

Super-State: The New Europe and its Challenge to America

by **Stephen Haseler**

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Most of this volume is a glorification of the new Europe. Haseler's view of history is biased to suit this political dream. He justifies the EU by drawing on evidence of economic integration, without properly understanding it. Gradually he gets carried away by his dream of what Europe could become, which leads me to question his judgment.

Haseler gives a selective and somewhat emotional account of EU history. His arguments focus on two periods of history. First, he glorifies the post-1945 European integration movements. Second, he twists the 9/11 terrorist attacks and afterwards to justify new EU ambitions. He paints a glowing view of the EU's future, based on his interpretation of an unchallenged European 'social' model. His two instruments for this European dream are the harmony of political integration and, dubiously, the creation of a European army.

The adoption of the euro in 1999 and the creation of the post of EU Trade Commissioner are presented as evidence of political maturity. However, the author shows woeful ignorance of the economics of both these selected 'symbols'.

For example, he forgets that national trade representatives monitor the EU Trade

Commissioner as he operates from a tightly controlled brief. This probably means little to Haseler, because he believes in 'fair trade'.

More significantly, he fails to mention that the euro is the second attempt to establish monetary integration in the EU, and that Britain, Denmark and Sweden retain their own currencies. In chapter 3, Haseler quotes twice from Bernard Connolly's excellent book on the failure of the exchange rate mechanism (ERM) in 1993, *The Rotten Heart of Europe*. However, he ignores the main message of that book, which is that dirty politics had brought down the ERM. Anyone following the Franco-German attacks on the European Central Bank (ECB) in 2005–6 could identify the same heavy-handed management in the euro system. Adopting a common currency managed by the ECB is not just a political gesture. It restrains national fiscal policy, too.

The claim that the EU is the world's largest economy is another example of Haseler's peculiar exaggerations. As long as each member government controls its own fiscal policy and governments can refuse to adopt the euro, the charter of fundamental rights or 'the EU Constitution', it cannot be regarded as 'a single state'. In no sense is EU economic policy integrated.

At the political level, it is evident that the author dislikes—not to say, hates—the United States and Americans. Like many Europeans in 1945, he is not grateful for American assistance after World War II, possibly because Americans were winners, while all Europeans (even the British) were losers

in 1945. (Few remember that two-thirds of soldiers fighting on the Western front in 1945 were American, while the other third was equipped from US factories!) Haseler resents the US-led NATO and the Marshall Aid that restored Europe in face of the Soviet threat post-1945. (Such views were common in 1945, when many Europeans were communist sympathisers.)

The real attack on the US is saved until later in the book, when he refers to 'hubris' and 'hegemony', without acknowledging EU reluctance to act against violence and genocide on its southern border, or anywhere else in the world. The rift with the US undoubtedly arose over Iraq. Haseler praises the opportunism of the French President and the German Chancellor to block the UN Security Council motion. As Haseler saw it, 'Charlemagna' (his ninth century title for Franco-German unity) had struck back against the US.

While praising the European economic model of 'social Europe', or 'social capitalism', which places limits on the market, the author does not attempt to assess the effectiveness of EU economic policies. He condemns Britain and Spain for pursuing American 'market capitalism', while his description of the 'European social democratic model' reveals it to be about regulation and state control. The 'core Europe' that supports this model comprises 'French technocrats, Brussels civil servants, German trade union leaders'—a frightening combination against economic freedom! With unemployment rates of over 10% in France and Germany, and ageing populations, some readers might want to consider the 'capitalist' alternative. The



future of 'security in employment, adequate pensions, welfare and a decent environment' looks uncertain with present fiscal deficits in 'core' Europe.

Democracy is not lauded in this book. The EU is undemocratic, with the EU Council making decisions at meetings in Brussels and the EU Parliament a mystery to most European voters. Voter turnouts for European Parliament elections are always low. There is no direct democracy because the thousands of EU decisions, directives, regulations, and so on are seldom discussed in member countries' parliaments. Haseler believes EU bureaucrats are 'elite professionals' and the European Court of Justice can be relied on 'to make final decisions on policy by exercising its power according to the Fundamental Charter of Human Rights'. French elitism and dictatorship are applauded here.

The concluding section of this book is disturbing. The blind support for a European role in world affairs leads the author to want a European Army, though he is unsure how it could be financed. He regards this as necessary to define Europe's foreign policy independence from the United States. Only then can 'a social, secular and democratic Europe' act independently to pacify the Middle East and a rejuvenated Russia, and presumably the rising powers of China and India! 'Where violent terrorist threats are identified, Europeans tend to rely on economic, social and diplomatic solutions. Direct military threats to Europe are discounted. No one was going to invade or threaten the EU! How will the Europeans feel if US military forces are withdrawn?

This book is not recommended, unless the reader wants to

understand why many Europeans are so self-absorbed and unaware of global realities.

**Reviewed by David
Robertson**