make decisions, whether it shares the competence with member states or whether it could only advise:

1. All decisions regarding the Customs Union, the functioning of the Internal Market, the monetary policy of the Euro, the conservation marine biological resources under the common fisheries policy and the common commercial policy is under **exclusive competence of the EU**. No member state can contradict any action taken in these fields.

2. The European Union can only advise and support any action taken in the fields of human health, tourism, industry, culture, education, youth, sports, civil protection and administrative cooperation. **The EU has no power to change any policy of any of its member-states** in these fields.

3. Any field that isn't specified is a field of shared competence. This means that **member-states are free to adopt policies in these fields, if the EU hasn't done so itself**.

The shared competence of policies creates a problem, as it is not exactly clear what happens if the EU decides to act in an area in which it hasn't exercised competence yet, and attempts to overrule an existing member-state policy. No treaty establishes the complete superiority of either EU law or member-state law over the other, and while court rulings have treated EU law as superior to member-state laws, there are some states, like Poland, in which the national constitution overrides EU law.

THE DEBATE OVER INTEGRATION

This overriding of national law by EU law is of great concern to many citizens of member states of the EU. Euroscepticism, the criticism of European integration, has risen drastically since the signing of the Lisbon Treaty in 2007. People fear that further integration would lead to a loss of sovereignty for their home country. They fear that their culture would be substituted out for a 'pan-European' culture, in the name of the Union.

Great Britain, in particular, has been very Eurosceptic ever since the creation of the EU back in 1993. In 2016, the primary reasons people listed when they voted for Brexit was that "decisions about the UK should be taken in the UK". People feel that the EU has too much legislative power over member-states, and that they cannot decide for themselves. They feel that the European Parliament does not represent them.

On the other hand, people who advocate for integration name the large economic benefits: indeed, most member-states have prospered as integration continued. Some experts, including Mark Leonard, have stated that a united EU, which will have 510 million people, would be an economic superpower. 39% of the EU population is in favor of increasing the amount of decisions being taken at an EU level (compared with only 20% who wish to limit them), around 40% are in favor of a European Army, and 44% are in favor of a Federation as the last step of European integration.

You have gathered here today to decide once and for all: should the European Union further integrate? Do the benefits outweigh your peoples' concerns? And if so, how would you build a better Europe?

It is all in your hands. May luck forever be in your favor.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Should the EU give more freedom to the Member States or should it become more cohesive? In what aspects?
2. How should the EU enforce its laws in its Member States?
3. Should the EU affect foreign policies of member states? If so, how?
4. What benefits does Supranationalism have over Intergovernmentalism? How far should one be used over the other?
5. Should a European Army be considered?
6. How can you bring forth greater economic cohesion?

FURTHER READING

It is highly recommended to read the Treaties outlined in the previous chapter. There is no need to read through all of them, but to have a basic understanding of the relevant articles could be crucial.

Moreover, we urge you to read the 2021 Future of Europe survey conducted by the EU. It is a public opinion survey on the future of the EU that is conducted in each EU member state, and so, can greatly aid your research process. You can find the survey at this link: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2554 (The file is located in the English data annex, which is available for download in this link).

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