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**The Problems Confronted by the EU
Integration**

Zhi-jie Cheng

PhD Student

Beijing Normal University

China

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Athens Institute for Education and Research
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209
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The Problems Confronted by the EU Integration

Cheng Zhi-jie
Ph.D. Student
Beijing Normal University
China

Abstract

The EU integration has clearly confronted with a series of problems during the process of it, which is mainly reflected in aspects of economy, politics, defense, enlargement and foreign affairs. These problems will affect the process of EU integration if they are not solved. For example, the abolition of state sovereignty, the EU system, the imbalanced comprehensive national power and the pursuit of balanced interests and the political corruption of member states in politics; the common agricultural policy, and the fiscal policy in economy; defense, enlargement, the complex relations between EU and America, Russia and Turkey. This essay will examine the problems confronted by the EU integration in four parts.

Keywords:

Introduction

The EU integration has clearly confronted with a series of problems during the process of it, which is mainly reflected in aspects of economy, politics, defense, enlargement and foreign affairs. These problems will affect the process of EU integration if they are not solved. For example, the abolition of state sovereignty, the EU system, the imbalanced comprehensive national power and the pursuit of balanced interests and the political corruption of member states in politics; the common agricultural policy, and the fiscal policy in economy; defense, enlargement, the complex relations between EU and America, Russia and Turkey . This essay will examine the problems confronted by the EU integration in four parts.

Problems in politics

The Abolition of State Sovereignty

The process of EU integration is proceeding under the debate of ‘federalism’ and ‘confederalism’, which historically exists for the European Unity. The core of this debate lies in whether or not to save the national sovereignty. This has led to two paralleled trends in the process of EU integration. On the one hand, the objective need of more close combined development among member states pushes the integration proceed more deeply, forcing members to transfer their rights to the EU continuously. On the other hand, the imbalance in politics, economy, society and cultural development among members makes the members safeguard their nationalism of the state sovereignty and national interests more strongly. The EU integration would always face with the possibility of stagnation and even retrogression if the relationship between integration and national sovereignty could not be solved fundamentally.

The EU System

Since establishment ,the European Coal and Steel Community has reformed its mechanism and system in order to promote the development of the EU integration. After the establishment of the EU in 1993, the integration in politics speeded up. However, there still existed some problems.

The Functional Expansion and Low Efficiency

During the development of EU integration, the EU’s connotation has expanded constantly, from the coal and steel common market followed the “Treaty of Paris” to the common market of four freedoms followed the “Treaty of Rome”, and finally to a comprehensive economic union, unified currency and a political union of common foreign and security policy followed the “Treaty of Maastricht”, the function of the EU ranged from individual department to the whole economic field as well as non-economic fields, such as diplomatic, political and judicial affairs. At the same time, the geographical space of the EU integration has been continuously expanding, from 6 countries

initially to 28 countries now. ‘But there are more and more differences among member states in the degree of development and the interests with the expanding of the EU. The decision burden aggravated by the function expansion, and the difficulty of coordination increased by the enlargement of the interests, making decision efficiency become low and low ,which was not high originally.’¹

The Concentration of Power and the ‘Democratic Deficit’

Function expansion means the original power owned by the member states is shifted to the alliance organization. The ‘Treaty of Maastricht’ had given more power to the European Commission, the EU Council of ministers and the European Parliament ,etc., the ‘Treaty of Amsterdam’ made it clear that the authority of making the European common diplomacy, security and defence policies would be given to the EU Council. However, this obviously caused the ‘democratic deficit’ of the EU institution itself: (1) as the only elected institutions of EU system, the European Parliament is not a legislative council of Western democracy ; (2) the right of democratic supervision of the European Parliament is not deficient; (3) the Council of Europe is lack of the democratic legitimacy; (4) the decision of the Council of Europe is lack of transparency. Because of the existence of the ‘democratic deficit’, the EU has been accused of ‘bureaucracy’. The result is that the EU system, which is advocated of being elected and governed by the people, is precisely lack of the will of the people as basis.

The Divergences of the Distribution of Power

There are three levels' dispute of the distribution of power within the EU:(1)the relations between the executive branch of the EU with each member state government. It was reflected mainly in the relations between expanding functions of the EU institutions and safeguarding state sovereignty. (2)the adjustment of relations among member states. As a sovereign state, each member state government tends to protect its national interests to maximum extent, for member state government is not willing to transfer its sovereignty, thus causing the inevitable quarrels. (3) the adjustment of the relations between governments and citizens. ‘The government is elected by voters in western democracies. If the government go against the public opinions, it will definitely lose citizens’ confidence. Therefore, member state governments will perform according to the public opinions on the issue of EU integration.’²

The Imbalance of Comprehensive National Power and the Pursuit of Balanced Interests

The gap of strength among member states has become larger and larger after five times’ enlargements. This kind of change is embodied on not only the

¹Zhou Jian-ping. (2002). *Political Economy of European Integration*. Shanghai: Fudan University Press.

²Zhao Jun-jie. (2002). *The EU Economic Development Strategy in Twenty-first Century*. Beijing: Chinese City Press.

new 'less developed' members and also the founding members. The most obvious influence is the shift of core role of the 'France-German axis' from France to Germany after the reunification of Germany, which became stronger. The contradictions and frictions between these two countries would have certain new influences on the EU integration.

The EU has alleged that all the member states are equal no matter small or big, and hope that there also exists equality in their interests. However, in fact, it tends to be easier for major powers to protect their interests, including right to speak and small countries' compromise.

The Political Corruption

The problem of political corruption occurs frequently in western politics, although western countries has always been regarded as examples of democracy and justice. The political corruption has effected the enlargement of the EU negatively. Therefore, the EU integration could not achieve further development if the EU will not obtain more power.

Problems in Economy

The Common Agricultural Policy

Common agricultural policy has played a positive role during the process of the EU integration, which relates to farm subsidies, farmers' incomes and rural development expenses. However, the annual spending of common agricultural policy accounts for more than half of EU's budget, and sometimes as high as 70%. Therefore, it has become a great burden of EU common finance and constrained the further development of agriculture as well. In fact, the EU member states always have high agricultural subsidies, which resulted in a surplus of farm products, low agricultural income and less competitive to agricultural products of America. Moreover, EU have to make up the loss by using subsidies when in the face of an agricultural problems. In addition, the EU have to increase the agricultural subsidies of European countries, which are new members after the enlargement and have large proportions of agriculture, resulting greater burden to the current EU common agricultural policy.

The Fiscal Policy

The EU has implemented an 'unfair' fiscal policy of burden and distribution. For example, in 2002, the payment of Germany's burden was up to 5 000 000 000 euros, the UK was 2 900 000 000 euros, while the other two big European countries France and Italy were 2 100 000 000 and 2 800 000 000 euros, which aroused great complaints in those countries like Germany. Germany and France are both included in the integration of 'the France-German axis'. Although France ranks only second to Germany in terms of national power, France pays a lot less money, which is obviously unfair. On the surface, the payment of burden of each member state matches the return commission that the EU given to them, which is reasonable. However, actually,

some member states pay more money and get less money back, which also leads to factions among member states.

Problems in Defence

After the Second World War, Europe has depended on America. Although they have made efforts to construct a defense alliance, the work moves slow without meaningful results. After the Cold War, the threat from the Soviet Union disappeared, U.S.A. has lost its reason to have troops in Europe. Experienced several large-scale wars after the Cold War, European countries realized the significance of strengthening crisis consciousness and advocated for establishing their own military. However, NATO is currently still the major military in Europe. The quick reaction force of Europe is still under construction, which will also lead to the problem of dealing with the relation with NATO and the US after construction. NATO Secretary General has said, common security and defense policy of the EU is not a copy of NATO, but is a supplement.¹ This voice afford much food for thought. And Some member states have little interests even go against in establishing their own defense, for their long-term dependence on NATO. These problems all need to be paid more attention to and be solved.

Problems in Enlargement

On May 1st, 2004, EU experienced the largest enlargement in history, which not only promote the status of the EU in international political arena and also is beneficial for the political stability of the European continent. But the enlargement of the EU also brings about a series of problems: (1) the conflicts between old and new members. The EU will offer more aids to new member states, which could arouse contradictions between the new and old members. (2) the conflicts among the new members. The new members will compete to obtain more market shares, which leads to contradictions among them. (3) the new members influence the speed of development of the EU integration. Some people regards the Europe as 'single-speed Europe', 'two-speed Europe', 'multi-speed Europe', etc. At the same time, the enlargement may lower the EU's ability of decision-making, increase the unemployment and immigrations, and also lead to contradictions in the relations with America, Russia and Turkey. From the outbreak of the EU debt crisis in 2009, the enlargement in 2004 has contributed to the 'indigestion' sequelae significantly².

¹Zhang Jie.(12/21/2013). The EU stressed that strengthening the UN and NATO defense cooperation. *People's Daily*.

²Zhang Liang. (10/19/2013). It is last optimistic for Turkey to join the EU. *People's Daily*.