

The European Union: past, present and future

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Part One: The Past

The Origin: Ideals

- The idea of the European integration: the Manifesto of Ventotene (Altiero Spinelli)

The Ventotene Manifesto (For a Free and United Europe. A draft Manifesto) was written in mid-1941 by Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, in confinement on the island of Ventotene. It was published by Ernesto Rossi in 1944.

The Ventotene Manifesto advocates the need of the European integration (the institution of the "United States of Europe"). It reads *inter alia* that: "A free and united Europe is the necessary premise to the strengthening of modern civilisation, that has been temporarily halted the totalitarian era."

- The idea of the United States of Europe (Winston Churchill)

Mr Winston Churchill speaking in Zurich - 19th September 1946.

"I WISH TO SPEAK TO YOU TODAY about the tragedy of Europe." [...]

"What is this sovereign remedy? It is to re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living."

"The structure of the United States of Europe, if well and truly built, will be such as to make the material strength of a single state less important. Small nations will count as much as large ones and gain their honour by their contribution to the common cause."

- The Schuman Declaration – 9 May 1950 – (Source: EU website)

The Schuman Declaration was proclaimed by the French foreign minister Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950. It proposed the creation of a European Coal and Steel Community, whose members would pool coal and steel production. The ECSC (founding members: France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) was the first step of the European integration process, that would ultimately lead to today's "European Union".

Historical context

In 1950, the nations of Europe were still struggling to overcome the devastation wrought by World War II, which had ended 5 years earlier. Determined to prevent another such terrible war, European governments concluded that pooling coal and steel production would – in the words of the Declaration – make war between historic rivals France and Germany "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible". It was thought – correctly – that merging of economic interests would help raise standards of

living and be the first step towards a more united Europe. Membership of the ECSC was open to other countries.

Key quotes from the Schuman Declaration

"World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it."

"Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity."

"The pooling of coal and steel production... will change the destinies of those regions which have long been devoted to the manufacture of munitions of war, of which they have been the most constant victims."

- The gradualist approach for building the European integration (Jean Monnet)

One of the founding fathers of the European integration process was Jean Monnet, a French political economist and diplomat. He was never elected to public office, but he worked behind the scenes of American and European governments as a well-connected pragmatic internationalist. He greatly inspired the Schumann Declaration, which was the first step of the European integration process, and he was the first President of the High Authority of the newly created European Coal and Steel Community in 1952.

Jean Monnet was a constant driving force behind the initiatives which laid the foundation for the European Union as it eventually emerged: first the European Economic Community (EEC) (1958), which was established by the Treaty of Rome of 1957; later the European Community (1967) with its corresponding bodies, the European Commission and the European Council of Ministers, British membership in the Community (1973), the European Council (1974), the European Monetary System (1979), and the European Parliament (1979). This process reflected Monnet's belief in a gradualist approach for building the European integration.

The Origin: Facts

- The European Coal and Steel Community (1951): the pooling of coal and steel production. It was repealed in 2001.
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- The aborted European Defense Community (1952): the failed project for a pan-European Military Organisation. It never came into force.
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- The European Economic Community (1957): promoting European economic integration, through the establishment of a "common market", "determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe". It evolved in the European Community (1991) and later in the European Union (2009).
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- The Euratom (1957): established the European Atomic Energy Community, for the supervision of the peaceful use of atomic energy in Europe. It is still in force.

The Evolution:

- The Establishment and Functioning of the (European) Common Market
- From the European Common Market to the European Internal Market
- The Single European Act (1986): the European Internal Market and Beyond
- The Maastricht Treaty (1991): towards the European economic and monetary union
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000)
Preamble: "The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values. Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice."
Chapter IV of the Charter is dedicated to "Solidarity" (art. 27-38).
- The failure of the European Constitution (2004)
- Getting things done: the Lisbon Treaty (2009)

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- The Euro crisis: problems, solutions and open questions
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Part Three: The Future

- Towards an "ever closer Union" or the end of Europe?
- Global geo-politics: which place for the European Union in the globalised world? The European Union, USA, China and the emerging economies
- A look at the future: is the European Union still a good idea?
- The Euro crisis and Greece: austerity vs. solidarity (Angela Merkel vs. Alexis Tsipras)
- The ascent of Syriza Party in Greece and fight for re-gaining sovereignty

Alexis Tsipras (Leader of Syriza Party, Prime Minister of Greece) (Quotes - February 2015)

"The various, small and big cartels of established interests, which attempt, even today, to control public administration and the economy, will collapse. Meritocracy, transparency, equal opportunities everywhere, with the appropriate social sensitivity and the rule of law will be the trademark for the new Greece of tomorrow. We start working hard, in order to change Greece within a Europe that changes direction."

“The austerity policies implemented by conservative and social democratic governments have reached their tipping point, as have the fiscal targets assigned by the European Union, which are unachievable for any country. This simply can’t continue. If Europe does not ‘turn’ towards the left – embracing growth, decent work and the welfare state – its other choice will be right-wing extremism and Euroscepticism. The setbacks will have terrible consequences.”

“We’re not just fighting for change in Greece – ours is a struggle for political change across Europe, a struggle against the current system that allows speculators and the world of capital to hold people hostage. We believe politics and economics should be centred around people’s needs, decent work, a thriving welfare state, environmental protections, democracy.”

“We’ve received, and continue to receive, so many messages of solidarity and peace from across the globe. Solidarity isn’t something that’s simply an emotional boost – it’s also an important factor in the social and political struggle to change things in other countries.”

Yanis Varoufakis: The Global Minotaur: America, Europe and the Future of the Global Economy, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEUWxNifJJ8>

Interview by DER SPIEGEL to Yanis Varoufakis

SPIEGEL: You say that the austerity measures advocated by Angela Merkel are destroying Greece.

Varoufakis: That is an entirely different matter. Your questions seem intent on creating the impression that Greece is trying to fuel strife in Europe. I cannot and will not accept such insinuations. In my position as finance minister, it is my duty to counteract any hard feelings harbored against Germany in Greece. I am arguing on an entirely objective level. I am saying that the austerity measures have done nothing and will do nothing to solve Greece's problems; in fact, they only make things worse. I would therefore like to see Germany participate in drawing up a kind of Marshall Plan to rebuild Greece and the rest of the periphery. I believe that a Merkel Plan for Europe would be a wonderful development.