

Germany's Dominant Role in the European Union

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After nearly a quarter of a century since the fall of the wall, Berlin has become the uncontested centre of the continent in both political and economic terms. Only in military aspects is the reunited powerhouse of Europe curbing its expansionist instincts or zeal (yet with Washington's benign consent it is now flexing its military muscles in Afghanistan and on the Syrian -Turkish border in quest of a much wider geo-political Lebensraum.

Germany today effectively runs the European Union. Its strength is daunting to some EU states like Greece, which is almost under an occupation like puppet regime, and very worrisome to former foes now close strategic allies in the U.K. and France.

France looks warily at Berlin and London increasingly seeks to withdraw from Merkel's EU, leaving Germany to make use of its free reign on the European playground, while advancing national interests on a continental scale.

This bad playhouse which led to an inordinate shift of influence to Berlin, began of course with reunification, and then continued with the introduction of the Euro. In reality, the Euro for all intents and purposes was a political not an economic project. It was devised by two statesmen who knew first hand the dangers of an unbounded Germany on the continent: François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl. An unspoken (officially speaking) and unsigned Franco German pact was implemented henceforth, as a means of curbing Germany's hegemony. In return for German reunification, Berlin agreed to give up its national treasure the *Deutsche Mark* for the European common currency.

The project badly backfired. The 'German Euro' represented Berlin's newfound dominance within the EU. When the financial global meltdown in the markets struck, Berlin seized this crisis to further strengthen its hand within the EU by further weakening less economically dynamic states. Berlin eroded the sovereignty of these states using the 'Euro straightjacket' as a tool for imposing austerity and hence hegemony over its clients.

The technocrats from Frankfurt's ECB along with their enablers and handmaidens in Brussels (the European Commission) and the IMF in Washington have since 2008 ruthlessly and brutality implemented an austerity programme throughout the Eurozone and beyond, which can only be compared to the one Weimar Germany was subjected to during the inter war years.

We all know where this led. In the most acute case, the Greek economy is still reeling from "third world" like unemployment and anemic growth. Never the less, Berlin seems relentlessly to be enacting these harsh policies with an almost fiendish, if not perverse pleasure despite the growing unrest in the southern flank of the EU. The devaluation on the Greek citizenry is nothing less than deplorable and horrific; bordering on the social pain only known to the impoverished Weimar Germans of yesteryear. Like the Germans of the 1920s,

the Greeks have responded domestically to these austere measures (meant to repay its debt to foreign creditors, mostly German and French banks) by opting for extreme political choices as a way out of the blind alley. As Democracy is imperiled, what other choice do they have? Both the far right and far left have become palatable choices for Greek voters.

In retrospect, the overlords in Berlin do not seem to see or are unwilling to notice the parallels between the plight of the Greek government in 2013 and that (street violence) of the post-world war one Weimar polity of 1923. Certainly the hyperinflation experienced by the wheel-barreling Germans back then, is not evident in today's Greece. But still, the political instability and dramatic fall in living standards do bear a sinister and striking similarity to those very dark days from the long forgotten it seems, past. The politics of austerity have a historical resonance worth remembering.

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