

After Brexit And Catalonia, What Will Become Of The EU?



The future of the European Union is surely in doubt.

Brexit and [Catalonia](#) are the most glaring recent examples of the irrepressibly dynamic forces of nationalism that continue to exert powerful influence on the human psyche within European communities.

More importantly, the processes that led to the victory of the “Leave” campaign in the June 2016 and the eruption of Catalonia’s cessationist sentiment form part of the disintegrating tendencies under way in today’s global political economy. They add to the growing list of cases illustrating the limits of the idea of a united Europe.

The more likely future of Europe is a neoliberal superstate jointly run by Berlin and Brussels. The European elite has been working hard for a long time now to have power transferred from the national governments to a Brussels-based super bureaucracy, with Berlin acting as the political and economic hegemon.

But there is also an alternative – a United States of Europe (a Europe with total integration and without nation states), which is a widely shared idea within certain European elites. Such a project can succeed only if the norms and values of democracy are applied at a transnational and global level (cosmopolitan democracy).

An imperial superstate

As a citizen of a European neoliberal superstate, your life will be determined by two entities: the Brussels-based bureaucracy and the unelected hegemon, Berlin. They will dictate the policymaking process, while nation states – especially those situated on the periphery of the Union – will be turned into “satellites”.

We have already seen plenty of evidence that the EU is heading that way.

Economic cooperation among European member states has revolved around distinct Machiavellian principles and it is the interests of the strong and

influential economic agents and of powerful state actors that drive public policy agenda.

The tradition of political cynicism also defines the actual foreign policy agenda of EU authorities and institutions as evidenced by their double-standard approach towards integration and secession. They opposed Catalonia's declaration for independence in late October 2017 because they don't wish to see Spain (an EU member state) split, but provided unanimous support in 2008 to Kosovo's independence.

As a matter of fact, the European Community (along with Washington) not only failed in the case of former Yugoslavia back in the early 1990s to guarantee the territorial integrity of European state frontiers, in clear violation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords Final Act, but individual European member states actually played a key role in the destruction of the Yugoslavian state.

But no one has ever charged the EU with being a democratic political entity. If anything, it acts as an imperial power by virtue of the very emergence of a neoliberal superstate, at least in regard to economic affairs. The manner in which the bailout programmes for Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Cyprus were handled during the euro crisis stands out as a glaring example of heavy-handed, anti-democratic tactics.

In Greece and Italy, democratically elected governments were forced to resign under pressure from EU authorities and replaced in turn by non-elected technocratic governments.

In the case of Greece, Germany's finance minister and EU officials even refused to accept the outcome of a bailout referendum. They still maintain a financial stranglehold over the economy, securing the country's transformation into a debt colony as a result of brutal austerity measures and outright refusal to provide debt relief.

Speaking of sovereign debt, Germany's own debt was largely written off in 1953 with the London Debt Agreement. To add insult to injury, Europe's new hegemon refuses to give back to financially strangled Greece a loan that the country was forced to provide to its Nazi occupiers during World War II. The value of the loan is estimated today to be in the [tens of billions](#) of euros.

Cosmopolitan democracy

The emergence of a United States of Europe presupposes not merely the complete redesign of the current EU architecture and fiscal unity but also the development of a new level of political consciousness.

The different peoples of Europe will have to embrace a cosmopolitan version of democracy which may be not simply contradictory to their national political cultures but run also contrary to emotional community attachment.

All prevailing experience indicates that we have not yet reached a stage of extending our emotional attachments to any measurable and influential degree to individuals and settings beyond close proximity to our own existence.

In other words, we can identify with the values and experiences of our communities and our nations, but hardly with those of the world at large, although we can still believe and subscribe to something called universal principles.

Moreover, cosmopolitan democracy is a noble but fanciful attachment not to universal principles as such, but rather to imagined political communities organised in empty space which may literally require the transcendence of time, culture, and history.

In other words, for cosmopolitan democracy to work, what is required is the application of a set of norms, practices, and values in a borderless world deprived of national cultures and distinct historical experiences – a borderless world that is located “outside” history and culture.

Cosmopolitan democracy requires the transcendence of all arbitrary limitations. In this sense, ontologically speaking, of course, cosmopolitan democracy as global governance comes close to resembling pantheism.

Unfortunately, the EU is not going that way. It will continue to accumulate political power at the expense of the democratic nation state in order to extend the tyranny of the neoliberal market for the benefit of European capital.

This is what the EU economic and political project has become all about, and the notion of a united Europe serves literally more as a political guide towards the establishment of a superstate rather than the remaking of Europe’s political landscape along the lines of a federal democratic polity.

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