

The raison d'être of the European Union according to European treaties' preambles

Lorenzo Donatelli, supervised by Dr Richard McMahon
UCL Department of Political Science



Context: The EU and Covid-19

In 2020, some member nations contributed to significantly slowing down the European decision-making process regarding financial responses to the COVID-19 pandemic ^[1]. This lack of coordination within the Union may be linked to a recurrent tendency to avoid defining the EU project ^[2]. The purpose of this research is therefore **to investigate the raison d'être of the EU.**



Methodology: Why preambles?

Due to the vast scope of the question, my focus is on the **analysis of the European treaties' preambles** and their **processes of negotiation**. Indeed, through the programmatic articulation of ideas, experiences and aspirations of a political entity ^[3], preambles present the "history behind [it], [...] [its] core principles and values" ^[4]. In other words, preambles tend to target the **raison d'être** and ideals behind a political project.

The EU may be defined as an **ongoing process of integration** guaranteed by a supra-national institution. Its **raison d'être**, I claim, is **the contextual need to overcome specific moments of crisis.**

1 ECSC

The ECSC preamble (1952) stresses the importance of securing peace through economic integration, following the catastrophic impact of **WW2**.

3 SEA

The SEA preamble (1987) stresses the importance of making the EU a more effective organisation to tackle the rise of **Euro-sclerosis** and **Euro-scepticism**.

5 Lisbon

The main aim of the Lisbon treaty (2009) is to make the EU's workings more efficient and transparent, in light of the **failure of the Constitutional project**.

2 EEC

The EEC preamble's (1958) main goal is to strengthen Europe's international stance after the **EDC failure** and the **rise of international tensions**.

4 Maastricht

The aim articulated in the Maastricht preamble (1993) is to make the EU stronger in the emerging geopolitical equilibrium, facing the **end of the Cold War**.



Shortcomings of this raison d'être

Significant issues ensue from this **raison d'être**, both in terms of efficiency and speed of decision-making. The consequence for the Union, I claim, is that policymaking inevitably "occur(s) only as a **result of lowest common denominator bargaining** among powerful member states, each pursuing its [...] economic self-interest" ^[5]. Therefore, to achieve a more cohesive and effective Union, **the raison d'être** of the EU project needs to be first shifted from the overcoming of contextual crises to some **positively defined and collectively agreed upon terms**.



References

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5. Jones, E., Kelemen, R.D. and Meunier, S., (2016). Failing forward? The Euro crisis and the incomplete nature of European integration. Comparative Political Studies, 49(7), pp.1010-1034.