

EU's Modern "Flexible Integration": Illusion or Reality

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Introduction. The on-going economic and financial crisis in the European Union has polarised region's political spectrum: some states have been hit hard (e.g. European debtors like Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain), others somehow survived (including the Baltic States), and still others went comparably well (e.g. Germany, Finland, Sweden and Denmark). This polarisation provided ground for temporary policy reshuffling both in the EU institutions, as well as among the EU member states.

The aim. The aim of the respective research is to show the state-of-art of the modern transformation in European economic-political integration's theory and practice greatly instigated by the Britain's idea of "repatriating powers" voiced in the start of 2013.

Materials and methods. The research paper is based on the analysis of recent publications in western media on issues of the so-called flexible political and economic integration in the European Union.

Results. The "illusion" factors that dwell on divisions between the member states' interests and that of the EU institutions: the former often see membership of the club in the economic sense while the latter see the EU as a political project driving for peace, stability, integration and economic governance. There is a danger that "a la cart" approach to the EU economic policy by some member states would lead to a damaged EU single market concept and practice. The "reality" factors: resurgence of Germany as the dominant factor in the European Union coped with the fact that the EU "consists" for a while, on the one side, of states inside and outside the eurozone's "core", on the other side, of an area of strong northern European creditors and weak southern European debtors. The present reality is represented by the "new bloc" led by Germany and France.

Each and every country in the "EU-family of states" is an asset to the European political, economic and cultural integration. The membership in the EU is based on acceptance of fundamental rules and principles. Citizens in the EU member states should not indulge in fantasy; it is unreasonable for any of these states to seek a status akin to that of Norway or Switzerland. The latter states are accepting the rules of the single market, while having no voice in making them.

Conclusions. The reforms that the EU is contemplating presently are aimed at shoring up the single currency project, that of the banking union and a separate eurozone budget, to name a few guidelines. They would create a new, tightly integrated bloc which might ultimately exert a dominant influence on the most important part of the EU - the single market. That means that the reality for the future is that the member states' governments are bound to reconcile their national interests with that of the EU.