

WILL JEAN MONNET’S LEGACY SURVIVE THIS TURBULENT WORLD?

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Abstract

Europe is facing rising geopolitical tensions, power shifts, and internal conflicts as the global system unravels. Rising authoritarianism, inequality, and erosion of democratic norms pose profound challenges not just globally, but within the European Union itself. At a time when unity is needed, collective action seems increasingly difficult. In a moment of global turmoil, the European Union faces an urgent question: can it preserve the integrity, solidarity, and unity at the heart of its founding vision?

This paper will look back at the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, a watershed moment in history, and consider how the European project has progressed since then. It examines the promises and realities of the European future through Article 2 of the TEU, human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. How consistently are these values applied in the EU’s accession processes, and are there indications of double standards or political expediency overriding principle? How are emerging narratives such as “Fortress Europe” or a “European Empire” or “New Europe” reshaping the EU’s identity, particularly with respect to borders, sovereignty, and exclusion?

Drawing on case studies and institutional analysis, this paper critically will examine whether the European Union is moving toward greater cohesion and democratic integrity—or whether it is at risk of undermining its foundational promises. In doing so, it assesses the hopes and realities of the European future, interrogating whether solidarity and unity remain achievable ideals or have become rhetorical tools in an increasingly divided Union.

Keywords: geopolitics, EU accession, Jean Monnet, EU identity, democratic norms