🇺🇸 THE EUROPEAN UNION: DOES IT REALLY MAKE SENSE?

By Stephen L. Bakke 🖼 June 25, 2016

The European Union flag has a blue field, with 12 five-pointed gold stars arranged in a circle, representing the union of the peoples of Europe.

The United Kingdom's (U.K.) dilemma of accepting or rejecting the European Union (EU) is all about striking the right balance between self-determination with sovereign borders VS. a measure of isolationism. It's not an easy thing to do!

Citizens of the U.K. voted to exit the EU which was formed in the 1950s and was originally known as the European Economic Community. It has grown to 28 members stretching geographically from Sweden and Finland in the north to Italy, Greece and Cyprus in the south - and from Portugal and Spain in the west to Romania and Bulgaria in the east. Perhaps this diversity of culture and geography is one of the organization's weaknesses.

While retaining sovereignty, each member country is bound by enforceable agreements. A "supranational" system does have authority similar to "federalism" in the U.S. The U.K. was not an original member and never relinquished its traditional currency in favor of the EU's common currency, the "euro."

I've always been leery of this sort of international "union," in terms of feasibility and practicality. Once you get by the "idealism," reality seems to enter the equation. Before the EU, we had individual countries in Europe, each with unique laws, cultures, languages, priorities, forms of government, and economic policies. And I should add, each had their own unique "BAD HABITS." Before the EU, each country's fate certainly had implications on their geographical partners, but the individual economies remained mostly separate.

The EU brought with it an idealistic hope for a European economic and foreign affairs powerhouse. While the upside was substantial, the downside was very real. The goal was to smooth over the differences and create some commonality, but here's where we stand:
- There still exist 28 different sets of priorities for life and government.
- There is no uniformity of financial strength among the EU countries.
- There are many different forms of governments and disagreements about the role of government.
- Differences in culture, lifestyle, religion, and spending habits are enough to make a real difference.
- Attitudes towards immigration differ greatly.
- Each member continues to display many of its own unique "BAD HABITS"!
- There will always be an element of old-fashioned nationalism which limits altruistic cross-border generosity.
- And there is no uniform level of sincerity to make it all work!

The reality is that the failure of one country could have a magnified affect for the entire "pool" of countries. Recall the recent financial calamity in Greece – there was a real possibility of an EU

financial meltdown. The system seems to create the possibility of reducing all economies, defense systems, and international influence to the "lowest common denominator."

While facing all of that, a majority of the U.K.'s governance activities were outside of their control, being totally determined by the EU. Imagine how Americans would react if faced with joining a "Union of the America's." Would we be comfortable with answering to a "Governing Council" seated in Venezuela and bound by a court system based in Canada? Of course we wouldn't!

I understand the U.K.'s desire to escape this situation. This may be a real victory for freedom, self-determination, and growth oriented government. On the other hand, I hope Europe can continue to join together in a cooperative posture of military defense. That's one function best suited to multilateral agreement.

I predict this "exit" will catch on with other EU members because it's actually quite natural for citizens to think favorably of sovereignty, nationalism, and patriotism. Maybe anti-globalization is catching on. If so, let's hope it's not all bad!