Europe’s integration process
and Sino-European cooperation*

In her book *European Unification, Dream of Sages*, Prof. MARIA GRAZIA MELCHIONNI of Rome University I gives a vivid narration of Europe’s integration process from an historical perspective. One distinctive feature of this book is the comprehensive anatomy of Europe’s integration process by means of combining broad vision and in-depth perspective: Europe’s divide and integration in history is explored while its change and development in the 20th century is studied. In the book, the author analyzes against the backdrop of changing world setup how the major European countries interacted with one another after the 2nd World War while taking their respective policy measures on the issue of European unification. This book is helpful not only to enhance our understanding of Europe, but also to promote our awareness of the international situation and draw on the experience of European integration in line with the historical trend of growing economic globalization and political multi-polarization.

I. - There are 15 members in the European Union including major west and north European states, whose population totals 3.7 hundred million and economic strength basically matches that of the US. It was decided at the Copenhagen summit meeting on Dec. 14, 2002 that 10 new members would be admitted into the European Union on May 1, 2004. On the occasion, the European Union will have a population of 4.5 hundred million, and 25 members; and extending from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean Sea its territory will cover almost the whole of Europe except few countries like Russia. In the long run, the eastward expansion of the European Union is bound to have a profound impact on the European and world setup.

(*) This preface, showing how Europe’s integration process is seen from an outsider, was written by Dr. Liu Shan, former Chinese Ambassador to the European Community, for *欧洲统一——贤哲之梦——统一思想史* (the Chinese edition of MARIA GRAZIA MELCHIONNI, *European Unification, Dream of Sages*, Beijing, World Affairs Press, 2004).

Having failed to respond to medical treatment, Ambassador Liu Shan unfortunately passed away on June 16, 2004. We would like to pay our tribute to him and cherish his memory by publishing his preface in English.
The establishment of the European Coal and Steel Joint Management Organization in 1951 by France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg has laid the foundation for the European Union. The development and growth of a united Europe is like a tortuous journey. Let us first take a look at the European history to have a better understanding of European unification.

The European civilization starts with ancient Greece and Rome. As early as more than 2000 years ago, Greece was already a city state of slavery, leaving to mankind a valuable cultural heritage. Approximately at the start of the 3rd century B.C., Rome conquered all the tribes on the Apennine Peninsula and became a strong power in the Mediterranean. In their prime, Greece and Rome waged war many a time to loot slaves and wealth whereas they created a brilliant culture promoting mutual progress between philosophy, natural science and humanities. The Greek and Roman culture became the source of the European civilization, different from that of Babylon, Egypt, Persia, India, and China. Later, Christianity became the national religion of the Roman Empire, giving the European civilization a religious touch. The Christian civilization, however, could not represent the European civilization. The humanist thought popular in the Renaissance period and socialist and communist thought springing up since the 19th century had profound impact on the European civilization.

Instead of a symbol of European unification, the Roman Empire in history could only serve as a manifestation of the unifying trend of the Mediterranean region. The expansion of Roman Empire resulted in the removal of his capital of Constantinople by Emperor Teodosio hand-over of Rome to one of his sons and divide of the Eastern and Western Roman Empire. In the 5th century A.D., the Western Roman Empire collapsed under the dual blow of domestic turmoil and foreign aggression. The Eastern Roman Empire, namely Byzantine Empire, inherited the Greek and Roman culture and spread the Byzantine Church to the Slavs through expansion. In the 15th century, however, Istanbul was made part of the territory of Osman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire came to an end.

Eastern expeditions of the Crusades took place during the rule of Eastern Roman Empire. They were 8 times altogether, lasting for nearly 2 hundred years (1095-1291). This is a clash between the Christian and non-Christian civilizations in form. The root cause for this clash lies in the following facts: the rise of European cities and development of their business made feudal lords want to have land and wealth overseas; the Holy Sea wanted to expand its religious authority; merchants wanted to expand markets and farmers following the eastern expeditions want to have land and a new life. During these expeditions, the European feudal lords and merchants obtained a lot of wealth through war and plunder while Europe absorbed other cultures of the world apart from that of Greece and Rome. Meanwhile,
the Holy Sea representing religious authority and dukes of various European countries representing royal right, both colluding and contending with each other, plunged Europe in endless wars. Therefore, Europe endured the dark Middle Ages.

In the 14th century, Europe witnessed big droughts, plagues and wars lasting for one hundred years, which resulted in huge disasters to European people. On the other hand, the renaissance, a new trend of thought born in these disasters, instilled into Euro-peoples the spirit of seeking freedom, democracy and European unification, Machiavelli stood for the establishment of a unified European monarchy while Desiderius Erasmus, Sir Thomas More stood for the aspiration of establishing unified Europe respectively through Christianity and Utopian socialism. Thus European unification became the ideal of some European politicians and philosophers.

The birth of capitalism in Europe wakened national consciousness and gave birth to the system of sovereign states in Europe. At the same time, Europe began to engage in colonialist expansions and struggles for hegemony between big powers. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Britain defeated the invincible fleets of the Netherlands and Spain respectively, established its maritime hegemony and later became an empire where the sun never set. From the end of the 18th century to the start of the 19th century, Britain and France were locked in a fight for hegemony in Europe. Invincible for a while across the continental Europe, Napoleon met the final defeat at Waterloo. At that time, maintaining peace with balance of power became the leading trend of thought among politicians of various European countries. But the balance of power was relative and imbalance of power was absolute. At the end of the 19th century, Germany, catching up from behind, found that the world had been carved up. Seeking expansion, it put forward the “theories” of securing space for survival and the Germans being the superior nation respectively, and engaged in intense conflicts with Britain, France and other countries. Therefore, Europe became the central theatre of operation for two world wars.

Recalling the history starting from the ancient Greece and Rome to the whole of Europe in the first half of the 20th century, one will find that different nations and countries in Europe scored outstanding achievements in the different historical periods and made important contributions to the formation and development of the European civilization. On the other hand, conflicts and wars frequently breaking out in European countries and between them have plunged Europe in endless catastrophes and made the European people ponder what the correct way leading Europe to peace and prosperity was. To this end, different politicians and philosophers put forward different proposals. Some of them proposed that Europe should be unified under the domination and leadership of a big power. The Roman Empire, the
British Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, Napoleonic Empire and the Third Reich of Hitler, all belonging to this category, collapsed one after another. Others suggested that peace in Europe should be realized through maintenance of balance of power by a few big powers. The Holy Alliance signed in the 19th century and Treaty of Versailles signed in the 20th century were nothing but the practice of this policy. History has shown that this power-balancing policy based on narrow nationalism could not safeguard peace. Once this balance of power was lost, peace would not be secured. The two world wars served as a good example in this case. Recalling this painful experience, some Europeans had to find other ways. During the 2nd World War, the resistant movements against fascism in various European countries joined forces with one another for the common goal. They included the underground resistant forces of France, Italy, Belgium and Denmark, and German opposition against Hitler. Having suffered a great deal under the rule of Nazi Germany, they began to free themselves from the bondage of narrow nationalism through common struggle, and realized that only by establishing relationship of a new type based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, could there be a bright future for Europe. Due to their different political backgrounds, they had different ideas about European unification or European integration. They all maintained, however, that Europe must not be made once more a theatre of operation for seeking hegemony. The key issue at that time was how to solve the German question through peaceful means so that Europe would become a big community of peaceful coexistence and common prosperity. Inspired by this new concept, post-war European countries began looking for a new way.

II. - After the 2nd World War, Europe split up politically into Eastern Europe and Western Europe, and became a strategic key area for the US-USSR contention.

Still in the abyss of misery, post-war Europe was dilapidated. The death toll of the 2nd World War was 3 times that of the 1st World War, half of whom were innocent people. Industrial and agricultural production fell by half and people were short of food and clothing while national economy was on the brink of collapse. Western Europe then faced three challenges: a. how to consolidate peace, dispel hatred between the warring states and prevent the resurgence of German militarism in particular; b. how to rejuvenate the economy damaged by this war and rebuild a prosperous homeland; and c. how to safeguard its independence and raise Europe's international standing in the post-war world dominated by US and USSR.

As early as during the 2nd World War, some personages of the resistant movement in Europe proposed to unite under the anti-fascist banner while others even suggested to found the united states of Europe in accordance with the American mode. However, most European countries did not reach consensus on the latter proposal, nor the
US supported it, because drastic changes took place in the post-war period.

Post-war confrontation between US and USSR reached its peak from 1947 to 1948, and in Europe it found expression in two events, Berlin crisis and US assistance in the anti-communist movement of Greece and Turkey. Against this backdrop Marshall, then US Secretary of State, put forward an aiding Europe plan in June, 1947. The American intention was to bring Europe into the sphere of its influence so as to resist the Russian influence. As a matter of fact, however, the European Economic Cooperation Organization, responsible for collective aid and for making common development plan, formed in 1948 by 16 recipient countries of Western Europe played a part in promoting unification of Western Europe.

The USSR’s control of and intervention in east European countries in the post-war period, from the other hand, promoted unification of Western Europe and alliance between Western Europe and the US. In March 1948, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Convention and founded Western Union. On this basis, the US and West European countries signed the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949. The Council of Europe initiated by the ten founding members – Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, Sweden and Ireland – was founded in May, 1949. It was an experiment in European political integration.

West European countries had different ideas about what role this Council should play. At first, France hoped to turn this Council into an authoritative political body so as to promote European unification and have some ultra-national power in the political, economic, and cultural fields. To this end, it put forward a proposal on joint utilization of coal and steel resources in 1950. On the other hand, Britain hoped, while maintaining confrontation against the USSR together with a united Western Europe, its special position in Europe must be affirmed with the support of its special relationship with the US and the British Commonwealth. Therefore it wished the Council of Europe to be merely a loose consultative body between governments and didn’t participated in joint management of coal and steel. Due to different interests of some European powers, unification of Western Europe, from its start, witnessed both cooperation and disputes. Its road was tortuous and bumpy.

Generally speaking, people regard the European Coal and Steel Joint Management Organization established by France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg in 1951 as the foundation of European unification. Over the past 50 years, European unification has by and large experienced the following 3 development phases:

1. Cooperation in the areas of coal and steel between the 6 member states developed into an economic community, which was also con-
sidered the beginning phase of European unification. The European Coal and Steel Joint Management launched in 1951 held its ground. The Suez Canal crisis in the 1950s compelled the 6 countries like France and Germany to expand cooperation into the atomic energy and other economic fields. In 1957, the 6 countries signed the Rome Treaty and founded the European Atomic Energy Community and European Economic Community. There were 3 pillars to this economic community: namely the tariff alliance, common agricultural policy and joint foreign trade policy. In 1959, Britain won over some North European countries and formed the European Free Trade Association to challenge the European Economic Community. After its failure, it applied for joining the European Economic Community, but was rejected by France.

2. Consolidation and expansion of the European Economic Community. Between the 1970s and 1980s, along with its development, the European Economic Community merged the European Coal and Steel Community and Atomic Energy Community to become the European Community. Therefore, a stable organization and operational mechanism took shape, and the European currency system and European Investment Bank were established. In 1985, the European Community proposed to found a unified European market concerning free circulation of commodities, capital, personnel and labor. With its expansion for three times during this period, its membership expanded from 6 to 12.

3. The European Community evolved into the European Union, leading economic alliance to political union. Since signing treaties like Maastricht treaty in the 1990s, the European Community began deepening and expanding its integration. To this end, with the issuance of euro, common economic and currency policies were implemented and economic and currency association was established. Politically, the European Union is preparing to implement joint security and foreign policies, build Europe’s independent defense, coordinate policies on internal and legal affairs and reform the operational mechanism of the European Union so as to gradually establish a political union. As for the expansion of the European Union, its membership has grown from 12 to 15, and will expand to 25 in the near future.

In the historical perspective, European unification has always advanced in a zigzag way coupled with quarrel and cooperation. The reason is that on one hand, European countries have either common interests or different contradictions, and on the other hand, the European Union could not be free from the influence of the changing world situation and other external factors. After the break-up of the bipolar structure, the common threat confronting US and Europe disappeared so as to provide an historical opportunity to the European Union to further improve its independent position and expand its sphere of influence. The strategic objective of the European Union,
however, contradicts with the US conception of a unipolar world. It is inevitable for Europe to meet difficulties and setbacks when it has to iron out internal disputes and overcome pressure from outside if it wants to become polar force to be reckoned with politically and militarily. After all, European unification for strength is the only feasible option for European countries to maintain peace, stability and prosperity in Europe.

III. - Since the founding of new China, it established diplomatic relations with some Western and Northern European countries respectively in the 1950s and 1960s. After the restoration of its legitimate seat in the UN in the early 1970s, China established diplomatic relations with most Western European countries, and in 1975 established diplomatic relations with the European Community.

All this has strengthened the international strategic standing of both China and Europe. Europe has become an important source providing market, capital and technology for China’s reform and opening to the outside world. Since 1989, the Sino-European relations once suffered ups and downs, but it did not take long for both sides to realize the strategic importance of strengthening cooperation with each other. Starting from 1995, the European Union issued its long-term policy toward China and document on building comprehensive partnership with China respectively. In 1998, the top leaders of China and the European Union held their first meeting in London, deciding to “build a long-term, stable and constructive partnership into the 21st century”. Sino-European cooperation gradually expanded to new areas. After the “September 11” incident and Iraqi war, China and Europe have shared identical or similar position on the major issues such as anti-terrorism fight, new international political and economic order, bringing into play the role of the UN, and diversity of world civilizations. Both sides think it is necessary to further promote cooperation with and attach importance to each other. Recently, China has for the first time issued a policy document on the European Union, showing that China attaches greater importance to the role played by Europe in the regional and global affairs. Last October, China and the European Union held their 6th summit meeting. At the same time, economic cooperation of the East Asian region in the 21st century was entering a new phase for development. The experiences and lessons of European integration as well as its impact on peace and security in Europe have attracted the attention of more and more Chinese. Against this background, historical developments of European unification introduced to the Chinese people by European academics will certainly be welcome.

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