

A Study on the Development of European Integration Process Based on Political and Economic Factors Caused by the Cold War

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Abstract. European integration began due to the influence of the Cold War. Due to the turbulent international situation in recent years, there have been disputes among the people of various European countries regarding European integration and its development after the Cold War. The development process of European integration and the economic and political organizations it formed have important reference values for analyzing the current situation in Europe. Therefore, the author chooses this research topic and adopts a literature research method to attempt to clarify the causal and logical relationship between the Cold War and European integration. Firstly, the author describes the impact and role of the economic and political factors of the Cold War in promoting European integration. Then, the author discusses the major strategic decisions made by Europe during the end of the Cold War, points out the advantages and disadvantages of contemporary European integration, and puts forward personal opinions. Finally, the author summarizes the first two parts and further elaborates on the importance of this topic based on the current situation in Europe. At the same time, the author points out the shortcomings of this research method and prospects for future research improvements.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

European integration has gone through decades of progress, including numerous twists and turns and explorations. In fact, the concept of European unity has existed for hundreds of years in Europe's history. Throughout history, European politicians have made great efforts to unify and lead the entire Europe with the power of a single country. However, historical facts have proven that it is impossible to achieve unity or integration of Europe with the goal of a single force or country's interests or development prospects.

Until the arrival of the two World Wars in the 20th century, Europe gradually realized that Europe had gradually lost its world dominance after witnessing the role and effects of the United States participating in World War I and the joint participation of China, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, were about to replace Europe as the new world hegemon. Therefore, after World War II, European countries began to intentionally try to promote cooperation and mutual assistance between each other. At the same time as Europe began to attempt joint exploration after World War II, the United States, and the Soviet Union gradually shifted from wartime cooperation to conflict due to the differences in their essential camp nature and

the resulting differences in their respective interests. With various conflict events, such as the Berlin crisis escalating, the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union eventually deteriorated sharply and fell to a freezing point, and the Cold War was out. As the main battleground of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, Europe was occupied by both sides. They hope to use Europe as a bridgehead on the front line of the Cold War and gain an advantage in the fierce Cold War confrontation. In the face of fierce confrontations and conflicts between the two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union, Europe has become a pawn in its confrontational game, posing a threat to its own social security and stability. European integration seems to have become the optimal solution that European society could make in the face of the international situation at that time.

The Cold War happened to have become a booster for the process of European integration, and both the United States and the Soviet Union intended to support European countries in consolidating and expanding their own camp strength. Taking Western Europe as an example, in terms of economic and political aspects, Western Europe accepted the Marshall Plan of the United States in 1947 and thus established the Organization for European Economic Cooperation and Development. This means that the Cold War has greatly promoted European economic integration since then, and at the same time, the strengthening of economic

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cooperation also means that the political aspect has become increasingly close.

European integration has always been a very important issue in European society in recent decades. Since World War II, Europe has been in an unstable state, squeezed by the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. Therefore, European integration is a major event closely related to Europe's own social development and national survival. In the Cold War era, even though the Soviet Union had disintegrated and the Cold War had ended, the economic policies and political measures brought about by the Cold War for decades did not disappear with the Soviet Union but continued to have a profound impact on European countries and continued to deepen Europe.

Therefore, if researchers want to study the formation of the current path of European integration and the exploration and development trends of the future path of European integration, it is particularly important to study and explore the Cold War, which played a huge role in promoting and influencing the economy and politics in the early and middle stages of European integration and continued to have an impact today. It can be said that if they want to study the process of European integration, the political and economic factors brought about by the Cold War are an indispensable and important part.

This research topic has extremely high social value for European society. After the end of the Cold War, due to the collapse of the original pattern, there was a fierce debate among European countries on how to establish a new state and social order. There were huge differences in the plan for the advancement and retreat of European integration. Even today, European society still has different opinions on the integration process. The masses who have experienced the Cold War and the new era groups have disputes due to differences in historical background and cognition, therefore clarifying the impact of political and economic factors caused by the Cold War on the process of European integration on European society. On the other hand, due to decades of economic confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the United States injected a large amount of economic aid into Europe, and the long-term promotion of European economic integration has also had a great impact on the integration of the European economic system; Therefore, the study of the economic factors brought about by the Cold War has great commercial value for predicting and analyzing the current pattern and future development trends of European economic integration.

1.2 Literature review

The academic research on European integration has already entered a mature stage of development, with a large number of scholars exploring and discussing European integration in a wide range of fields. Of course, there are also a considerable number of scholars who have linked and merged the Cold War and European integration. This is also because the Cold War and the

process of European integration are inherently inseparable events.

Yang's "On the Formation of a New Route of European Integration Movement in the Early 1970s" takes the historical process of Europe as the basic framework and deeply analyzes the origin of the European integration order. In the complex context of the changing international situation in the 20th century, Europe put the integration agenda on the agenda under various international factors. It also analyzes in detail the help and influence of countries such as the United States and France on European integration in the 1960s. This article further reveals that European countries sought new forms of integration process in the context of the intensification of the Cold War in the 1960s. This article further reveals the efforts made by European countries to seek new forms of integration in the context of the intensification of the Cold War in the 1960s, which is of great help for us to understand the rapid growth of European integration in the 1960s and 1970s and its increasing influence in the international political landscape [1].

Ding's article "Study on the Eisenhower Administration's Policy towards European Economic Integration" discusses the important initial stages of early European economic integration from the perspective of the US Eisenhower administration. Through the perspective of the US government, it explains how the United States consolidated its own monetary position by promoting European economic cooperation, thereby keeping the post-war international economic and political order in the hands of the United States. This research direction also precisely demonstrates from another perspective how the economic factors caused by the Cold War effectively promoted the process of European integration, providing readers with a new perspective to understand the role played by the Cold War in European integration [2].

Wang's article "The End of the Cold War and the Dispute over the Leading Power in Europe Strategic Interactions on the New European Order among the Big Four" analyzed starts from the end of the Cold War after the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and focuses on exploring the exploration and attempts of each country to establish a future order in Europe based on their own strategic intentions, from the perspective of the four major countries during the Cold War, when the previous bipolar structure collapsed, and the original political and economic order system in Europe was once again disrupted after the end of the Cold War. This article also provides a longitudinal comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of previous articles in this area and raises a series of issues that still need to be addressed. Attempting to provide readers with a new perspective through extensive archival interpretation, this indirectly proves that the political and economic factors caused by the Cold War not only had a huge impact on European integration at the time but also continued to have an impact in the post-Cold War era, providing reference significance for studying the current and even future trends of Cold War factors [3].

There have been countless studies in academia on the impact of the Cold War on European integration. Most mathematicians have focused on studying the role and influence of a specific government or individual on European integration during the Cold War, which is very helpful for studying the specific measures taken by the Cold War to promote European integration. However, in contrast, few scholars have focused on studying the macro-level thinking of the overall impact of the Cold War on the strategic level of major powers. This leads to research that appears somewhat singular and fragmented and fails to effectively integrate specific and nuanced perspectives to explain the overall macro perspective.

1.3 Research framework

This article will first attempt to review the events leading up to the formation of the Cold War since the end of World War II and analyze the role of economic and political factors brought about by key events in European integration from a major power perspective. Secondly, it will attempt to interpret the major turning points and strategic decisions that Europe experienced during the end of the Cold War, confirming the sustained impact of Cold War factors on it. Finally, provide personal opinions on the problems and challenges faced by the current, contemporary, and future development of European integration.

2 Method

This article adopts the Literature Research Method, which has a large number of precedents and mature applications in the academic community. The basic concept of the literature research method is that researchers read written literature related to a specific research topic or direction, such as academic papers or written works published by predecessors. Researchers need to systematically and comprehensively read the literature and understand the main viewpoints and thinking systems that the literature wants to express. By understanding and mastering the key information in the literature, researchers can understand the research achievements that have been achieved in the field in the past. Moreover, timely updates and a grasp of the current research status and avant-garde trends in this field provide important basic guidance and research ideas for researchers in subsequent personal-related research. Researchers can also obtain strong support from previous literature and improve their own research field by discovering and summarizing the advantages and disadvantages of previous literature. From this, it can be seen that the literature research method is a highly efficient and valuable research method, which is a must-have for many researchers.

In this article, the author fully utilized the literature research method, focusing on the academic literature related to the study of the Cold War era and European integration based on the theme and research direction of this article. The literature was mainly scheduled from World War II to the end of the Cold War period,

obtaining opinions and perspectives from different scholars on the causal relationship and inevitable connection between the political and economic factors brought about by the Cold War and European integration through the study of literature content. In the process of reading literature research, the author not only studies the literature itself but also further refers to the written works and literature referenced in this literature, consolidating the author's research direction framework, making the evidence chain supported by the literature more complete, and making the article more convincing.

3 Result

3.1 The outbreak of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union

In fact, the reason why the United States and the Soviet Union became allies during wartime was very simple, simply to jointly confront the threat posed by Nazi Germany and defend their own national security. However, there is a great hidden danger in this relationship. When the war ends and the common interests of both sides disappear, there is no need for an alliance between the two sides. As the old saying goes, there is no eternal friend, only eternal interests. The United States and the Soviet Union are very good examples. Both the United States and the Soviet Union do not want to engage in war again after just experiencing World War II, but due to differences in their respective social systems and strategic goals, conflicts will inevitably arise. In 1946, British Prime Minister Churchill visited Britain and delivered the famous Iron Curtain speech, which marked the official beginning of the Cold War as a loyal ally of the United States.

In order to curb the development of the Soviet Union in Europe and even the world and to promote their own international capitalist strategy, in 1947, US President Truman issued the famous Truman Doctrine, which clearly defined "containing communism" as the national political ideology and foreign policy of the United States. This can be regarded as an important turning point in the history of US diplomacy, marking the official opening of the 44-year-long Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union transitioned from wartime allies to hostility.

3.2 Economic factors have an impact on European integration

3.2.1 The most important economic plan

An extremely important part of the Cold War confrontation was the economic confrontation, with the most representative being the Marshall Plan. The plan aims to provide economic assistance to Western European countries that were traumatized during World War II to assist in post-war economic reconstruction. The plan was launched in July 1947 and has delivered a total of \$13.15 billion in various forms of aid, including

technology, finance, technology equipment, etc., to Western Europe, of which 90% were grants and 10% were loans. It lasted for a total of 4 years [4]. The Marshall Plan was one of the extremely important Cold War containment measures against the Soviet Union that accompanied the Truman Doctrine, and it formed the fundamental framework of the United States' foreign strategy.

3.2.2 The considerations of the United States before the Marshall Plan

Long before the Marshall Plan, the United States began its aid program in Western Europe, which can be traced back to the Lend-Lease Act implemented by the United States for its allies during World War II. After the end of World War II, the United States began its reconstruction aid program for Western Europe, mainly through the wartime Western European Lend-Lease Act, which continued to be implemented through indirect aid. In the early stages of aid, the United States did not want Europe to develop rapidly through aid and form a new powerful economic bloc, which would add unstable factors to the implementation path of its global strategy. Therefore, at that time, the United States did not support European integration. However, soon after the outbreak of the Cold War, the United States had to re-examine its strategy towards Europe. Faced with a strong and constantly expanding Soviet Union in Europe, which was still weak at the time, the Western European countries that were trying to rebuild and restore their economies were clearly not prepared to resist the expansion and infiltration of Eastern Europe under Soviet control.

Another important situation is that the European economy was extremely depressed after World War II due to its heavy impact. In addition, due to the Soviet Union's extensive occupation of Europe and propaganda of communist expansion strategies, a considerable number of European countries at that time had Communist and socialist parties, which became mainstream political parties with the support of the Soviet Union. Suppose the United States did not provide timely and large-scale assistance to solve Europe's economic difficulties. In that case, the political situation in Europe is highly likely to be dominated by left-wing political parties, which could lead to European countries developing independent capitalist economies and boycotting American currencies and commodities [5]. If such a situation occurs, Western Europe is likely to seek new industrial raw material suppliers outside the American system and explore new international markets. Western Europe will likely seek to form an alliance with the Soviet Union, and this will lead Eastern Europe to obtain the necessary materials for its development. The Soviet Union may also absorb Western Europe's leading experience in business management and scientific technology through this channel to continuously enhance its own strength [6]. This further triggered the domino effect, allowing the Soviet Union to continue to have the upper hand in the Cold War confrontation, putting the

United States at a disadvantage in competition with the Soviet Union in Europe. The multilateral free international economic order, which the United States has been painstakingly managing and laying out, will collapse accordingly.

3.2.3 The United States begins to support integration

In the face of this dilemma, the US government can only change its previous strategy against European integration because, according to the situation at that time, the recovery and sustainable development of the European economy needed to be carried out jointly to be able to move forward quickly. The prosperity and prosperity of Western Europe are beneficial for the United States to continuously digest its production capacity and promote the development of its domestic industrial and trade system. A strong Western European consortium can also become an effective weapon for the United States to confront Western Europe led by the Soviet Union on the main battlefield of the Cold War in Europe, allowing the United States to gain an advantage in suppressing the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The United States needs an integrated Western Europe that follows the orders of the US government, is politically stable, and has rapid economic development under its control. Therefore, after the outbreak of the Cold War, the United States began to change its previous strategy and instead supported Western European integration. From this, it can be considered that the Marshall Plan became an important catalyst for promoting European integration.

The current academic community generally agrees that the Marshall Plan enabled Western European countries to effectively expand and strengthen the prevalence of multilateral free trade by establishing international organizations such as the European Economic Cooperation Organization to allocate and handle American aid. This led to the successful reduction of long-standing and towering tariff barriers in Western European countries, which reduced their barriers to international trade and made their connections increasingly close. Finally, after helping Europe clear the existing problems, it was integrated.

3.3 The impact of political factors on the process of European integration

3.3.1 The beginning of political confrontation, Truman doctrine

For the development of a country or region, economic factors are an indispensable part, but the importance of political factors is equivalent to economic factors. The introduction of many important economic plans and policies is often not solely due to economic factors but often carries deeper political objectives behind them. Europe during the Cold War was no exception.

In fact, before 1947, the United States did not demonstrate a large-scale and explicit hostile policy or targeted activities towards the Soviet Union. However,

as the situation between the United States and the Soviet Union became increasingly tense, the introduction of the Truman Doctrine officially marked the formal departure of the United States and the Soviet Union in terms of political stance and future strategic path. One of the most important ideas in the Truman Doctrine is the demand to suppress the development of communism and to use this ideology as a national political ideology. This directly led to the United States changing its strategy and planning for European aid in the early post-war period and indirectly facilitated the launch of the Marshall Plan, which had a significant political impact on Europe thereafter.

3.3.2 The political influence in the Marshall Plan

There is a great misunderstanding among people from all walks of life regarding the Marshall Plan, believing that its role in European integration is mainly reflected in the economic aspect. In contrast, other aspects, such as politics, have little effect. However, in fact, the political role of the Marshall Plan is not inferior to its economic role. On the surface, the main focus of the Marshall Plan was to provide sustained aid to Europe, including a large amount of US dollar loans, while Western European countries used these loans to purchase American goods. On a deeper level of consideration, it has greatly helped the United States stabilize the Bretton Woods system and increase the value of the US dollar, helping to solidify its political and international position in Europe. It can be said that behind the Marshall Plan lies the extremely important political objectives of the United States [7]. In the previous text, the author mentioned that the political situation in Europe turned left after World War II, and communist forces dominated many countries. However, it was precisely because of the timely end of the Marshall Plan and the timely play of the rescue role that the influence of communist parties in various countries rapidly decreased, which stabilized the political situation in Western Europe. This provided an official political foundation for economic integration cooperation after World War II, which precisely confirmed Marx's theory that the economic foundation determines the superstructure. US President Truman also believed that European political unity was a "long-term goal" that should be achieved through economic integration. These packages, such as aid plans and proposals focused on assisting the coal and steel sector, have promoted the beginning of European integration [8].

4. Discussion

4.1 The great power game after the end of the Cold War

By the early 1990s, the world situation had undergone earth-shattering changes. The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany in 1989 marked the disintegration and end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. This means that the Yalta system, which was established

around the Cold War after World War II and planned for Europe in all aspects, such as economy, politics, and military, will face enormous challenges and reform. At this time, the situation in Europe is very complex, and the major countries that affect Europe, such as France, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, have engaged in fierce exchanges and strategic layouts regarding what new order Europe should establish in the future, as well as the redistribution of political and economic organizations that have been preserved in Europe in the past.

Each country has a different vision for the future strategic path of Europe, such as the Atlantic Doctrine of the United States, the Pan-European Doctrine of the Soviet Union, the Europeanism of France, and the Pluralism of Britain. Atlanticism and Europeanism demonstrate the most intense competition. In France's view, the best plan for Europe after the Cold War should be to establish the European Community as the main body, gradually stripping NATO, which is actually controlled by the United States, out of its core leadership. In early 1990, France continued to exert pressure on NATO, attempting to push the European Community to the top position and downplay NATO's influence. France's attitude towards NATO and the United States doubled the pressure on the United States. Washington firmly believed that Paris was advancing a systematic plan to obstruct the United States from maintaining NATO and its continued presence in Europe [9]. The United States naturally will not hand over leadership to France. Through multi-party operations, the United States ultimately withstood pressure from France and other parties, issued a summit declaration on strengthening NATO's political role and reducing military factors, and ultimately held a summit [10]. This marks the victory of Atlanticism.

In this major turning point regarding the planning of the future path for Europe after the Cold War, the United States successfully utilized its political power base in Europe during the Cold War period, took over the power vacuum after the Soviet Union withdrew, defeated the European Community that attempted to exclude the United States, and promoted the process of new European integration with distinctly American characteristics. The political factors brought about by the Cold War, such as NATO and economic factors, continue to play important roles in this process and drive the development of future European affairs.

4.2 The present and future of European integration

In the current multipolar international situation, Europe, as a hub of geographical, economic, and political intersection, occupies an important position in the new round of international exchanges. Against the backdrop of tensions between China and the United States, ongoing conflicts, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, Europe faces both opportunities and challenges. In terms of opportunities, Europe includes a large number of

economically powerful countries, such as France and Germany. In the 2023 global GDP ranking, Germany even surpassed Japan to become third. Its advanced industrial and academic systems play a leading role in the fields of automobiles, new energy, and others on a global scale. The strong economic power provides strong support for its continuous integration and competition for international status in the modern and contemporary era. On the other hand, there are also great challenges for the future integration of Europe. In terms of economy, Europe is facing the impact of several years of large-scale trade wars between China and the United States. Most of the trade between the two sides has a cooperative relationship with Europe, and the vicious competition between the two sides poses a potential threat to Europe's future economic development, posing a threat to Europe's integration and improvement in the new era. In terms of politics and regional security, the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war has posed a great threat to regional security in Europe. This war led to the rise of extreme nationalism and right-wing forces in some parts of Europe, which had an impact on political stability.

In the face of complex international situations, in the author's opinion, European countries need to fully utilize their economic advantages as a foundation, leverage their geographical advantages to exert influence in international affairs as much as possible, protect and strive for resources through active diplomacy and political means, maintain European economic status, and stabilize the political structure of each country. In addition, Europe should make full use of the convenient communication and transaction-sharing mechanisms brought about by European integration. Developing strategies to address challenges from all parties in order to achieve a virtuous cycle can promote European integration in the future through global competition.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion of key findings

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in intense confrontation in various fields in Europe, with the most representative being economic and political confrontation. In terms of economy, the United States has undergone a lot of strategic considerations and intends to promote and implement its global strategy, establish economic leadership, and stabilize the hegemony of the US dollar in this process. Finally, through projects such as the Marshall Plan, the United States assisted Europe in achieving its established goals. Europe was also able to receive a large amount of economic aid due to the Cold War, and this process successfully facilitated the construction of European integration. And with the help of the United States, we will continue to promote the process of European integration. In terms of politics, there is a deeper consideration of the future political integration pattern in Europe in economic plans represented by the Marshall Plan. Behind economic aid lies the goal of promoting political stability in Europe and suppressing the rise of

communism. This also led to the formation of political integration in Europe under the premise of orderly economic recovery due to Cold War factors. In the new era after the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe, major European countries engaged in fierce competition in the face of the collapse of the old system and the redistribution of European power. In the end, the victory of Atlanticism came to an end, and the development of European integration continued to move forward under the continuous influence of the Cold War factors.

5.2 Research significance

European integration has been developing for decades and is still ongoing, but it is facing new challenges in the current complex and tense situation in Europe and the world. Faced with the instability of regional security and the global economic downturn, there is a call for the European integration system and model, as well as the resurgence of populism, which creates unstable factors in European society and may have a negative impact on European integration. Therefore, it is essential to study and reflect on the Cold War factors that have had the greatest impact on the emergence and formation of European integration. In the context of most European political and economic organizations being driven by Cold War factors today, this study can help governments and various sectors of society to provide past case studies and basic thinking frameworks for the development and planning direction of European integration in the future, and to maintain European economic development and political stability. It has extremely high commercial and political value in solving problems such as maintaining one's own values and international status.

5.3 Limitations

Although this article extensively utilizes literature research methods, it provides strong support for event cascading and logical inference during the research period. It effectively helps the author analyze the current situation and gain insights into future progress. However, this article still has shortcomings. The literature research methods widely used in the article are mostly secondary data, lacking references and research on the original materials. A more obvious problem with secondary data is that the author's writing intention may contain personal emotions and subjective factors and may not achieve a 100% fair evaluation of events, and primary data can help researchers get closer to the true logic and causal relationships of events, which is conducive to researchers making more objective and rational research ideas and results. In future research and learning, researchers should obtain primary data through more diverse research methods such as surveys and interviews in order to enrich the research and reference methods of the article, making the research ideas and results more reliable and convincing.

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