Europe in the mirror of Germany: to what extent does German unification (1815-1888) prefigure the unification of Europe (1947-…)?

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ABSTRACT. The future development of the process of European unification, which began in 1947, is examined by comparing it with the process leading to the unification of Germany between 1815 and 1888. The priority of economic unification over political unification and, in the economic field, of commercial unification over monetary unification are clear similarities. The different degree of cultural homogeneity and the pace of the political unification process are clear differences. The possibility of economic unification without political unification and the accomplishment by peaceful means of the political unification of such heterogeneous nations as the European ones must necessarily remain open questions.

Introduction

BETWEEN 1815 AND 1888, thirty-nine German states were involved in a process of economic and political unification that resulted in thirty-six of them giving rise to what was to become known as Germany from the late nineteenth century onwards. Since 1947, a still indeterminate number of European states have been involved in an as yet incomplete process that may nonetheless result in an economic and political unification similar to the one that took place in Germany. What similarities and differences are there between the two processes? Do they suggest that the final result of the process of European unification will in fact be the same as that of German unification? These are the questions that this paper seeks to answer.

The Basic Conditions: Cultural Homogeneity and Political Organisation

Nineteenth-century Germany

THE THIRTY-NINE STATES that were involved in the process of German unification in its different stages between 1815 and 1888 had two important characteristics in common, one cultural, the other political: culturally they were German; politically they belonged to the German Confederation.

In saying that these states were culturally German, the intention is to stress that most of the population in all these states consisted of German speakers. Another feature of cultural homogeneity may also be pointed out: in all of them, the majority of the population was Christian. This aspect was, however, linked to a heterogeneity that should not be overlooked: in some of these states, the predominant Christian religion was Roman Catholicism; in others, it was independent Lutheran Christianity[1].

The German Confederation [Deutscher Bund] was created by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, based in Frankfurt under the presidency of the Austrian Emperor, as an umbrella political organisation of German states (in the cultural sense of the previous paragraph). The Confederation consisted of thirty-nine sovereign states – Anhalt-Bernburg, Anhalt-Dessau, Anhalt-Köthen, Baden, Bavaria [Bayern][2], Bremen, Brunswick [Braun-

1. In the 1870s, and already at an advanced stage in the process of German unification, the government of the newly-created German Empire attempted to encourage greater religious homogeneity within its borders by supporting the separation from Rome of the so-called Old Catholics (Catholics who did not accept the doctrine of the *Pastor Æternus*, the constitution of the First Vatican Council that solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope), in a campaign that became known as Kulturkampf. These efforts were thwarted and most of the German Catholic Church remained faithful to Rome.
2. Strictly speaking, the King of Bavaria was also the Count of the Palatinate [Pfalz], a state that was composed of two geographically separate territories, one in the Upper Rhineland, the Rhine Palatinate [Rheinpfalz], and the other close to Bavaria, the Upper Palatinate [Oberpfalz]. In practice, these states can be considered as one single state in the context of the process of German unification.

schweig], Frankfurt, Hamburg, Hanover[3], Hesse-Darmstadt, Hesse-Homburg, Hesse-Kassel, Hohenzollern-Hechingen, Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Holstein[4], Liechtenstein, Lippe-Detmold, Lübeck, Luxembourg[5], Mecklemburg-Schwerin, Mecklemburg-Streliz, Nassau, Oldenburg, Austria [Österreich][6], Prussia [Preußen][7], Reuß-Gera, Reuß-Greiz, Reuß-Schleiz, Saxony [Sachsen], Saxe-Altenburg, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Weimar, Schaumburg-Lippe, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, Waldeck, and Württemberg. These were

3. Until 1838, the King of Hanover was also the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In that year, the ascent of Queen Victoria to the throne of the latter kingdom led to the separation of the Kingdom of Hanover, which, because of the application of the Salic law, followed a path of male succession.
4. The Duke of Holstein (and Lauenberg, a duchy that was formally distinct from that of Holstein, but which can, in practice, be treated together with it in the context of the process of German unification) was also the King of Denmark. At the same time, the King of Denmark was also the Duke of Schleswig, another state where the population was predominantly German-speaking, but which was not part of the German Confederation.
5. The Grand Duke of Luxembourg was also the King of the Netherlands. The northern part of the Grand Duchy was inhabited by predominantly French-speaking people. When Belgium separated from the Netherlands in 1830, it occupied Luxembourg. This occupation did not end until 1838. At that time, the territory where there was a predominance of French speakers was ceded to Belgium and, in the territory where there was a predominance of German speakers, the authority of the King of the Netherlands was restored.
6. The Emperor of Austria was also the King of Bohemia (a state where most of the population were Czech speakers, but which formally belonged to the German Confederation), the King of Hungary (a state where most of the population spoke Hungarian, although there were regions with a predominance of Slovakian, Polish and Romanian speakers, and which did not formally belong to the German Confederation) and the King of Lombardy and Venice (states where the majority of the population spoke Italian and which did not formally belong to the German Confederation).
7. Strictly speaking, the King of Prussia was the sovereign of various distinct (and geographically discontinuous) states: Brandenburg, Pomerania [Pomern], Posnania [Posen], East Prussia [Ost Preußen] and West Prussia [West Preußen] in the east of the Confederation and Westphalia [Westfalen] and part of the Rhineland [Rheinland] in the west. In fact, to be more precise, the two Prussias and Posnania, inhabited by predominantly Polish

states with different kinds of formal dignity (imperial, royal, grand-ducal, ducal, free cities, etc.), which were very heterogeneous in terms of size[8] and frequently discontinuous in geographical terms. However, any deliberation taken by the Diet [Bundesversammlung] of the Confederation had to be unanimously approved by the representatives of the thirty-nine powers. The German Confederation was not therefore, strictly speaking, a true federal state, but a mere international organisation, without any delegation of sovereignty to the central power.

Twentieth-century Europe

THE STILL INDETERMINATE NUMBER of European states that have been involved in the, as yet, incomplete process of European unification do not have a cultural homogeneity which is comparable with that of the states that were involved in the process of German unification. Of course, there is some cultural similarity among European nations, especially if the Christian-rooted, later secularised, culture, which is dominant between the Arctic and the Mediterranean in latitude and between the Atlantic and the steppe in longitude, is compared to Chinese, Indian and Muslim paradigms. However, linguistic heterogeneity and openness to other paradigms are characteristic features of what may be called

speakers, were not even part of the German Confederation. However, the policy followed by the King of Prussia was to involve his states that did not belong to the Confederation in its affairs, with the aim of promoting the unification of those states and gaining the power to dominate the process of German unification. For this reason, these states can be treated in practice as if they were one single state in the context of the process of German unification. It can, in fact, be said that the opposite generally happened with the other sovereigns with states both inside and outside the Confederation.

8. In the mid-19th century, the group of states under Prussian sovereignty had more than 16 million inhabitants and the states under Austrian sovereignty that were members of the German Confederation had roughly 12 million inhabitants (the total population of the territories under Austrian sovereignty was roughly 36 million inhabitants), whilst some of the smaller states of the Confederation did not have more than 50,000 inhabitants. The total population of the German Confederation was roughly 40 million inhabitants.

European culture, that make it more difficult to define and to present as a unifying element to Europeans themselves.

At the same time, European unification involves states that, at the time when the process was started in 1947, did not have any formal political ties between them. Moreover, the immediate post-World War II witnessed the formation of the so-called Iron Curtain, that separated Western Europe, a set of democratic and right-wing authoritarian states that became an American sphere of influence, and Eastern Europe, a set of communist dictatorships that became a Soviet sphere of influence. For nearly forty years, European economic and political organisations usually came in pairs. From an economic point of view, 1948 saw the formation of the OEEC (Organisation of European Economic Cooperation), designed to manage American aid under the so-called Marshall Plan, and the COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Aid), designed to promote cooperation among centrally-planned economies. Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey belonged to the OEEC. The American, British and French occupation zones in Germany (which would later form the Federal Republic of Germany) and the free city of Trieste (which would later be integrated into Italy) were also included. Spain joined in 1959. The organization ceased to exist in 1961, being replaced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which embraces highly-developed countries from all over the world. Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and USSR belonged to COMECON. The Soviet occupation zone in Germany (which would later form the German Democratic Republic) was also included. The organization ceased to exist in 1991 in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet sphere of influence. Finland, Yugoslavia and (at first) Spain remained outside these organisations, although it was clear that Finland and Spain tended towards the American sphere of influence and Yugoslavia was a communist centrally-planned economy, although at odds with the Soviet Union. From a political and military point of view, NATO (founded in 1949) and the Warsaw Pact (founded in 1955 and ended in 1991) played similar roles, although with a more reduced membership.

The exception to the pair rule[9] was the Council of Europe, designed to be a forum for cooperation among European democracies. It had only ten members when it was founded in 1949: Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. In the same year they were joined by Greece and Turkey, in 1950 by Iceland and the Federal Republic of Germany, in 1956 by Austria, in 1961 by Cyprus, in 1963 by Switzerland, in 1965 by Malta, in 1976 by Portugal, in 1977 by Spain, in 1978 by Liechtenstein, in 1988 by San Marino, in 1989 by Finland, in 1990 by Hungary, in 1991 by Poland, in 1992 by Bulgaria, in 1993 by the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania, in 1994 by Andorra, in 1995 by Albania, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova and the Ukraine, in 1996 by Croatia and Russia, in 1999 by Georgia, in 2001 by Armenia and Azerbaijan, in 2002 by Bosnia-Hercegovina, in 2004 by Monaco, in 2006 by Serbia[10], and in 2007 by Montenegro.

As a consequence of the absence of previous pan-European political organizations, the schemes and organizations of political cooperation among the states involved in the process of European unification had to be formed in the context of the process of European unification itself.

Commercial Unification

Nineteenth-century Germany

IN A CERTAIN SENSE, the first step in the process of German economic unification may be considered to have been an internal measure taken

9. In the political field. Another conspicuous exception in the sports field was UEFA (Union Européenne de Football / European Football Association), which organized pan-European soccer competitions from the mid-1950s onwards.
10. Serbia is continuing the membership of the Council of Europe previously exercised by the Union of the States of Serbia and Montenegro since 2003.

by one of the states involved: Prussia. In fact, the states subject to the King of Prussia after the stabilisation of the political map of Europe following the Congress of Vienna of 1815 (see note 7) were distinct economies, in particular because they were separated by customs barriers. In 1818, the Prussian government decided to suppress these barriers, hoping that the strengthening of political unity and the increase in economic prosperity would compensate for the loss of public revenue resulting from this measure.

The customs union of the states subject to the sovereignty of the King of Prussia profoundly altered the economic conditions of the small states either contained within them or bordering them. Over the following years, some of these states signed agreements to be integrated into the Prussian customs union. This was the case with Schwarzburg-Sondershausen in 1819, Saxe-Weimar and Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt in 1823, and Anhalt-Bernburg, Lippe-Detmolt and Mecklemburg-Schwerin in 1826.

Other states that were less dependent on Prussia did, however, try to react in another way. Thus, in 1828, two other commercial areas were set up within the German Confederation. One, the South German Customs Union [Süddeutsche Zollvereiningung], was a genuine customs union, but it only included Bavaria and Württemberg. The other, the Central German Commercial Union [Mitteldeutsche Handelsverein], amounted to a mere granting of customs preferences, but it comprised a considerable number of states: Baden, Brunswick, the city of Frankfurt, Hanover, Hesse-Homburg, Hesse-Kassel, Hohenzollern-Hechingen, Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen[11], Nassau, Oldenburg, Saxony and Schaumburg-Lippe.

Thus, the Prussian customs union, which, also in 1828, was transformed into the North German Customs Agreement [Norddeutsche Zollvertrag], comprised seven states, the South German Customs Union comprised two states and the Central German Commercial Union

11. It should be noted that these two principalities of Hohenzollern-Hechingen and Hohenzollern-Sigmarigen had sovereigns belonging to the family that was also the ruling family of Prussia, even though they were located between Baden and Württemberg.

comprised twelve states. Roughly half the states of the German Confederation still remained outside this movement for the formation of commercial areas.

The formation of two rival commercial areas did not prevent the North German Customs Agreement from continuing to expand. Even before the end of 1828, Anhalt-Dessau, Anhalt-Köthen and Hesse-Darmstadt had joined the agreement; in 1829, it was the turn of Saxe-Altenburg, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and Saxe-Meiningen to join; in 1831, Waldeck joined, and then, marking a crucial turning point, came Hesse-Kassel, which thus abandoned the Central German Commercial Union[12].

Meanwhile, the North German Customs Agreement and the South German Customs Union in 1829 had signed a trade agreement, and in 1833 they decided to merge, as from 1 January 1834, into a single German Customs Union [Deutscher Zollverein], which was immediately joined by Hohenzollern-Hechingen, Hohenzollern-Sigmarigen, Reuß-Gera, Reuß-Greiz, Reuß-Schleiz and Saxony, this latter state being one of the leading members of the Central German Commercial Union. This fact led to the break-up of the Central German Commercial Union. A new Fiscal Union [Steuerverein] was formed in the north with only four members: Brunswick, Hanover, Oldenburg and Schaumburg-Lippe. The other four states remained outside any existing commercial areas for some time, but they quickly joined the German Customs Union: Hesse-Homburg in 1835, and Baden, Frankfurt and Nassau in 1836.

Thus, by the mid 1830s, the German Customs Union already

12. The transfer of Hesse-Kassel from the Central German Commercial Union to the North German Customs Agreement was crucial, above all for geographical reasons. Without Hesse-Kassel, the Central German Commercial Union became divided into two parts: Brunswick, Hanover, Oldenburg, Saxony and Schaumburg-Lippe to the north, and Baden, Frankfurt, Hesse-Homburg, Hohenzollern-Hechingen, Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen and Nassau to the south, without any territorial continuity. On the contrary, however, with Hesse-Kassel as a member, the western and eastern parts of the territory of the North German Customs Agreement were almost completely linked together.

comprised twenty-seven states, whilst the Fiscal Union comprised four states. Remaining outside either union were eight states from the German Confederation: the three Hanseatic cities – Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck – and five geographically peripheral states – Holstein, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mecklemburg-Streliz and Austria[13].

As was to be expected, the German Customs Union became the predominant organisation of German commercial life and the trend was to absorb the states that were still on its borders, through successive enlargements. In 1842, Brunswick and Schaumburg-Lippe abandoned the Fiscal Union and joined the German Customs Union. Luxembourg also joined around the same time. Little more than a decade later, in 1854, it was the turn of the other two states from the Fiscal Union, Hanover and Oldenburg, to join the German Customs Union. Meanwhile, Liechtenstein and Austria had set up their own distinct customs union in 1852.

In 1867, as a consequence of the political events occurring in the mid-1860s, which will be examined later in this paper, the city of Lübeck, Mecklemburg-Streliz and the duchies of Holstein and Schleswig (until then linked to Denmark) became members of the German Customs Union, whilst, at the same time, Luxembourg left this union. In 1871, the territory of Alsace-Lorraine (which until then had been part of France) joined the German Customs Union at the same time as it was annexed by the newly-formed German Empire. Finally, in 1888, the German Customs Union received its last members, the cities of Bremen and Hamburg. The explanation for the long resistance of these two cities to joining the German Customs Union is to be found in their prosperity, which allowed them to operate as ports working in conjunction with other regions along the northern sea coasts.

13. The description provided in the previous paragraphs of the process leading to the formation of the various German commercial areas between the end of the 1810s and the mid-1830s has been simplified, since it does not take into account the particular situation of some enclaves which, for reasons of economic convenience, did not follow the trading links of the main part of the states to which they were politically united.

Thus, at the beginning of the 1890s, the German Customs Union already comprised the whole area of the former German Confederation, except for Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Austria[14], and other regions that had meanwhile been annexed from Denmark (Schleswig) and France (Alsace-Lorraine), besides those territories whose sovereign was initially the King of Prussia and which were formally outside the Confederation.

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The fairly immediate success of the commercial unification of the German world may be considered the consequence of two facts: on the one hand, the process did not formally jeopardise the independence of the various German states[15]; on the other hand, the abolition of customs duties between the various states stimulated economic activity in such a way as to compensate for the fact that some customs revenue had ceased to be collected[16].

Twentieth-century Europe

THE PROCESS OF EUROPEAN UNIFICATION started during the 1950s as a process of economic cooperation within the framework of the OEEC. Soon, however, projects put forward by Belgium, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (usually known as the Six) to set up common markets for particular commodities

14. As will be seen below, these three states were the only ones in the German Confederation that were not included in the process of political unification. It should be remembered that Liechtenstein and Austria had themselves formed a distinct customs union.
15. In practice, this was not exactly the case, because Prussia arrogated for itself the right to negotiate customs agreements unilaterally with third parties, imposing these upon the group of states belonging to the North German Customs Agreement and then upon the group belonging to the German Customs Union.
16. It should be noted that the customs revenue of the German commercial areas (net of administration costs) represented income for the member states and was generally divided between them according to the size of their population.

and even an overall customs union, supported by common policies for particular sectors, clashed with the more modest projects put forward by Great Britain to set up a mere free-trade area for industrial products. Moreover, while the other highly-developed members of the OEEC (Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, known, together with Great Britain, as the Other Six) regarded the British proposal with approval, less-developed members of the organization (Iceland, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Turkey and, later, Spain) regarded with suspicion joining commercial areas that they feared might hinder their economic development.

As a consequence, while the Six boldly formed the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) in 1951 and the Euratom and the EEC (European Economic Community) in 1958, and set up a common agricultural policy in 1962 and a common fishing policy in 1970, the Other Six (joined at the last minute by Portugal) formed the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) in 1960. For a while, Western Europe was divided into two rival commercial blocks.

The first of these blocks to expand was the EFTA, joined by Finland in 1961[17] and Iceland in 1970. But it soon became clear that the European Communities (ECCS + Euratom + EEC) was a much more successful endeavour. As a consequence, Great Britain applied for membership as soon as 1961, and again in 1967. Denmark, Norway and Ireland followed Great Britain, because of their close dependence on British markets[18]. The first application was vetoed by France, but the second just remained unanswered until 1969. By then, French reluctance was overcome and negotiations started the next year. They led to

17. The practical veto power of the Soviet Union on Finland's foreign policy (which became known as finlandisation) had already prevented Finland from joining the OEEC, as pointed out above, and demanded an odd formal scheme for Finland's participation in EFTA. Finland did not become a formal EFTA member until 1986. Between 1961 and 1986, there was only a free-trade agreement between EFTA and Finland.
18. In 1961, a similar application was also presented by Portugal.

the 1972 treaties with provisions for the integration of the four candidates into the European Communities as from 1 January 1973[19] and the gradual formation of a free-trade area comprising all members of the European Communities and EFTA.

Things did not happen exactly as scheduled. Norway decided by referendum to switch from integration to remaining a member of EFTA. Great Britain forced a re-negotiation of its membership treaty that was not concluded until it was approved by referendum in 1975. And, after a few years of membership, Greenland decided, also by referendum, to abandon the European Communities, which happened in 1985. However, it is impossible to deny that 1973 was a turning point: from then on, the European Communities became the undoubted core of the European unification process.

As a consequence, new members came as quickly as local political conditions and European economic conditions allowed. Greece in 1981, Portugal and Spain in 1986, Austria, Finland and Sweden in 1995, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2005, and Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 increased membership to twenty-seven. Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia, Iceland and Serbia are already accepted as candidates.

Meanwhile, the European Communities changed their character in a process that is formally depicted in their new names: the European Community in 1987, and the European Union in 1993. These changes will be considered in more detail below.

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Various important analogies between the process of German integration and the process of European integration found in this section should be underlined:

19. Of the two autonomous regions of Denmark in the North Atlantic, one – Greenland – went with Denmark and became part of the European Communities, but the other – the Faroe Isles – decided to remain outside the European Communities.

1) The process of economic integration preceded the process of political integration.
2) In the economic domain, the process of commercial integration preceded the process of monetary integration.
3) In the commercial domain, there was not one single union at the outset, but several commercial areas.
4) The various commercial areas set up initially were not identical in nature, varying between the models of a full customs union, a free-trade area and, in the case of German commercial unification, an area of mere customs preferences.
5) Right from the beginning of both processes of commercial unification, there was an apparently clear trend towards their being dominated by one of the commercial areas formed – the Prussian customs union in the process leading to the commercial unification of Germany, and the European Communities in the process of European commercial unification.
6) In both cases, attempts were made to combat this trend: various medium-sized states sought to prevent the formation of an area dominated by Prussia in the 1820s and 1830s; and Great Britain attempted to prevent the formation of an area dominated by the French-German axis in the 1950s. The analogy between these attempts is further heightened by the failure of both these efforts.
7) The changes in the positioning of Hesse-Kassel in 1831 (a crucial change, particularly for geographical reasons) and Great Britain in 1967-1973 (a crucial change, above all for reasons of size and its leading role in EFTA) were decisive moments in the confirmation of the expected domination of the processes.
8) Once the undeniable hegemony of one of the commercial areas in the process had been established, it became a pole of attraction for the states that were not yet members, tending to absorb them through successive enlargements. Particular circumstances of some especially prosperous states could, however, exceptionally delay their

joining the union. In this regard, the situation of the states that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, are still part of what is left of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland) may be considered similar to that of the Hanseatic cities until the 1880s.

From Trade to Currency

Nineteenth-century Germany

THE 1830S WERE MARKED by a further step taken in regard to another aspect of German economic unification: the establishment of a monetary union between the states of the German Customs Union.

In 1837, at a Convention held in Munich, some states, especially those in Southern Germany – Baden, Bavaria, Frankfurt, Hesse-Darmstadt, Hohenzollern-Hechingen, Hohenzollern-Sigmarigen, Nassau, Saxe-Meiningen and Würtemberg – agreed on a standardisation of their coinage based on the Gulden, equivalent to roughly 9.545 grams of silver[20], as the monetary unit.

The following year, another Convention was held in Dresden resulting in an agreement between the members of the German Customs Union to standardise their coinages based on the Gulden or the Thaler (this latter coin being equivalent to roughly 16.704 grams of silver[21]) as the monetary unit and to grant the status of legal tender in all states to coins worth two Thalers. These were coins denominated as Union coins [Vereinsmünze], with a weight of 37.120 grams and a fineness of 900/1000, and could be issued by any of the states. The following states adopted the Thaler as their monetary unit: Anhalt-Bernburg, Anhalt-Dessau, Anhalt-Köthen, Hesse-Homburg, Hesse-Kassel, Lippe-Detmold, Mecklemburg-Schwerin, Prussia, Reuß-Gera, Reuß-Greiz, Reuß-Schleiz,

20. Striking of 24.5 Guldens per Cologne mark of fine silver [Kölnsmark] with a weight of 233.855 grams.
21. Striking of 14 Thalers per Cologne mark of fine silver.

Saxony, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, Saxe-Altenburg, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Saxe-Weimar and Waldeck.

Despite the difference in the monetary unit, the widespread choice of a silver standard and the consequent existence of a fixed ratio, 1 Thaler = 1.75 Gulden, or 1 Gulden = 4/7 Thaler, created an effective monetary union between the states of the German Customs Union. This monetary union then expanded in keeping with the enlargement of the customs union itself: in 1842, it was joined by Brunswick, Schaumburg-Lippe and Luxembourg; in 1854, by Hanover and Oldenburg; and, in 1867, by Mecklemburg-Streliz and Lübeck. All the new members of the customs and monetary union adopted the Thaler as a monetary unit, except for the city of Lübeck, which maintained its previous monetary unit, the Hanseatic Mark, equivalent to roughly 6.794 grams of silver.

In 1852, when a customs union was established between Austria and Liechtenstein, the two countries also established a monetary union, whose monetary unit was the Austrian Gulden (distinct from the Gulden of the states of the German Customs Union), equivalent to roughly 11.136 grams of silver[22].

In 1857, the Monetary Treaty of Vienna sought to formally join together the monetary union of the states of the German Customs Union and the monetary union of Austria and Liechtenstein[23]. In keeping with this treaty, coins of one Thaler, with a weight of 18.519 grams and a fineness of 900/1000, were considered legal tender and issued by all members[24]. However, so that all this could be possible, the monetary union of Austria and Liechtenstein was required to withdraw legal tender

22. Striking of 21 Guldens per Cologne mark of fine silver.
23. In which it was obviously Austria that really mattered.
24. The Cologne mark of fine silver was replaced by the customs pound [Zollpfund], with a weight of 500 grams, as its standard and the equivalences were established of 30 Thalers per customs pound, 45 Austrian Guldens per customs pound and 52.5 Guldens from the German Customs Union per customs pound. This was equivalent to a devaluation of 0.23% of the monetary units.

from its inconvertible paper money. This did not happen, due to Austria's almost immediate involvement in a war with France and Piedmont.

After the political unification resulting from the creation of the German Empire in 1871, which will be discussed below, there was an evolution in the monetary domain. The Law of 4 December 1871 created a new monetary unit, the Mark, which was equal to one third of the old Thaler (equivalent to roughly 5.556 grams of silver), the Law of 9 July 1873 established this as the monetary unit for the whole of the German Empire[25] and the Laws of 14 March and 22 September 1875 created a central bank for the Empire, the Reichsbank, through the transformation of the earlier Prussian bank of issue, and regulated the issues made by the Empire's other thirty-two banks of issue by imposing limits on them. Meanwhile, the German Empire had effectively moved from the silver standard to the gold standard, although it was not until the Law of 1 July 1909 that the mark was defined as equivalent to 1/2790 kilograms of gold (358.4 milligrams of gold).

Twentieth-century Europe

MONETARY UNIFICATION WAS NOT A MAIN CONCERN at the beginning of the process of European unification, perhaps because at that time fixed exchange rates prevailed in the context of the so-called Bretton Woods international monetary system. However, in 1969 a Commission was appointed to present a proposal for a European Monetary Union. Its report became known as the Werner Plan, from the name of its Luxembourg chairman.

25. Thereafter, the monetary union was to include another two states – the cities of Bremen and Hamburg – which were to join the customs union fifteen years later, as mentioned earlier. Until 1873, the monetary unit of Hamburg was the Hanseatic Mark, equivalent to roughly 6.794 grams of silver, already mentioned in the case of the city of Lübeck, and the monetary unit of Bremen was a quite distinct Thaler, equivalent to roughly 1.075 grams of gold. It should be noted that Bremen was the only state in the German Confederation that had a monetary system based on a gold standard and not on a silver standard.

The presentation of the Werner Plan almost coincided with the collapse of the Bretton Woods international monetary system, which began in 1971 with the suspension of the convertibility of the dollar and was sealed in 1976 with the Kingston Agreements, that formally acknowledged the end of all efforts to restore fixed exchange rates. This made the European Monetary Union simultaneously more necessary and more difficult. For a while, difficulties prevailed. A scheme for the joint fluctuation of the European currencies as against the dollar (the so-called "snake-in-the-tunnel") was all that was possible to implement, and it must be said that it performed very poorly. In 1979, this was upgraded to become the European Monetary System, with its Exchange Rate Mechanism. In practice, the ECU (European Currency Unit) was introduced to replace the dollar as the reference for joint fluctuation, and schemes of mutual support among European central banks were devised. Although far from perfect, performance improved. This opened the path to the appointment in 1989 of a second commission to present a proposal for a European Monetary Union. Its report became known as the Delors Plan, from the name of its French chairman.

The Delors Plan (quite similar to the Werner Plan two decades earlier) began to be implemented in 1990 and was included in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993. After some hiccups, linked to the difficult short-term situation of the European economy during the mid-1990s, it became the basis for a monetary union among eleven members of the European Union – Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain – as from 1 January 1999. They were joined by Greece in 2001, and in 2002 all means of payment denominated in the old currencies were replaced by means of payment denominated in euros (the new name of the ECU).

The other members of the European Union – Denmark, Great Britain and Sweden – remained outside the monetary union, and were linked to the so-called euro area by a renewed European Monetary System. The same happened, at first, with all the new members that joined the European Union in 2005 and 2007. Only later did Slovenia (2007), Cyprus and Malta (2008), Slovakia (2009), and Estonia (2011) also became members of the European Monetary Union[26].

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A certain analogy can be found between the process of German monetary unification in the nineteenth century and the process of European monetary unification in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They were both largely the result of the need to complete and consolidate the benefits obtained by the previous commercial unification.

However, the most striking aspect resulting from the comparison between the process of German monetary unification in the nineteenth century and the process of European monetary unification in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is the precocity and apparent ease with which the former was achieved in contrast with the slowness and difficulty faced by the latter process. This difference may basically be considered a consequence of the differences between the monetary systems that predominated in Germany (and in Europe in general) in the first half of the nineteenth century and those predominating in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century (and, of course, still existing at the beginning of the twenty-first century).

The monetary system in the first half of the nineteenth century was a commodity money system, in which the monetary unit was defined as the value of a certain amount of a certain commodity (in practice, a certain mass of a precious metal) and payments were made, above all, with metal

26. In spite of the commitment to eventually join the Exchange Rate Mechanism linked to participation in the European Monetary System, Great Britain, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania did not yet join the Exchange Rate Mechanism. Thus, only Denmark, Latvia and Lithuania have their currencies pegged to the euro in the context of the European Monetary System. Moreover, Monaco, San Marino and the Vatican signed special agreements to join the European Monetary Union, and Andorra and Montenegro also adopted the euro as their actual, although informal, currency.

coins. Under such circumstances, a monetary union only required the adoption of identical monetary standards and rates of seigniorage. As in the case of the commercial union, there was not, in principle, any loss of sovereignty or revenue for any of the states involved. All that was required was to renounce manipulations of the currency (the traditional depreciation), whose harmful effects, compensated only by temporary benefits enjoyed by the governments, were generally recognised.

The monetary system of the second half of the twentieth century was a conventional currency system, in which the monetary unit did not have any formal definition and payments were made, above all, with bank money or paper money. Under these circumstances, a monetary union obliged the states involved to give up their traditional monetary sovereignty to the union and to renounce the revenue of seigniorage (besides depriving themselves of what, in the meantime, had become an important instrument of economic policy). The advantages of union do exist (especially for those countries whose currencies were not reference currencies before monetary union), but they are not generally so clearly understood as the disadvantages, so that it becomes politically more difficult to take the decision to join.

From Economics to Politics

Nineteenth-century Germany

IF THE PROCESS OF ECONOMIC UNIFICATION took place relatively smoothly in Germany in the nineteenth century, the situation was completely different for the process of political unification. In fact, various difficulties arose with regard to the political unification of the German world in the nineteenth century.

First of all, in the political domain, there was no way to avoid the loss of sovereignty of the various principalities and cities that the creation of something more profound than the German Confederation would entail. For this reason, there were two positions in the German world regarding the political organization of the country. For the legitimists and conservatives, the Confederation was a desirable framework, as it did not call into question the traditional rights of sovereigns, which they considered necessary to preserve. For the nationalists and the liberals, the Confederation was an unsatisfactory framework, as it did not allow for the political existence of the German nation. Nationalists and liberals wanted a more profound political union, which would, in principle, involve giving up sovereignty to a new (Second) German Empire, preferably more effective than the (First) German Empire, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, had been in the last few centuries of its existence, before its abolition in 1806 under pressure from Napoleon's imperial France.

Secondly, the problem was complicated by the existence of areas where there was common sovereignty between Germanic and non-Germanic states. As the nationalist ideology could not accept the existence of a traditional Germany, subject to foreign sovereigns, these areas of common sovereignty could have only one of two possible outcomes: either separation or the imposition of a German imperialism upon the non-Germanic states that shared sovereignty with Germanic states. This latter solution would, however, imply a clash with the nationalism that was naturally present amongst those non-Germanic nations that were thus subjected to German imperialism.

Finally, one must consider the struggle between Austria and Prussia for hegemony over the German world. Both had emerged victorious in the fight against the domination of Europe by revolutionary and imperial France, as members of the group of the major European powers. Political unification of the German world would either require them to merge together or one of them to submit to the other. Neither of these solutions was possible within the context of conservative legitimism, which naturally considered the rights of the houses of Habsburg (reigning over Austria) and Hohenzolern (reigning over Prussia) to be inviolable. The radical break with these frameworks, which, according to a nationalist and liberal logic, was possible, was never strong enough to impose itself.

In practice, the question of hegemony ended up leading to a division between those who wished for a unification of the whole German world (including Austria and under its domination – Great Germany [Großdeutschland]) and those who accepted only a partial unification of the German world (excluding Austria and under the domination of Prussia – Small Germany [Kleindeutschland]).

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Under such circumstances, the period from 1815 to 1848 was characterised by the total predominance of the conservative viewpoint, which suppressed all attempts to affirm nationalist and liberal ideas[27] through the concerted action of the princes and cities of the German Confederation[28].

The great opportunity for the nationalist and liberal currents of opinion arose in 1848, with the movement that became known as Vormärz. In the wake of the wave of revolutions that had begun in January in Sicily and in February in France, there were uprisings in March in various states. Constitutions were granted in most of them and the Diet of the German Confederation called elections for a second chamber [Parlament][29], which met in May in Frankfurt[30]. The main

27. These were particularly active in the first period of the Confederation's existence, still in the wake of the influence of the ideas of the French Revolution of 1789 and the resistance to the French imperialist manoeuvres of the Napoleonic period, and in 1830, in the wake of the revolution in France in July of the same year.
28. This was the period of the so-called 'Metternich system', named after the Austrian minister who had idealised and implemented it after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, devoting himself to conserving it until his downfall in March 1848.
29. In the customary sense of the expression, it would be the Diet that should be called the second chamber. However, the later creation (and ephemeral life) of this Parliament makes the terminology adopted appropriate.
30. Around the same time, the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein rebelled against the abolition of the Salic law by the King of Denmark. The application of this law made it practically certain that there would be a separation between the duchies and Denmark on the death of the then king Frederick VII of Denmark (who had no descendants, nor any collateral heirs through the male side). The aim of the abolition of the Salic law was evidently to prevent such a separation.

initiative of this second chamber of the Confederation was to try to transform it into an Empire. A regent was chosen (from the Austrian imperial family), a constitution drawn up and a government formed. Austria's insistence on including in the Empire its territories outside the German Confederation, namely Hungary, which was not represented in the second chamber and had meanwhile rebelled against the central power, did, however, prevent the decisions taken by this second chamber from being applied at the level of Great Germany. In a last attempt to implement its decisions at the level of Small Germany, the second chamber offered the imperial crown to the King of Prussia, but he decided not to accept this without obtaining the agreement of the princes, a solution that proved impossible, partly because the princes did not wish to renounce their independence and partly because Austria was engaged in diplomatic manoeuvres in an opposite sense. In 1849, the second chamber was dissolved and, in 1850, the Treaty of Olmuz fully restored the situation prior to the movement of 1848[31].

After roughly a decade and a half of the 'Metternich system' without Metternich[32], a new (and decisive) period of political unrest in the German world was set in motion at the end of 1863 through the expected death of King Frederick VII of Denmark and the subsequent attempt that was made not to apply the Salic law to the succession in the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. The German Confederation decided to impose this application by not recognizing King Christian IX of Denmark as

31. Around the same time, the King of Denmark re-established his authority over Schleswig and Holstein. The government set up by the second chamber in Frankfurt attempted to support the rebellion of Schleswig and Holstein, and Prussia began to prepare for an intervention in the duchies. However, in a perfect application of legitimist and conservative principles, the German Confederation abstained from any intervention, although it still did not recognise the abolition of the Salic law.

32. The real end of this period occurred in 1859, when Piedmont and France provoked a war with Austria, resulting in Austria being obliged to cede Lombardy to Piedmont. This gave rise to the process that would lead in 1860 to the unification of the whole of Italy under the rule of Piedmont (until 1870 with the exception of Lazio, which remained for a further decade under the Pope's rule).

duke, but by recognizing instead Duke Frederick of Augustenborg. As Denmark did not give way, war had to be declared upon the country. In order to undertake the subsequent military operations, the German Confederation, deprived of any force of its own, was forced to resort to the armies of its two most powerful members, Austria and Prussia. When the duchies and Jutland were occupied, Denmark found itself forced, by the Treaty of Vienna of 1864, to hand over the duchies to Austria and Prussia. These two states set up a provisional, and initially joint, administration in the duchies, from 1865 onwards, under the terms of the Gastein Convention, Prussian in Schleswig and Austrian in Holstein.

As the months passed, it was gradually becoming clear that Prussia was blocking any initiative that attempted to hand power in the duchies to the legitimate sovereign recognised by the German Confederation (Duke Frederick of Augustenborg), a situation that was of no interest to Austria. This latter country put the question before the Diet of the German Confederation, which did not manage to reach agreement, so that there ended up being a kind of civil war in the Confederation between Baden, Bavaria, Frankfurt, Hanover, Hesse-Darmstadt, Hesse-Homburg, Hesse-Kassel, Liechtenstein, Nassau, Austria and Württemberg, on the one side, and Anhalt[33], Brunswick, Bremen, Hamburg, Lippe-Detmold, Lübeck, Mecklemburg-Schwerin, Mecklemburg-Streliz, Oldenburg, Prussia[34], Reuß-Greiz, Reuß-Schleiz-Gera[35], Saxony, Saxe-Altenburg, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Weimar, Schaumburg-Lippe, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen and Waldeck, on the other side. Emerging victorious from this war was the coalition led by Prussia. The Treaty of Prague, signed in

33. The duchies of Anhalt-Dessau and Anhalt-Köthen had merged together in 1847. The new duchy of Anhalt-Dessau-Köthen and the old duchy of Anhalt-Bernburg merged in 1863, giving rise to a single duchy of Anhalt.
34. Prussia had absorbed Hohenzollern-Hechingen and Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen in 1849.
35. Reuß-Schleiz had absorbed Reuß-Gera in 1848, but the capital of the new state was established in Gera.

1866, dissolved the German Confederation, ratified the annexation by Prussia of the defeated states located in the centre and north of Germany – Frankfurt, Hanover, Hesse-Homburg, Hesse-Kassel and Nassau – and the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, and created a North German Confederation [Norddeutsche Bund], composed of only twenty-one states – Anhalt, Brunswick, Bremen, Hamburg, Lippe-Detmold, Lübeck, Mecklemburg-Schwerin, Mecklemburg-Streliz, Oldenburg, Prussia, Reuß-Greiz, Reuß-Schleiz-Gera, Saxony, Saxe-Altenburg, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Weimar, Schaumburg-Lippe, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen and Waldeck – and presided over by Prussia[36]. Luxembourg[37] remained neutral in the war of 1866, abandoning at that time any political or economic link with Germany.

Events seemed to be leading towards the unification of an exceptionally small Germany, with a split between the North and the South of the Germanic world. However, in 1867, a diplomatic incident brought most of the states of South Germany and the North German Confederation back together. The question revolved around the attempt by France to get the Netherlands to cede Luxembourg to France. The German states were opposed to this, obtaining the neutralisation of the country, which continued under the sovereignty of the King of the Netherlands[38]. In order to consolidate this position, the North German Confederation, Baden, Bavaria, Hesse-Darmstadt and Württemberg formed a military alliance.

This alliance was brought into play once more in 1870, when a new diplomatic incident took place, on this occasion because of the claim of

36. In the war of 1866, normally referred to as the Austro-Prussian war, Italy also took part as an ally of Prussia. Through the Treaty of Prague, Austria ceded Venice to Italy. The following year, Austria reorganized its empire, turning it into the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary.

37. Which, it should be noted, was now the only state in the German Confederation with a sovereign whose main states were located outside the Germanic world.

38. In 1890, the Netherlands and Luxembourg ceased to have the same sovereign, due to the application of the Salic law in Luxembourg, when Queen Wilhelmina I ascended the Dutch throne.

a member of the royal family of Prussia to the throne of Spain. In the end, the candidacy did not happen, but France demanded guarantees from Prussia that there would be no more attempts to join the thrones of Prussia and Spain together in the same family, guarantees that Prussia decided not to give. There then followed a war between France and the German states, which ended with the victory of the latter. Just as, or even more, important than this victory was the decision of the sovereigns of the states of the North German Confederation and its allies in the south to set up the (Second) German Empire, a federation of twenty-five states – Anhalt, Baden, Bavaria, Brunswick, Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse-Darmstadt, Lippe-Detmold, Lübeck, Mecklemburg-Schwerin, Mecklemburg-Streliz, Oldenburg, Prussia, Reuß-Greiz, Reuß-Schleiz-Gera, Saxony, Saxe-Altenburg, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Weimar, Schaumburg-Lippe, Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, Schwarzburg-Sondershausen, Waldeck and Württemberg – under the presidency of Prussia. Finally, through the Treaty of Frankfurt in 1871, the newly-formed German Empire obliged France to cede to it the territory of Alsace-Lorraine [Elsaß-Lothringen].

In this way, the political unification of Small Germany was brought about, leaving out three states from the former German Confederation, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Austria. It did not take long for the monetary unification of the same territory to be completed, as early as 1871-1875, although commercial unification was only completed in 1888, as mentioned earlier[39].

39. The idea of a political unification of Great Germany, once again, came to the fore after the First World War. Germany's defeat amputated the Empire, now transformed into a republic, of Alsace-Lorraine (which returned to French sovereignty), the north of Schleswig (which returned to Danish sovereignty) and Posnania and West Prussia (which were brought under Polish sovereignty) and reduced Austria to that part of the former Austria-Hungary where there was a predominance of German speakers (at around the same time, Liechtenstein exchanged its traditional economic links with Austria for an identical customs and monetary link to the Helvetic Confederation). Although the peace treaties (of Versailles with Germany and of Saint-Germain with Austria) prohibited any economic or political connection between the two countries, this connection [Anschluss]

Twentieth-century Europe

THE THREE PROBLEMS MENTIONED at the beginning of the references to the political unification of Germany have also been (and at least two of them continue to be) present as problems in the process of European unification.

The question of the opposition between national sovereignty and supranationality or European federalism was (and continues to be) formally the central question of the process. It was one of the questions that lay at the basis of the split in the 1950s between the European Communities (with supranational powers) and the European Free Trade Association (without supranational powers); it also gave rise in the 1960s to one of the crucial moments in European construction, the so-called "empty chair crisis"[40] with the subsequent Luxembourg compromise[41]; and, despite the bypassing of the European Free Trade Association[42] and the successive treaties leading to closer cooperation (Single Act 1987, Maastricht 1992, Amsterdam 1999, Nice 2001) which extended the majority decision rule into the present-day European Union, this question still dominated the preparation of the aborted European Union Consti-

was to be made in 1938, under the framework of the so-called Third German Empire. Only for a short while, however, because Germany's defeat in the Second World War not only amputated the country of even more territories (in particular East Prussia, split between Poland and Russia), but it also re-established the division between Germany in the strict sense and Austria and even led to a division of Germany itself into two states, the Federal Republic of Germany [Bundesrepublik Deutschland] and the German Democratic Republic [Deutsche Demokratische Republik], which were only joined together again in 1990, through the absorption of the latter by the former.

40. When confronted with a majority decision taken by its partners in the Communities under the scope of the Treaty of Rome, France abandoned the meetings of the Council.
41. By guaranteeing that, if any member state were to invoke fundamental national interests in opposition to a decision, this decision would not then be taken and negotiations would continue, this (informal) agreement established the rule of the absence of opposition as a condition for important Community decisions.
42. Resulting from the passage of Great Britain to the European Communities in 1973 and formalised with the creation of the European Economic Area through the Treaty of Porto in 1992.

tutional Treaty of 2004, and the new Treaty of Lisbon of 2007. Everything points to the fact that this question will continue to dominate discussions about the future of the European Union for a long time to come.

The question of European sovereignty over non-European areas of the world was very relevant at the beginning of the process of European construction. It was also one of the questions that lay at the basis of the split in the 1950s between the European Communities (with a kind of economic sharing of the colonial territories being provided for in the Treaties of Paris and Rome) and the European Free Trade Association (without any formal relationship with the areas of the British Commonwealth and the Portuguese Overseas Territories, politically linked to the participating European states). It did, however, disappear in practice with the wave of decolonisation at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. It is true that some states in the European Union still maintain non-European possessions even today, some of which are included in the Union (Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guyana and Réunion), whilst others are not (Netherlands Antilles, Falklands, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, etc.). However, they have ceased to be quantitatively important and do not now amount to a major topic of political debate within Europe.

The question of the struggle for hegemony between the large European countries, particularly the struggle between Great Britain and the so-called French-German axis, was another of the facts that lay at the basis of the split in the 1950s between the European Communities (an instrument of the French-German axis) and the European Free Trade Association (an instrument of Great Britain). It remains as a formally absent, but in reality very present, question.

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The seriousness of these problems and the absence of a European nationalist movement comparable to the German nationalist movement of the nineteenth century (fundamentally for the cultural reasons mentioned earlier) explain the poor results so far obtained in the process of European political unification. As a matter of fact, it was only the Treaty of Maastricht that in 1992 added a formal political dimension to the process of European unification. To the traditional supranational economic pillar, were added two other inter-government pillars: a common foreign policy and justice and internal affairs. Nearly ten years later the Constitutional Treaty tried to take one step further towards the existence of a federal European state without success. It had to be replaced by the less ambitious Treaty of Lisbon and it remains to be seen if this will be ratified by all member-states.

From History to the Prospects for the Future

THE QUESTION THAT NECESSARILY JUSTIFIES all the investigation undertaken so far must now be asked: to paraphrase a famous passage from Marx, does the past process of German unification show the European unification process its future?

Just like all the prospective questions to which the study of history leads us, this is an impossible question to answer, precisely because it is prospective and, therefore, by virtue of its being about the future, necessarily uncertain. All the previous work would, however, be in vain, unless we identify and consider the likelihood of the possible scenarios.

The first of these scenarios is that of the analogy made real: a Europe transformed into a federal state and a national economy, just like Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. It is not a scenario that can be achieved quickly, nor is it inevitable, but it must be stressed that nothing in the process of European unification so far has militated against this trend. In this scenario, the Europe of the future may effectively be mirrored in nineteenth-century Germany. The main similarity that has yet to be realised is that of (federal) political unification and the main observation we must make is that, in the case of nineteenth-century Germany, the hegemonic rivalries were resolved with "blood and the sword" and not through "the ballot box", according to the memorable phrase of its principal architect, Otto von Bismarck. Will it be possible to unify politically such heterogeneous nations as the European states by peaceful means? This is the big question that remains to be answered. One may be tempted to add that the path of blood and the sword has already, in fact, been attempted, in the case of Continental Europe[43], by Germany, with the two so-called world wars of the twentieth century, especially with the second one, and without success. Another important difference would be found here between nineteenth-century Germany and the Europe of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The second of the possible scenarios is the implosion of the European Union. Here the mirror of Germany is not perhaps the most suitable one. One should perhaps look for the analogy with Austria-Hungary and its fate after the First World War. It is not possible to develop this analogy here, because the evolution of Europe since 1947 has been in the opposite direction[44]. All that should be stressed is that the probability of this scenario occurring is not an insignificant one, as is suggested by many different historical cases of the splintering of culturally heterogeneous states[45].

The third of these scenarios is the stabilisation of the European Union at a phase of the integration process that clearly stops short of the fusion described in the first scenario. This is perhaps the most interesting and least likely scenario, because it is not possible to find an obvious historical analogy for this. Will the European Union generate something that is really new?

43. A kind of Small Europe, excluding Great Britain, by analogy with Small Germany, excluding Austria, built by Bismarck.
44. There have been only two cases of an abandonment of the European Communities: that of the French departments of Algeria – Algiers, Constantine and Oran – when this country became independent in 1962 and that of the Danish autonomous region of Greenland in 1985. Both involved relatively small economies and ones that were not yet closely integrated in the Communities.
45. In contrast, there is in Europe at least one case of the stable economic and political unification of a culturally heterogeneous space: that of the Helvetic Confederation. Two of the Member States of the European Union, Belgium and Spain, may perhaps also claim to have had a successful experience of the same type, excluding Austria, built by Bismarck.

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