

Edited by

**ALTUĞ GÜNDAR AND DİDEM SAYGIN**

**THE  
EUROPEAN  
UNION**

in the  
Twenty-First  
Century

Major Political, Economic and  
Security Policy Trends

# **The European Union in the Twenty-First Century**

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# **The European Union in the Twenty-First Century: Major Political, Economic and Security Policy Trends**

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## Preface

The European Union today faces the greatest threat since World War II. During the writing process of this book, Putin's Russia has attacked Ukraine and undermined European peace. In the wake of events that unfolded following the discussions over Ukraine's membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, Putin immediately declared war on Ukraine in a revisionist foreign policy move. At this point, the European Union has never been more in need of being a union than it was after World War II and at the end of the Cold War.

The European Union faces crises from time to time. Crises or administrative problems confronting the Union are transformed into legislation through consensual solutions that strengthen the Union and deepen integration. The presence and characteristics of these crises have differentiated in the 2000s, and the crises/challenges have begun to confront the European Union as an existential threat to integration.

The existential debate that arose after France and the Netherlands rejected the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 has put the future of the European Union up for discussion. The founding nations have done significant damage to the integration process, and the notion of political union, which has been dormant for ages, has disappointed continental Europe once more.

The main difficulties and challenges that the European Union has recently experienced are discussed in this book, to which academics working on the European Union in Turkey have contributed. Following the passage of the Constitutional Treaty, the debates about the future of Europe have become more heated. In the context of the recently conducted Conference on the Future of Europe, İrfan Kaya Ülger examines and assesses the discussions on the future of Europe. The entire globe paid great attention to David Cameron's address on June 24, 2016. The speech was given following the resignation of Cameron, who had called for a referendum on whether the United Kingdom should stay in the European Union. The debates on Brexit, i.e., the United Kingdom's referendum on leaving the European Union, and the future direction of the European Union were covered by Hakan Samur. In 2019, a disease that started in China quickly spread over the world and turned into a struggle for survival for all people. The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally altered the way we see the world, the natural world, and ourselves. The states and other entities at the heart of the international system have been severely impacted by this transformation, both politically and economically. The European Union struggled for its existence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the images that emerged in the member states were

expressed as the despair of the European Union. In the framework of the European Union, the analyses of the political and economic effects of COVID-19 and the fight for the survival of the European Union in the face of the crisis were analyzed by Didem Saygın.

Digitalization is another factor that has made the pandemic a part of our life. Digital systems and capabilities have redefined our perception of time and space in pandemic conditions. New employment options have been made available to people, such as working from home, and a new phase of digital change has started. Mesut Savrul examines how the European Union's single market is becoming more digital and evaluates the Digital Single Market Rules and Digital Single Market Strategy. Manufacturing is regarded as the catalyst for economic growth, development, and prosperity in the European Union, which is regarded as an economic giant but whose economic integration is up for dispute in the wake of the financial crisis and COVID-19. In their research in the EU member states, Yasemin Özerkek and Fatma Didin have examined this topic. The study finds that there is a trend toward technology-intensive manufacturing with medium and high skill levels among the member countries of the European Union, pointing to a change in the manufacturing sector in the European Union. Regarding the notable social and political effects of the past 10 years, migration is one of the concerns that stand out the most. This is true within the European Union. In terms of results, Europe has struggled mightily with managing migration over the past 10 years. Mehlika Özlem Ultan examines the EU's mechanism for handling both domestic and external migration in her study on migration in the EU. Another significant issue facing the European Union is antiimmigration, which is connected to the migration issue. Immigration and related issues were one of the key points of contention for Brexit supporters. Kamber Güler investigates how antiimmigration political parties portray immigration as a threat in the European Union through a critical discourse analysis. He comes to the conclusion in his analysis that political parties utilize antiimmigration as a cultural, economic, and security threat. Ayşe Gülce Uygun discusses the relationships, cooperation, and externalization of these relationships with Frontex, the European Union's migration control system, and non-EU nations. In managing immigration, the European Union also follows democratic ideals and guidelines. The risks and criticisms of externalizing Frontex are evaluated in the study. After Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy in 2008, other connected financial systems also collapsed as a result. Rüya Ataklı Yavuz analyzes the European Union debt crisis and discusses financial developments and recent actions in the European Union economy. Altuğ Günar outlines how the European Union's economy will be sustainable and energy-efficient in his work on the green transformation in the EU, as well as how the EU will transition to a carbon-neutral economy by 2050. Yasemin and Cagatay Cagrir discuss developments in green fiscal policy and the issue of green financing in the European Union.

The final section of the study discusses the European Union's external relations. Samet Zenginoğlu discusses security ties in transatlantic cooperation with a focus on the historical security aspect of United States–European Union relations.

Özgür Öztürk undertakes a highly analytical analysis when he discusses how US security has been reshaped by the European security policy. Tuğçe Yıldız discusses the ties between the European Union and Russia and examines the events that led to the Ukrainian War. While Omca Altın discusses Ukraine–European Union relations in the context of the EU Neighborhood Policy, İlhan Aras evaluates China’s stance in the European Union crises. Alper Yurttaş addresses the relationship between the European Union and Turkey after 2005; İnci Aksu Kargın, on the other hand, provides an in-depth analysis of the motivations behind the refugee deal between Turkey and the European Union. Finally, Didem Öztürk Günar assesses the post-Brexit relationship between the United Kingdom, the European Union, and the African, Caribbean, and Pacific States, and discusses the current situation from the perspective of the parties.

It’s also critical to remember that this book’s chapters went through a rigorous internal and external double-blind review procedure. To assist our readers, we would like to thank all the authors and researchers who are authorities in their fields for their dedication and perseverance. We also like to express our gratitude to our book’s external reviewers for their insight and assistance. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to those individuals who have been an inspiration and support for our authors throughout the creation of this work. Additionally, we appreciate Emerald Publishing. Without their support throughout the challenging pandemic, we would not have been able to conduct this study.

Yours Respectfully

Altuğ Günar  
Didem Saygın

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# **Part 1**

## **Introduction**

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## Chapter 1

# The Conference on the Future of Europe: A New Beginning or an Endless Crisis Management?

*İrfan Kaya Ülger*

### Abstract

This study aims to reveal the impact of the “Conference on the Future of Europe” (which was officially launched on May 9, 2021 and lasted for one year) on the European Union (EU) integration. The ultimate goal of the integration movement in Western Europe was defined in the founding agreements as political integration through the strengthening of economic cooperation among member states. It is a fact that very important steps have been taken toward this goal until today. The first of the two main trends that dominate European integration is deepening, which refers to diversifying the areas of cooperation, and the second is enlargement, which means increasing the number of member states by the participation of new ones. Theoretically, there are almost a dozen scenarios for the future of the EU. However, taking into account the EU’s internal problems and developments in the current international political system, the strongest scenario emerges as intertwined flexible integration. Indeed, developments in today’s world call for a revision of the EU’s geopolitical perspective. In addition to the internal factors shaping the future of the EU, the roles of the United States, which is its strategic partner, and China, which has risen to become its largest trading partner, are also important in the international political system. Likewise, there is no doubt that the developments in the Maghreb and Mashriq countries as well as Russia and Turkey will affect European integration.

*Keywords:* Conference on the future of Europe; European Union crises; constitutional crisis; EU enlargement; migration crisis; future of the European Union

## Introduction

Although the founding treaties have been amended at certain intervals in line with regional and global developments, no consensus has yet emerged among member states on the future and goal of integration. The founding treaties have been revised according to the progress of integration and the current conditions. The first comprehensive revision in this area began in 1986 with the Single European Act. Efforts in this aspect continued with the Treaty of Maastricht, Amsterdam, and Nice. The rejection of the draft constitution produced by the Convention chaired by former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 2005 by the two founding countries (France and the Netherlands) led to significant uncertainty about the future of the integration movement. To overcome this problem, the Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2007 and entered into force in 2009. Today, European integration operates within the framework whose limits are defined by the Treaty of Lisbon. The regional and global developments of the last 15 years and the deepening of dissidence between member states make it necessary to reconsider the goal of the European Union (EU) integration.

The aim of this study is to present the impact of the Conference on the Future of Europe on the course of the integration movement. The first part of the study discusses the main problems of European integration, which faces stagnation today, while the second part examines the scenarios for the future of the integration movement. The last part mentions the importance of the Conference on the Future of Europe in terms of European integration and the impact of the developments in today's international political system. In this context, concerns on the future of the integration movement will be discussed under the final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe, which is expected to have a profound impact on European integration, and the decisions of the EU Summit.

## Major Current Problems Affecting European Integration

European integration has long been in an interregnum period, in other words, in a period of stagnation. There are different opinions about when the said interregnum period started. However, the common opinion is that the roots of the current stagnation in the EU lie in the vacuum led by the rejection of the Constitution and the welfare loss after the fifth enlargement. The task of the European Convention met for the first time in 2002 was, on the one hand, to draft a fundamental rights law and, on the other, to draw up a new constitutional text as a roadmap for integration (Haastrup, McGowan, & Phinnemore, 2021). The constitution, signed on October 29, 2004, had been intended to give European integration a new dynamic. With its entry into force, the movement of integration toward federation would gain momentum. This was because the constitution created new institutions such as the EU Presidency and the EU Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in referendums held in France on May 29, 2005, and in the Netherlands on June 1, 2005, rendered the vote meaningless in other countries. After the Constitution failed to enter into force,

positive thoughts about the future began to lose steam throughout Europe, and uncertainty and fear took their place.

Another event that was as important as the Constitution and influenced European integration was the welfare loss driven by the fifth and sixth enlargements. Only two of the 10 countries that joined the EU in 2004 were from the free world: Cyprus (Greek Cypriot Administration) and Malta. The other eight countries, plus Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU in 2007, are former communist nations. Countries in this group were directly or indirectly under the administration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and have a communist past. The successor states of the former Yugoslavia should also be assessed in this category. Comprehensive programs have been implemented sequentially to allow these countries to adapt to the EU legal system and structure based on devolution.

Following the abolition of the Warsaw Pact, the dissolution of the USSR, and the breakup of Yugoslavia, partnership agreements, namely the Europe Agreements, were signed between Eastern European countries with a communist past and the EU, and these countries were granted financial support under the PHARE Programme. The Copenhagen criteria, adopted in June 1993, are primarily aimed at facilitating the alignment of these countries with the EU system. Minority rights, the rule of law, democracy, and sensitivity to human rights have triggered extensive reforms in the accession countries. However, the Copenhagen criteria could not be fully met by all candidate countries. Negative situations, such as the problem of the Russian minority in the Baltic countries or the fact that the political and legal structures of countries such as Bulgaria and Romania were not implemented to the extent expected, were overcome by political decisions. These participations were seen as overcoming the political disunity of Europe and created a stir. But at the same time, the adaptation of these countries to the EU system caused great financial difficulties, the average income level in the EU decreased, and there was a welfare loss. The harmonization problems that arose at the national level with the unification of the two German states on October 3, 1990, also became an issue at the EU level after 2004. While the costs of adapting the Eastern bloc countries to the EU system were disputed, the newly acceded countries reported their disappointment.

Another reason for the stagnation of European integration is the global economic crisis that erupted in 2008. Especially the Mediterranean countries of the EU and Eastern Europe, which have recently joined the union, have been deeply affected by this crisis. Countries within the Eurozone have had difficulty staying in the range of the Maastricht criteria. The Greek debt crisis, and the troubles of the Iberian countries, as well as of Italy and France, further increased the financial problems after the fifth enlargement.

In the 2010s, the influx of refugees affected European integration, this time. The swing of the Arab Spring protests into political struggles and internal conflicts in many countries allowed for an intense and strong influx of refugees whose ultimate destination was Europe. With the Arab Spring, the influx of refugees to Europe took place through four routes: Gibraltar, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. The preventive measures of the border police Frontex (European Border and Coast

Guard Agency) and the construction of a wall or the installation of barbed wire fences on the borders in some countries were implemented to stop the refugees. Some Schengen countries started internal border controls and inspections, contrary to the agreement, while others temporarily closed their borders. Meanwhile, readmission agreements were signed with third countries as part of the fight against irregular migration, as well as bilateral aid agreements with some countries, such as Turkey, which provide financial support to refugees. Despite all this, the influx of refugees into Europe after the Arab Spring could not be prevented and remained on the EU's agenda (Lehne, 2016).

The immigration problem, which directly or indirectly affects EU policies, did not originally start with the Arab Spring. Immigration to Europe began immediately after World War II to meet the labor shortage and differentiated over time. The fact is that while some of the migrations to Europe have a cultural dimension, they can also be political or economic in origin from a different perspective. The migrations of the first group usually took place in times of political power changeovers or revolutions. Examples of political migrations include the Rule of the Colonels in Greece, the Iranian Revolution, also called the Islamic Revolution, and the 1980 Coup D'état in Turkey. Migration to Europe in the aforementioned examples essentially has a political dimension. The close relationships and organizations that the United Kingdom, France, and the Iberian countries established with their former colonies played a role in the cultural dimension of migration. England established the British Commonwealth of Nations to maintain its relationship with former colonial countries. Similarly, France created a cultural organization called the International Organization of La Francophonie. The widespread use of the Spanish and Portuguese languages played a role in migration from Latin America to Spain and Portugal. As a result of the activities of the organizations in question, the number of Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh-originated people has increased in England, and Algeria- and North African-originated people in France. Meanwhile, European countries facing labor shortages have signed migrant worker agreements with countries such as Turkey and Yugoslavia to overcome this shortage. In this sense, migrant workers who have come to European countries for economic reasons have, over time, become part of the society in which they live. Overall, legal and illegal migration in Europe and the uncontrolled influx of refugees have begun to influence governments at the national level and the EU at the supranational level. The cooperation of EU institutions, such as Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), and the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) among themselves and with governments at the national level to prevent the influx of refugees, which accelerated after the Arab Spring, was not enough to solve the problem (Aydin, 2022, p. 116).

Another development that has been observed in the last 15–20 years in Europe in general and in the EU countries in particular is the rising of xenophobic and racist political parties (Rodríguez-Aguilera, 2014). Political parties such as the Lega Nord (complete name: Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania) in Italy, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands, the National Rally (until 2018

known as the National Front) in France, the Alternative for Germany party (AfD) in Germany, and Golden Dawn in Greece have gained influence at the national level and in European Parliament elections.

The strengthening of the abovementioned parties means that the public in the EU supports marginal political movements. These parties are also skeptical of European integration (Bekar, 2018). The marginal parties generally emphasized national sovereignty and nationalism. The parties in question are generally distanced from European integration and do not share the view that this project will be successful.

Other developments that had a negative impact on EU stagnation include the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU, the problems caused by COVID-19, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The formal procedure to be followed by member states wishing to withdraw from the EU was regulated for the first time in the Treaty of Lisbon. After this treaty's entry into force, the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU by 52%–48% in the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, commonly referred to as the Brexit referendum, which took place on June 23, 2016. Due to delays in the Brexit negotiations and in ratification of the signed agreement, the United Kingdom left the EU on January 31, 2020. The pessimistic expectation that Brexit would incite new withdrawals did not materialize; on the contrary, the opinion that getting rid of a country that has slowed down reforms thought to the contrary would bring new dynamism to EU integration has prevailed. Work on reorganizing trade relations between the United Kingdom and the EU after Brexit continues. It is envisaged that relations between the two parties will resemble the European Economic Area (EEA) agreed with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries in the early 1990s.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the whole world in 2020 and 2021, has also negatively affected the EU economy due to quarantine and the restriction of free movement. The fact that health cooperation is still the responsibility of national governments, in other words, the absence of a common health policy, and governments' taking action at the national level to combat the pandemic has led to a discussion within the EU on the partnership and the spirit of solidarity. The practices put forward by governments fight against the pandemic at the national level reinforced the idea of EU pessimism and allowed new steps to be taken to reinforce the lack of cooperation in the health field as well.

Another development that profoundly affected European integration was Russia's attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, confusion in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) disappeared, the idea of collective effort and joint action against the Russian threat was strengthened, and new regulation of defense spending came to the fore. European integration has gone through a similar process. The EU's decision to provide military aid for Ukraine has led to progress, particularly in the areas of defense and security. On the other hand, new changes have come to the fore in the dimensions of cooperation between NATO and the EU, which were previously seen as a problem. The views of countries far from military integration within the

EU have also changed, and the view of strengthening cooperation against the Russian threat has prevailed. The request of Sweden and Finland to join NATO in the face of the Russian threat was assessed as strengthening the idea of increased military cooperation within the EU.

## **Scenarios for the Future of the European Union**

Theoretically, the spectrum of European integration scenarios is very broad. At one end is the United States of Europe, and at the other is Europa A la Charte model in which states freely determine the areas in which they can cooperate. Let us look at the content of the models that has emerged in this context. Europa A la Charte model essentially means that European integration is defined as a free trade area. This model, in which states establish common policies with which they cooperate of their own free will, without providing for a minimum level of integration, means in practice the free trade area, which is a derivative of the customs union. The United Kingdom's stance of opting out of various common policies after joining the EU essentially means directing integration toward the selective European model. This model, which eclipses the progress made under the Treaty of Paris (1951) and the Treaty of Rome (1957), is primarily about the commercial benefits of member states based on their national interests. It is not important that integration be directed toward a goal.

In the second model, the United States of Europe, it is envisaged that member states will gradually achieve a political goal. This model, advocated by the Union of European Federalists in the founding phase of the European Economic Community, aims to strengthen economic cooperation among member states over time and directs it toward the goal of establishing a political union. The current level of integration of the EU and the areas of cooperation do not correspond to this article. On the other hand, this model envisages the establishment of European supranational identity and the acceptance of European supranational identity by the citizens of the member states.

The third scenario is called Multi-Speed Europe. In this model, which envisages uniform integration, it is not mandatory that all member states achieve the common level of integration within the same time frame. Taking into account their economic and social indicators, it is accepted that some states will reach the stage of common integration in a certain period of time. The situation of the member states in the framework of de facto European integration partially corresponds to this model. For example, the accession of member states to the Schengen system or to the monetary union through the subsequent fulfillment of the criteria can be considered as the application of the Multi-Speed Europe model.

In the Variable-Geometry Europe model, on the other hand, there is a deviation from uniform integration due to the different obligations of the member states. Proponents and opponents of military cooperation within the EU, or NATO member or non-NATO member EU states bring different commitments to defense and security issues. Similarly, the commitments of countries in the most