

SCUSA 60 - Western Europe

Over the last 60 years, Western Europe has prospered under its membership in the European Union (EU). After the devastating World Wars, the common goal of seeking unconditional European peace, while maintaining a cooperative front against Russia, led to the establishment of NATO – an organization seeking to institutionalize the transatlantic relationship by keeping the United States and Western Europe intimately connected. As Western Europe progressed through the Cold War, their internal peace and stability allowed the European Community to work through crises and expand; with numerous legal frameworks and a build-up of supporting intergovernmental institutions, they managed diversity while seeking to make failure impossible – avoiding the previous economic and diplomatic failures that had led to the bloodiest conflicts in world history. When measuring progress and seeking to define future challenges, one must examine the economic, political, security, and social policies that have evolved in this region. American influence has allowed their system to grow, but should now trust European leadership to handle the most pressing challenges of their own internal integration.

Following World War II, fostering economic cooperation was a tool in preventing future conflict between France and Germany. Integrating the markets for coal and steel, which represented the basic inputs of production for these countries, laid the foundation for future market integration. The initial success of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the prospect for easier market transactions drew an increasing number of states to membership. While political and cultural differences between European states continued to exist, they were mitigated by the prospect of Soviet aggression. Thus, European states had a vested interest in cooperating to regain economic strength through integrating national markets. This momentum for integration has been carried to the present, continuously expanding the free movement of capital, goods, and labor. Today, the European Union is a single integrated market, facilitating economic activity and growth via a common currency and a European Central Bank. The aggregate GDP of the European Union's 27 member states is now larger than that of the United States, posing a challenge to United States economic hegemony.

The reemergence of a united Europe as a major world economic power has significant implications for the United States. As the global marketplace becomes increasingly interconnected, we see cooperation amongst U.S. and EU financial institutions and policymakers as critical to ensuring global economic stability, especially in light of the current financial crisis. The United States should not view Europe's economic success as a threat, but rather as an opportunity to gain a powerful partner in managing global economic affairs. Economic integration is the backbone of political and social integration among the member states, and thus it is imperative that the success of the Common Market and the Euro itself continue so that the prosperity and stability of the region is maintained. The United States should continue to be a proponent of European integration.

The institutions and agreements established in post-war Western Europe sought to transition the European countries from their historical experiences of competition to an established EU that would eventually integrate politically to support their progress in economics. Modern Western European efforts to establish common positions in matters of foreign and security policies have spawned political institutions and unprecedented intergovernmental connectivity that grants EU policymakers a stable framework from which to tackle future regional and global crises.

Institutions such as the European Council and European Commission have evolved to facilitate and coordinate on a wide range of economic and legislative processes. The creation of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) furthered the notion of integration by installing a judicial arm founded upon common adherence to the rule of law and had competence over economic and trade matters. These institutional bodies have exercised significant effort in expanding the use of soft power tactics to influence Western European domestic issues, as well as provide an organization effective at managing international questions by promoting and applying its internal values in external situations. Institutions in the EU serve as the guiding force for the future in furthering progress in terms of facilitating integration especially among the Western European powers.

The United States has a stake in the well-being of the EU not just for economic reasons but also for the power that this region holds politically. The EU is an entity that now has the ability to take a position of leadership in strategic global areas. The EU is a proven, resilient ally, and their expertise and

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effectiveness in some regional matters means that we must increasingly consult with European policymakers in order to remedy instability (e.g., present in the Ukraine, Georgia, Kosovo, North Africa, etc.). The potential for modifications and a further deepening of European integration, as proposed by the Lisbon Treaty, provides for credible effort for European progress towards recognition of Europe as a solidified global power.

There is no doubt that U.S. deterrent and political capabilities have provided the majority of Europe's security umbrella since the end of WWII. The unprecedented military and socialization practices of NATO have enabled the European Union to enhance their soft power capabilities, expanding the stability of Europe beyond their borders –to North Africa, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe. Externally, the end of the Cold War has all but eliminated a Russian military threat, but managing energy security remains of prime importance to Western European governments. The focus on renewable and alternative energies within the region has helped to instill a feeling of independence, which has enabled Europe to take a lead on climate change and environmental policy directives – such as with the Kyoto Protocol. The credibility of NATO, in conjunction with European integration, has removed internal security threats and has opened up the EU to expand its power to provide external security through peacekeeping and civilian-military state-building missions. Pragmatism has established these European states as honest brokers in areas like Russia-Georgia, China-Taiwan, and the Israel-Palestinian conflict – areas where U.S. interests have historically conflicted with unbiased mediation.

Despite European security, looming threats such as Iran, China, or even a resurgent Russia could pose dangerous international threats to European prosperity. Both the United States and Western Europe have seen the implications of their energy dependency. This includes Russian control of European oil and gas, which as the 2006 Ukrainian and Georgian situations demonstrates, threatens regional stability. Additionally, the multitude of international organizations and their competing mandates and goals necessitates a search for clear objectives and a stricter sharing of responsibilities between organizations such as NATO and EU security forces. While we see no need for an independent European military force, the continuing coordination of national forces is an extremely important objective for European leadership. When evaluating the U.S. role, it could be harmful to assume that we must be actively engaged in every step of this process – perhaps it would be wise to take a step back, rely on the strength and resiliency of the transatlantic relationship, and possibly emulate European policy changes that have increased their soft power and state-building capabilities.

Western Europe's ability to coexist for the first time in a somewhat unified manner illustrates this great social progression. By having no official language (and subsequently providing full translation for almost all EU meetings and materials) and empowering regional actors (through such things as the Committee of the Regions), EU governments have embraced the diversity inherent within the continent. This coexistence has not been perfect - especially in regards to the tolerance of differing races, religious preferences, and linguistic disparities. However, these shortcomings provide the foundation for future improvement of the region. A potential means for addressing these shortcomings is for the Western European populous to continue to develop a "shared history" within the European Union. The new generation of European citizens who would carry this shared, pan-European history will start to see similar levels of improvement socially, as they have seen with the remarkable economic and political strides they have made in recent history. With improved social integration, Western Europe can better continue coordination in military goals, as well as increase tolerance and acceptance, which would lead to an enhanced co-existence and an ever more potent soft power capability. With the United States, experience in dealing with its own regional conflicts (civil war, articles of confederation, and immigration), perhaps they can lend a helping hand in improving cooperation and coordination among the varying European states. This would benefit both the European goals of a more cooperative and integrated EU, while helping American foreign policy by narrowing the foreign policy focus towards a more comprehensive "single Europe" policy, versus separate policy for each of the EU's member states. As previously stated, strength in Europe begets strength in the United States.

Progress for Western Europe can be measured by the level and success of their integrative practices. Having already made great strides in the economic and political realm, the largest internal

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challenge remains the need for a cohesive European society. Unfortunately, the United States cannot actively aid in this goal, and should allow European governments to handle their internal divisions. A strong, united Western Europe is essential to U.S. interests in order to increase burden sharing in global security roles; U.S. support for European soft power would allow for further Western leverage in areas where the U.S. finds its role as mediator constrained. Furthermore, modeling European civilian-military capabilities and international persuasive techniques can increase America's own international influence. In an increasingly multi-polar world, viewing Europe as an economic partner, as well as continuing political and security partnerships, can help decrease harmful competition and reaffirm the international strength that comes from an emboldened transatlantic relationship.