

European Union: An Integration Exporter or an Actor Sui Generis

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Abstract: *The European Union was formed after the Second World War in search of peace and to help Europe stand up on its feet economically. Starting from a six nation organisation, today it is a 28 member organisation. It is one of the most integrated models of regional organisation and looked up as a perfect model by other regions. There is a tendency to compare other regional organisations with EU. Hailed as one of the most successful model, there is often effort to replicate the EU model. The success of EU is beyond doubt; however, it is a product of its own experiences and historical milieu. Other regions might have different experiences. The paper is an attempt to analyse the factors that make European Union unique and whether it can be replicated in other parts of the world or not.*

Keyword: European Union, Regional Integration, Homogeneous, Heterogeneous, Third World, Nationalism

1. Introduction

The European Union provides one of the successful examples of modern world. It was set up with the aim of ending the frequent wars within Europe. Extreme form of nationalism had devastated the continent. European integration was seen as the remedy to create a no war zone within Europe. This process began with the formation of council of Europe in 1949, the European steel and coal community in 1950, the Europe Economic community in 1957 through treaty of Rome. Finally in 1992, the treaty of Maastricht was signed which laid the foundation of modern day European Union. Today the EU has 28 member countries. It provides an example as to how contentious issues could be left aside for cooperation in economic field and then progress towards political cooperation. Any discussion about regionalism in the world economy inevitably refers, explicitly or implicitly, to the experience of European integration. This paper examines whether European Union is an integration exporter or a product specific to its history and environment.

2. Methodology

The paper is mainly based on secondary sources. The paper depends upon analytical studies relevant for the study. It relies heavily on books and scholarly articles of Richard Higgott, Finn Laursen, Walter Mattli. It also looks at writings of Amitav Acharya that has helped to look at other regions and compare them with EU, in order to analyse to what extent EU model can be imported in other regions.

European Union: A standalone model

The creation of the Common Market opened the doors to prosperity for member states. Intra-regional trade has increased. Economic cooperation has increased the standards of living. Democracies have emerged and flourished. Europeans can now move around freely within the European Union and seek for jobs in other countries. The European Union is looked at as a perfect model of regional integration and often propagated as a norm setter for other regional organisations. However, how much the EU model can be or

should be replaced is often missed out in such in an assumption.

There are three factors that make the region that constitutes European Union unique.

European Union is the most integrated regional entity. Its approach towards integration has been supranational. The reason for this is the kind of wars the region of Europe has witnessed. The thirty years war (1618-48) was a running sore for Europe that was only healed with the Westphalian treaties of 1648. An attempt by Napoleon of France to create a land based empire in Europe failed in 1815, but encouraged the rulers of the European states to join together against the rise by any one power on the continent of Europe. These efforts degenerated into the creation of increasingly hostile power blocs in Europe with one based around France and United Kingdom and the other around Germany after its unification in 1871. During the First World War (1914-1918) and Second World War (1935-1945), a coalition of states, including the US, successfully challenged German attempts to dominate Europe. The world wars which were result of extreme nationalism, destroyed European economy and reduced European nations from superpower to second rate nations.

The Second World War left Europe economically devastated. This led to the view that if Europe was to recover, it would require a concerted effort on the part of European States (Agraa, A.M.E (2011), *European Union: Economics and Policies*, New York: Cambridge University Press :20) Thus, an effort towards European Integration began with the Schuman Plan, which launched the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The Common Market for Coal, iron ore and Scrape was officially opened in February 1953, when members agreed to eliminate tariffs and quotas in accordance with the treaty. The ECSC was much more about just coal and steel. It was to first step forward towards federation of Europe. It was expected that it would lead to shifting of loyalties of political actors in several distinct national settings towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation state (Haas, E.B (1958), *Uniting of*

Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957, US: Stanford University Press: 16) ECSC was a product of a combination of integrationist impulses and ideas, national self-interest, and international circumstances. It was hailed by Jean Monnet as the first expression of the Europe that was being born.

This kind of devastating wars faced by Europe has not been faced by most of the other regions. Regions like Southeast Asia have been colonies (barring Thailand). They have a history of national struggle for independence. This makes them sceptical towards foreign powers, sensitive towards sovereignty and the principle of non-interference becomes sacrosanct for them. Thus, expecting these nations to shift of political actors in several distinct national settings towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation state [Haas, E.B (1958), *Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*, US: Stanford University Press: 16] wouldn't be fair.

Second, the member states of EU are homogenous in terms of territory, population, economic development, political system, religion. Hence, the EU model is quite exacting, especially for the developing world. For instance in SAARC, there is great deal of disparity among nations especially India and the rest of the nations in terms size (population and territory) and development. There exists diversity in religion too. The political systems are not only different but also unstable in some nations. The heterogeneity among nations has amounted to trust deficit among them. The EU has also set political and economic criteria of accession called the Copenhagen criteria of membership. . The accession could take place as soon as an associated country was capable to live up to the obligation of membership by fulfilling the necessary economic and political criteria. The criteria for an accession to the union were defined as follows:

- That the candidate country has achieved stability of institution guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human right and respect for and protection of minorities (political criteria of accession).
- The existing of a functioning market economic as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the union (the economic criteria of accession).
- If pre supposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligation of membership including adherence to the aim of political, economic and monetary union (administrative capacity, acquis implementation).
- The union capacity to absorb new members while maintaining the momentum of European integration, it is also an important consideration in the general interest of both the union and the candidate countries.

The entry of Turkey in EU is in doldrums and one of the reasons for this is that Turkey is different from other member states of the Union. "Turkey isn't politically fit to join the European Union and shouldn't become a member", the lead candidate of Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union for European Parliament elections said. Merkel rejects Turkey, a mainly Muslim nation of 81 million people, joining the 28-member EU. Instead, she and most of

her CDU want to offer it a "privileged partnership" with the bloc (Bloomberg, Turkey Unfit to Join EU, says Merkel Europe Parliament Candidate, Arne Delfs, April 10 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-04-10/turkey-unfit-to-join-eu-says-merkel-europe-parliament-candidate.html> accessed on 19th December, 2014)

Third, Nation-building is a completed project in Europe but uncompleted or recently completed project in the third world countries. The vision of nationhood is European. The post-World War II world the sense of national identity evolved prior to the crystallization of the structures of political authority. By contrast, in most of the currently underdeveloped, newly independent countries this sequence is reversed: authority and sovereignty have run ahead of self-conscious national identity and cultural integration. To this extent it can be said that Europe produced nation-states, whereas Asia and Africa have produced state-nations (Rejai, Mostafa and Cynthia H. Enloe (1969), "Nation-States and State-Nations", *International Studies Quarterly*, 13(2): 140-158) There is lack of unity in terms of physical, political, social or religious within these nations. The question of unity at the regional level is thus, quite far off.

EU replaced the 19th century notion of sovereignty with the 21st century notion of interdependence and created the most open border for regional groupings. Divisive factors are thriving at the national level and are not ready as of now to move towards supranational level.

Moreover, EU is not devoid of problems. The Euro zone crisis has brought to fore the contradictions within the European Union. Apart from the crisis, there are other factors that bring out Contradiction in EU. The European Commission's White Paper on Governance (Tsakatika, Myrto (2002), *Why is political responsibility lacking in EU: the legacy of Monnet Method*, Paper presented in the PSsA Conference University of Aberdeen) pointed out European citizens feel 'alienated' from and disenchanted with the state of the Union. Citizens, it is argued in the White Paper, believe that the EU has shown itself unable to act in crucial moments. Even when the EU has indeed acted, citizens have not given it due credit, because it is not clear to them that it is the EU and not national governments that are behind the improvements in their lives. Member States are not troubled by such confusion; on the contrary they do their best to encourage it, as they consider it to be in their benefit. Furthermore, citizens are not aware of who does what in Europe, and consequently, they do not see themselves represented by the Union's institutions and feel powerless in the decision making process. The paper also points out that no doubt, the Monnet 'method' has been and continues to be influential in the development of the EU. However that influence has been detrimental to the development of openness, accountability, efficiency, coherence and participation in the European Union.

The phenomenon of 'creeping competencies' (the inexplicit and gradual redirection of competencies from the national centers to a European centre, in the process of which vague amounts of sovereignty would pass from one level to the other) have been creeping indeed and as such they have created uncertainty about the balance of power among the different levels of EU governance, they also have brought

about uncertainty about the delineation and allocation of responsibility among the actors that operate at the various levels of the European Union. There has been incoherence and inefficiency in European Union policy-making; incoherence because some sectors became Europeanised while others not (eg. agriculture as opposed to taxation) and inefficiency because incoherence led to the impossibility of overall co-ordination. Decision making in the European level is horizontally complex, already to such an extent that insiders, let alone citizens, are finding it extremely difficult to follow it from beginning to end. This means that it is extremely difficult for citizens to understand who does what and when. It also means that it is extremely difficult to attribute responsibility, to apportion blame when something goes wrong and praise when something is well done. Under circumstances of such complexity, effective practices of accountability, openness and transparency become very difficult to establish, while public trust diminishes.

3. Conclusion

Any discussion about regionalism in the world economy inevitably refers, explicitly or implicitly, to the experience of European integration. This is not surprising, since the European Union is the most integrated regional entity. European integration has been the product of very specific historical conditions. There is a danger of looking at regionalism elsewhere through the lens supplied by European integration. The politics and dynamics of regional integration in Europe may not be appropriate for and replicable in other regions.

The states facing similar challenges may respond differently. The desire to form an institutional structure or set of mechanism is based on specific experience and historical context. Decisions regarding the form and functions of regional body relate to history and perception of what is required as well as the role played by external and internal drivers of integration. Regions are formed on the basis of geography, recognition by participating states of common aims and benefits with the advantages appearing to outweigh the disadvantages. The yardstick of regionness will vary by the number of policy issues and questions present and what dominant actors in a given group of countries at a given time see as their political priorities. Each region develops its mechanism through its own circumstances and experiences.

Also there are lessons even EU can learn from associations like ASEAN; principles like pragmatism and flexibility, including high flexibility of labour markets and a high degree of adaptability (Capannelli, Giovanni (2009), "ASIA and EUROPE: Comparing Approaches to Regionalism", *Development Asia*: Issue 3 Url: <http://development.asia/issue03/cover-04.asp> access date: 16-12-2014)

The choice of model adopted by a particular region will depend upon the consensus that will emerge among the countries of the region. There can be no model which can be universal or the integration/norm exporter. However, there is a universal message. If nation states are willing to cooperate, cooperation is possible. There was distrust and animosity within the nations of European Union and ASEAN at the

time of formation. France and German shared historic rivalry, while in Southeast Asia each member had a territorial dispute with at least one of their neighbours yet it kept those issues aside and focused on economic cooperation. To overcome troubled relationships and conflicts with neighbours and flourish economically was at the heart of the intention to form the two regional groups, though European Union intended to integrate politically as well through economic integration.

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