West European Politics

European Union?

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PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

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This article provides an overview of the study of the European Union since the doldrums of the 1970s. We focus on three debates that have helped to shape the field. Has European integration centralised state control or is European integration part of a process of dispersion of authority? What is the role of identity in framing preferences over European integration? And, finally, is European integration part of a new political cleavage? We observe that the European Union is a moving target. It has a habit of throwing up new and unexpected facts which wrong-foot extant theories. We have no grounds for believing that this will not continue.

Developments on the ground have provided a powerful reality check for research on European integration.[1] Harold Macmillan's response to a question about his greatest challenge in office: 'Events, dear boy, events', applies with special force to research on Europe. As the character of the European Union has changed, so has our understanding of it.

One might say that the object of research is unidentified and travels at great velocity. The EU is unidentified in that it escapes labels, such as nation, state, empire, region, federation, which form the conventional toolkit of political science. European integration challenges the long-standing division in political science between politics *within* countries – where justice, equality, freedom, and the rule of law are appropriate concepts, where executives, parliaments, and courts authoritatively legislate and arbitrate, and where interest groups and political parties intermediate interests – and politics *among* countries, where national governments express national preferences, and where relative economic or coercive power, arguably moderated by institutional and normative commitments, determine outcomes. Perhaps no field has spawned so much conceptual innovation as European integration; no field is so uncertain about what it is that needs to be explained.

Moreover, the EU travels at great velocity. The speed of institutional change is undeniable: from a consultative assembly to a powerful European Parliament, directly elected, and with veto power over a wide swathe of legislation; from a weak court to a formidable adjudicative and legislative

body under the doctrines of supremacy and direct effect; from a trade-oriented regime involving six countries to a continental polity with responsibility stretching over monetary policy, environmental policy, structural policy, and much besides. Over the space of 50 years, the EU has increased two-and-a-half times in population, from 190 million to 493 million.[2] Has anything this big been created in so short a period? The answer is, of course, yes. Wars have produced large-scale political units in glimpses of historical time. What is distinctive about European integration is that the transformation has been deliberative; it has taken place in the absence of the coercion that has shaped and reshaped empires in the past. In the pantheon of deliberative regime creation, the EU is unique in its breadth and speed.

John Keeler (2005) identifies three eras in the development of EC/EU studies, and each corresponds with major shifts on the ground: the launch era, opened by the implementation of the Treaty of Rome and shaped theoretically by debates between neo-functionalists and intergovernmentalists; the doldrums era, a period of stagnation after the 'empty chair crisis' that induced scholars to turn away from grand theorising; and the renaissance/boom era, when rapid integration following the Single European Act (1986) revitalised grand theorising and led to unprecedented diversification of EU studies.

The first *West European Politics* issue echoed the disappointment of the doldrums era. Ralf Dahrendorf (1978: 9) observed bluntly that, 'After many years of progress in European unification, this process has now come to a halt'. The ardent federalist, Altiero Spinelli (1978), labelled his article 'Reflections on the Institutional Crisis in the EC'. When *WEP* – and political science – returned to European integration, the scholarly debate had changed. The purpose of this article is to sketch this change by engaging three substantive debates in the field of EU studies.

At the Margins

Europe has served as the laboratory for comparative research on democratic politics for the simple reason that most advanced industrial democracies are European. Researchers who wish to compare the authoritative institutions, public policies, party systems, and political economies of capitalist democracies are drawn to Europe.

The study of regional integration in Europe began in this genre as a distinctly comparative-historical enterprise. Ernst Haas (1958, 1961) examined the various forms of regional integration that were emerging in post-war Europe, including the Nordic Council, the Council of Europe, NATO, the Western European Union, and the European Coal and Steel Community. Haas' study (1964) of global forms of integration, such as the International Labour Organization, had a strong influence on the formulation of neo-functionalism. Karl Deutsch, another intellectual parent of regional integration studies, compared the creation of the European

Community to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, multinational states, such as Britain, Switzerland or Italy, and international organisations, such as NATO (Deutsch *et al.* 1957). Philippe Schmitter (1970) elaborated this comparative framework and took it to Latin America, and Joseph Nye (1970) sought to apply it to other parts of the world.

Events dealt a blow to this approach. By the end of the 1960s, efforts at regional integration outside Europe had regressed. The collapse of Bretton Woods ushered in a decade of national protectionism. At the same time, the resilience of European integration – despite the perception that it was in institutional crisis – highlighted the contrast between this enterprise and faltering integration elsewhere. The European Community stayed put, enlarged its membership, and in certain respects deepened.

One price of apparent stagnation was to induce comparativists and international relations scholars to exit the field. Of the ten contributors to the standard work on theorising regional integration (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970), only one, Donald Puchala, was still writing on the subject in the early 1980s (Schmitter 2005). Ernst Haas (1975) announced the obsolescence of regional integration theory, and began to study learning in transnational epistemic communities. Karl Deutsch turned to issues of security and modelling. Philippe Schmitter went on to discover neo-corporatism, a distinctly national phenomenon.

This exit was hastened by the theoretical problems that neo-functionalism, the only credible research programme until the early 1970s, was running into. While it generated a stream of empirical research, it also began to sprout findings and auxiliary hypotheses that looked suspiciously – in Imre Lakatos' (1970) terms – like a 'degenerating problem shift'. Neo-functionalism imploded under the weight of its own complexity, as much as, or perhaps more than, a result of competition with a rival theory. Subsequently, grand theorising took a back seat to implicit intergovernmentalism.

A small group of scholars (and practitioners), most of them committed to the idea of Europe, kept the field on the map. But the study of the European Community became a backwater of international relations, and European integration was regarded as a peripheral, one-off, phenomenon.[3]

In March 1982, the *Economist* featured on its cover a tombstone with the words 'EEC: born March 25th, 1957, moribund March 25th, 1982, *capax imperii nisi imperasset*'.[4] The problem was not that the Community had swum far from shore into deeper and more challenging waters (to use Stanley Hoffmann's metaphor[5]), but that it was incapable of making progress on the basic commitment of the treaty of Rome – to remove barriers to trade.

By the early 1980s it became clear that the elimination of the national veto was not merely a fantasy in the minds of European federalists. On the contrary, the national veto blocked trade. It allowed governments to avoid confrontation with domestic rent seekers who took advantage of the

vagueness of the treaty of Rome to reap state aid, minimise competition in public procurement, and sit behind national product rules designed to keep foreign competitors at bay. Even committed defenders of national sovereignty, such as Prime Minister Thatcher, came to realise that some form of majority voting was necessary, as a practical matter, to achieve market integration. An unholy alliance of pro-marketeers and federalists produced the Single European Act. Political scientists renewed their acquaintance with a European Community led by an activist Commission President, Jacques Delors, with an ambitious legislative plan eliminating non-tariff barriers, empowering the European Parliament, and introducing a serious dose of majoritarianism in the Council of Ministers.

The Recasting of Europe – and Our Understanding of It

European integration has transformed the jurisdictional architecture of Europe. How has it done so, and with what implications? We review three debates, each of which has motivated major research programmes. Events have attracted some seasoned scholars and many novices, especially from comparative politics, to EU studies like bees to a honey pot. Renewed comparativist interest in European integration is arguably the most significant development in the field since the doldrums of the 1970s.

Dispersion of Authority or Central State Control?

The Single European Act reopened the debate about decision making in Europe. National governments had agreed to a treaty that imposed qualified majority decision making in the Council of Ministers on market legislation and gave the European Parliament the authority to pass amendments into law unless overridden by unanimous opposition in the Council. So instead of explaining why national sovereignty was immovable, researchers had to grapple with the question of why it had eroded.

The opening shot was fired by Wayne Sandholtz and John Zysman in a 1989 *World Politics* article that re-established the plausibility of neo-functionalism. The single market reform, they argued, was a response to exogenous international shocks – the decline of American hegemony and the economic rise of Japan – which threatened to further diminish European competitiveness. Sandholtz and Zysman (1989: 108) noted that 'any explanation of the choice of Europe and its evolution must focus on the actors – the leadership in the institutions of the European Community, in segments of the executive branch of the national governments, and in the business community (principally the heads of the largest companies)'. Rather than providing a blow by blow analysis of decision making, they examined how the views of these actors came to converge and, in particular, why national Keynesian policies were perceived as insufficient. The initiative, Sandholtz and Zysman argued, was taken by supranational

entrepreneurs and transnational firms, often working against the inertia of national governments (see also Cowles 1995).

Sandholtz and Zysman eschewed causal models, and their interpretation had so many moving parts that it was almost immune to disconfirmation. James Caporaso, Wayne Sandholtz, and Alec Stone Sweet went on to hone neo-functionalist theory by elaborating a model in which societal groups press for reforms to lower cross-border transaction costs, and governments respond by establishing supranational institutions, which makes it easier for societal groups to increase cross-border interactions and press for further reform. This combines Karl Deutsch's insight that socio-economic transactions are a source of political reform, with Douglass North's idea that economic organisations press for institutions that lower their transaction costs. A powerful disconfirmable implication is that the demand for supranationalism will vary across groups in line with the density of their cross-border transactions, a pattern that has been confirmed in several empirical studies (Fligstein 2008; Sandholtz 1996; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 1998). The theory placed the self-evident monopoly of national governments in the treaty process within a simple and powerful model of societal pressure. National governments negotiate and sign the treaties, but they are subject to functional pressures that shape their choice.

The revival of neo-functionalist theory highlighted the role of the European Court of Justice. Several studies confirmed the expectation that the greater the density of trade among EU countries and within a sector, the greater the demand on the part of firms for transnational dispute settlement (Caporaso 2006; Chicowski 2004; Conant 2006; Stone Sweet and Brunell 1998). In the process, a supranational legal system was emerging behind the backs of national states.

The intergovernmentalist response was that national governments retain control – individually, as well as collectively – by means of their monopoly over treaty making. Initially, intergovernmentalist Moravcsik (1993: 485), argued that collective EU decision making actually preserves, or even enhances, state control because national governments will only participate insofar as 'policy coordination increases their control over domestic policy outcomes, permitting them to achieve goals that would not otherwise be possible' (see also Milward 1992). This argument was criticised on the ground that it conflates the ability to control others with the ability to achieve goals, and consequently, does not allow meaningful statements about situations where an actor's best strategy for achieving a goal is to cede control to others. In his book, *Choice for Europe*, Moravcsik (1998) argued that member states make informed trade-offs between anticipated economic benefits through cooperation while minimising the loss of national control. That is to say, member states are both aware of, and capable of forestalling, undesirable transfers of authority to European institutions.[6]

The debate between neo-functionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism was interlaced with a discussion about the nature of the beast (Risse 1996) and, by implication, about the appropriate categories of analysis (Hix 1994, 1996; Hurrell and Menon 1996). Is European integration best conceived as a means for coping with international interdependence or is more to be gained from analysing the European Union as a federal polity? Should one use the language of international relations, or the language of comparative politics? Two volumes published in the early 1990s – one edited by international relations scholars Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann (1991), and one by comparativist Alberta Sbragia (1992) – staked out contrasting positions. It is indicative of the changing times that two of the three editors of these volumes had not previously published on European integration. In the introduction to the Keohane/Hoffmann volume, Keohane writes that he had been 'paying little attention to current events in the European Community' and needed to tool up before he could co-chair a graduate seminar on European integration, where the foundation for the volume was laid (Keohane and Hoffmann 1991: vii). While Alberta Sbragia had written her Ph.D. on Italian politics with Leon Lindberg, she had never published on European integration when she was approached by the Brookings Institution to bring together a group of comparativists to analyse the European Community. Both projects viewed the European Community uninhibited by conventional theoretical lenses, though the editors were wise to employ as sounding boards policy makers, such as Peter Ludlow, Federico Mancini, and Shirley Williams, and respected EC scholars, such as Helen Wallace, William Wallace, and Wolfgang Wessels.

To understand Europe's jurisdictional architecture, scholars borrowed ideas from comparative politics (Caporaso 1996; Héritier 1996; Leibfried and Pierson 1995; Majone 1994; Marks and McAdam 1996; Peterson 1995; Pierson 1996; Pollack 1995; Sbragia 1993; Tarrow 1995; Tsebelis 1994). Fritz Scharpf was one of the first to do so in an influential article, published in 1988, in which he drew on his prior analysis of German federalism to show how divergent national interests under EU membership could lead to a joint decision trap, preventing national governments from making policy while blocking the European Union from taking joint decisions. Scharpf avoided taking a position on whether the EU was a state or an international organisation, but his analysis directly challenged the core tenet of intergovernmentalism, that national governments control policy outcomes.

By the late 1990s, the debate on Europe's jurisdictional architecture appeared settled in favour of the view that European integration had transformed a network of sovereign national states into a system of multilevel governance (Bache and Flinders 2004; Benz 2003; Hooghe and Marks 2001; Jachtenfuchs 2001; Kohler-Koch and Eising 1999; Marks *et al.* 1996; Scharpf 1997).[7] Even advocates of the staying power of national governments have come to accept that a 'multilevel governance system [is] prevailing in Europe' (Moravcsik 2004: 356).
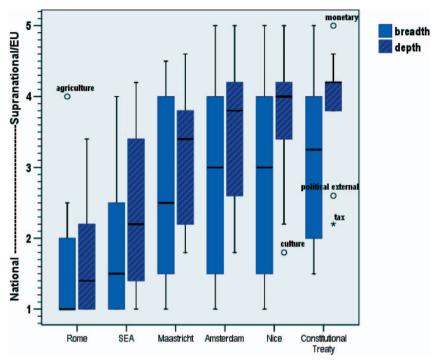
There are (almost) as many definitions of multilevel governance as there are users of the term, but common to all is the idea that authority on a broad swathe of issues has come to be shared across EU institutions, national, and subnational governments.[8] The reason for this development lies in the benefits of adjusting the scale of governance to the scale of collective problems. Where the externalities that arise from a problem such as providing clean air, minimising transaction costs of monetary exchange, or reducing trade barriers, are transnational in scope, the most efficient level of decision making is similarly transnational. Where the externalities are local or regional, as for garbage collection or land-use planning, the most efficient level is subnational. However, there is no reason to believe that functional pressures translate directly into jurisdictional reform.

Multilevel governance in post-war Europe can be understood as a response to a shift in policy, a shift in regime, and a shift in geopolitics. First, during and immediately after World War II, authority was packaged in highly centralised states by the overriding need to mobilise resources for war and to survive scarcity. From the late 1940s, the policy portfolio of Western Europe came to encompass policies related to economic growth, trade, and welfare with widely varying externalities and economies of scale. Second, liberal democracies were established across Western Europe. Democracies divorce competition for office from the desire to centralise power in one's hands. Whereas autocratic rulers centralise to sustain their monopoly of power, democratic politicians face incentives to shift authority below or beyond the central state if this enables them to provide more goods for voters. Thirdly, the geopolitical tensions that had led to war centralisation and hyper-nationalism in Western Europe were transformed as the Cold War began and the United States pressed for European concertation. Rulers could focus on reducing barriers to trade in Western Europe because the nature of the coercive threats they faced had changed. National survival was aligned with, not against, European economic interdependence.

European integration is one outcome of a broader process of authority dispersion, which stretches beneath as well as above the central state. The two processes appear to be related. The existence of an overarching market lowers the cost of regional autonomy. One of the chief constraints on regional autonomy in the past has been the fear that it would lead to small, inefficient economic units that might be denied access to former markets. However, as rules about market access came to be determined at the European level, the meaning of decentralisation changed. Economic autarky was taken out of the equation.[9]

Figure 1 reveals how formal rules concerning national/EU decision making across 18 policy areas have evolved over six treaties, as charted by Tanja Börzel (2005).[10] *Breadth* of integration refers to the range of policies or tasks for which the EU plays a role; *depth* of integration refers to the supranational or intergovernmental character of the decision rules. There is

FIGURE 1
EVOLUTION OF EU AUTHORITY (POLICY BREADTH AND DEPTH) (1957–2004)

Note: *Breadth* (1–5) estimates the extent to which the EU plays a role in a policy (1–5); *Depth* (1–5) estimates the supranational or intergovernmental character of the decision rules. The boxes encompass the interquartile range for 18 policies, the horizontal line is the median, and the whiskers indicate the fifth and ninety-fifth percentiles. Starred policy areas are outliers, and white circles are extreme cases.
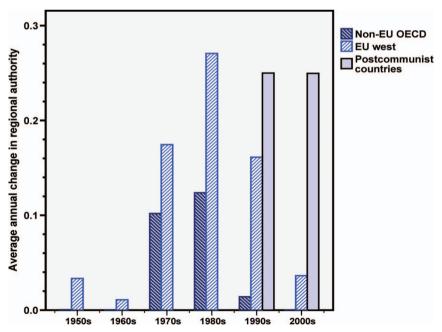*Source*: Börzel (2005: 221–3).

wide variation across policy areas, as suggested in the size of the box plots representing the 5 to 95 per cent range for breadth and depth. As one would expect, policies that redistribute income among individuals are handled almost exclusively within national states, whereas policies having to do with trade and market integration are handled almost exclusively at the European level. A startling fact about the pattern revealed in Figure 1 is that there is not one case where a policy has been shifted from the European to the national level, nor is there a case where a policy that was supranational has become intergovernmental. At least up to this point in time, the formal development of European governance has been unidirectional.[11]

Most policy areas that have been shifted to the European level follow a functional logic rooted in the territorial scope of their externalities. This applies to policies concerned with trade, the environment, and movement of persons. But a functional logic gets us only so far. Some policy shifts involve

political side-payments. These include structural and cohesion policy and agricultural subsidies. Moreover, Europeanisation does not encompass all policy areas for which there are collective functional benefits, such as defence procurement. Most of the exceptions can be explained by the distributional consequences of Europeanisation and the capacity of potential losers, be they national governments or domestic interests, to block reform. While neo-functionalist accounts emphasised functional pressures, albeit mediated by political processes, intergovernmentalists highlighted the distributional impediments to international cooperation. But neither predicted the constraining impact of mass publics – a recent development which, as we discuss below, has exerted a serious drag on integration.

Figure 2 charts regional decentralisation in Europe and the OECD since 1950. The increase in regional authority has been particularly strong in the European Union. The picture is consistent with the hypothesis that democracies are conducive to multilevel governance. It also supports the

FIGURE 2
EVOLUTION OF REGIONAL AUTHORITY (AVERAGE ANNUAL CHANGE)
(1950–2006)

Note: Annual change in regional authority for 35 democracies, 1950–2006, averaged by decade. Regional authority is measured as an index of policy scope, taxation power, electoral representation, and power sharing in central government.
Source: Marks *et al.* (2008).

idea that decentralisation is less costly when it is detached from rules about market access, as is the case in the European Union. With minor exceptions, the regionalisation of Europe has been unidirectional. There are very few cases of recentralisation. So regionalisation is similar to Europeanisation in that it is a coherent process of change – not a series of independent bargains.

Figures 1 and 2 give credence to the claim that the jurisdictional architecture of the European Union has become multilevel. But what does this mean for politics in Europe? How has it affected Europeans' conceptions of their political communities? How has it influenced structures of political conflict? Over the past two decades research on Europe has engaged each of these questions.

Identity and Economic Interest

Political institutions that lack emotional resonance are unlikely to last. Economic interest and efficiency – the building blocks of social science research over the past 30 years – are arguably only part of the story of polity creation. Identity – emotional attachment to community – appears vital. The early theorists of European integration took identity seriously, and the topic has returned to the research agenda of Europeanists in this era of political populism.

Ernst Haas (1958: 16) defined integration as the 'process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations, and political activities toward a new centre'. Karl Deutsch considered a 'sense of community' to be a key indicator of integration (Deutsch *et al*. 1957: 36). Would Europe become a focus of identity?

Ronald Inglehart (1967, 1970) believed that generational replacement was working in this direction. The underlying process was political socialisation: individuals socialised in a society where public goods are provided by supranational rather than national institutions would, Inglehart argued, develop loyalty towards supranational institutions. On the basis of his transaction theory of identity formation, Karl Deutsch disagreed. Deutsch and his collaborators found that national communication was expanding at a much faster pace than European communication. European institution building 'had not been matched by any corresponding deeper integration of actual behavior' (Deutsch 1966: 355; Merritt *et al*. 2001) When European integration appeared to grind to a halt in the 1970s, Deutsch seemed vindicated, and interest in identity as an outcome of integration withered away.

It was not until the late 1990s, in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty (1993), that the issue of identity resurfaced. The Treaty was a compendium of practical steps to Europeanise monetary policy and important aspects of environmental policy, social policy, cohesion policy, and much besides. Each step was designed to enhance efficiency by centralising decision

making at the continental level, but the aggregate effect was to present citizens with a supranational polity. While scholars were debating whether or not national sovereignty was undermined, opinion leaders were debating whether or not they could tolerate a palpable authority shift to Europe.

The Maastricht Accord was negotiated by elites, but it was submitted to publics in four referendums which led to one defeat (in Denmark) and one near defeat (in France). Neo-functionalists and intergovernmentalists conceived European decision making as an elite affair, but now decision making appeared to be shifting in a populist direction. Seven referendums were held on European issues in the 25 years prior to the Maastricht Accord; in the 16 years following the Maastricht Accord, 27 referendums have been held on European issues.[12] At the very time that rulers subjected themselves to their publics, publics were inclined to withhold consent.[13] Governments and their allies have been defeated in six of these 27 referendums.

The mobilisation of mass publics has transformed the process of European integration. Whereas elites negotiated with an eye to efficiency and distributional consequences, publics appear to be swayed by identity as well as by economic concerns. Identity is no longer an inert outcome of jurisdictional reform, as Deutsch and Haas assumed, but has become a powerful constraint (Hooghe and Marks 2008).[14]

Many researchers who studied identity had an ear to the ground. Immigration had become a hot political issue, and populist right-wing parties, such as the *Front National* and *Vlaams Blok/Belang*, made emotional connections between immigration and loss of national sovereignty due to European integration. Elites who viewed Europe from the standpoint of Pareto benefits seemed to miss the point. As Eichenberg and Dalton (2007: 138) note in a recent survey of public opinion literature:

> [W]hen the post-Maastricht years are included in the analysis...the causal dynamic of previous periods is substantially altered. Through 1991, public opinion responded very much in the way that the existing literature would lead us to expect: support for integration responded positively to increased trade within the EU and to improvement in economic conditions. Since Maastricht, however, these relationships have essentially disappeared.

The theoretical underpinnings of research on identity were quite thin. In his presidential address to the American Sociological Association, Douglas Massey (2002) called for research on the interaction of emotion and rationality on the grounds that emotional responses antedated rationality in human evolution and are often causally prior in explaining social behaviour. Most articles on identity refer to social identity theory which posits that group identifications shape individual self-conception and that humans have an 'innate ethnocentric tendency' which leads a person to favour his or her

own group over others (Brewer 1999; Druckman 1994). Whether this tendency breeds hatred or tolerance, or something in between, depends on answers to questions posed by political scientists. Three questions stand out. How are identities mobilised in political competition? How do multiple identities, to Europe, to nations, and to subnational communities, fit together? How are identities shaped by discourse?

Research on the first question engages the causal connection between being British or Slovenian or Dutch or Catalan and having an attitude over a particular political object. National identities do not speak for themselves in the world of politics, but must be *framed* (connected to a particular political object, as when a political party connects having a national identity to opposing immigration), *cued* (brought into play by instilling a bias, e.g. against foreign influence), or *primed* (made salient, e.g., when a political party highlights an identity in the context of an electoral campaign). A compelling example of framing is provided by Erica Edwards and Catherine de Vries who find that the extent to which individuals are Eurosceptic depends not only on the extent to which they see themselves as exclusively national (e.g. exclusively French and not European), but on whether this identity is framed by a populist right-wing party. The stronger the radical right party in a country, the more intensely individuals with exclusive identities oppose European integration (Edwards and de Vries 2008).[15]

The second question sets out from the basic psychological insight that most individuals have multiple identities (Brewer 1993).[16] Fifteen years of opinion polling reveal that most Europeans have some positive attachment to Europe and their nation, alongside subnational communities (Diez Medrano and Guttiérez 2001; Hooghe and Marks 2001). Moreover, these identities are not necessarily zero-sum. That is to say, strong identity and pride in one's nation do not, on average, predispose an individual against Europe (Citrin and Sides 2004). What is decisive is how identities fit together. Does an individual conceive of national identity as one among a set of attachments or as an exclusive attachment? Is national identity conceived as a civic characteristic that can be acquired, or as an ethnic characteristic that is inherent?

Mass surveys of public opinion have not provided the kind of in-depth information that would allow researchers to probe these issues. Analysing focus group discussions in a set of Welsh and Scottish communities, Richard Haesly (2001) has found that individuals in both countries see an affinity between being Welsh or Scottish and being European, but they conceive this in contrasting ways. Whereas most Welsh conceive of European identity as a marker that differentiates them from the Eurosceptic English, European-minded Scots are drawn to the pluralistic, overarching (and therefore non-British) character of Europe.

Research on multiple identities debunks the notion that European identity is homogenous across Europe, and it poses the question of how

identities are shaped by discourse (Marcussen *et al*. 1999). How are identity frames constructed, and who does the construction? Whereas quantitative research highlights differences among individuals and suggests that identity is malleable, qualitative research emphasises national differences and describes how identities are refracted through durable patterns of discourse. Qualitative research has explored how history (and history lessons at school) and elite and media discourse reinforce particular national understandings (Diez Medrano 2003; Parsons 2003; Schmidt 2007). Such frames are durable and consequential. Puzzling over why some member states have consistently been more willing to cede sovereignty on common foreign and security policy than others, Thomas Risse (2005: 303–4) argues that this is best explained by

> the social constructions and collective understandings that come with federalism. . . . Countries whose elites and citizens are used to the notion that sovereignty can be divided and/or shared between various levels of governance, are also more prepared to include supranational levels of governance in these understandings. Once one is prepared to accept supranationalism over intergovernmentalism in general, this might also extend into questions of war and peace. Borrowing from neofunctionalism, one could call this ideational spill-over.

One of the strengths of the social identity approach is that it rejects the notion that one can read off a person's political views from her identity. The way identity bears on European integration depends on how it is framed, and it is framed in domestic political conflict.

Is European Integration a New Political Cleavage?

In the 1980s, researchers debated whether European union had shifted authority away from national states. When the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty made clear that this had happened, they began to ask questions about the effect of European union on democratic politics within and across member states. Was it still valid to conceive European integration as a broadly consensual elite project detached from domestic political competition?[17] Or had European integration begun to affect daily life in ways that made it salient and contestable for the public and for political parties? Once again, events intervened, this time in the form of referendums and a growing recognition that major European reforms were too important to be left to political elites.

When European integration moved into domestic arenas in the 1990s, comparativists moved into European integration. And they applied the stock of knowledge and techniques of comparative politics to the European level to shed light on conflict about Europe (Cowles *et al*. 2001; Hooghe and

Marks 1999; Imig and Tarrow 2001; Katz and Wessels 1999; van der Eijk and Franklin 1996).

Might European integration constitute a new political cleavage? In their classic analysis of the sources of party competition in Western Europe, Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 14ff) diagnose four key historical junctures over the past three centuries giving rise to a centre/periphery cleavage, a secular/religious cleavage, an urban/rural cleavage, and a class cleavage (see also Steenbergen and Marks 2002). In Lipset's and Rokkan's conception, a cleavage is not merely an ideological conflict, but is rooted in social structure and is expressed in organisations, such as churches or trade unions. So the hurdle is high, particularly in light of the apparent weakening of the connection between social structure and ideology in post-industrial societies, and a consequent increase in volatility of individual voting across elections. Past cleavages were rooted in massive social change which disrupted whole populations. The hurdle is high, but not, perhaps, impossibly high.

Two recent books boldly characterise European integration as a vital ingredient in a new cleavage pitting the winners of globalisation against the losers. Stefano Bartolini (2005) theorises that European integration reverses a centuries-long process of national boundary construction. Whereas the creation of national states replaced local or regional boundaries with national ones, European integration undermines national boundaries without replacing them with a meaningful European boundary.[18] The upshot is that individuals with mobile resources are no longer contained within national boundaries, but neither are they regulated within Europe as a whole. Individuals who lack the resources to take advantage of these new opportunities are stuck in weakened national states that are less able to provide economic security.

Hanspeter Kriesi, Edgar Grande and their colleagues write that, 'in a Rokkanean perspective, the contemporary process of "globalisation" or "denationalisation" can be conceived of as a new "critical juncture", which is likely to result in the formation of new structural cleavages, both within and between national contexts' (Kriesi *et al.* 2006: 921). Analysing public opinion and party positioning in six West European countries, they detect a new and powerful demarcation/integration dimension of conflict. European integration and globalisation have, they argue, given rise to three kinds of competition that are generating new sets of winners and losers: competition between sheltered and unsheltered economic sectors, cultural competition between natives and immigrants, and competition between defenders of national institutions and proponents of supranational governance. These conflicts cannot be absorbed in conventional left/right competition and are likely to provoke partisan realignment. Losers of globalisation (and European integration) flock to parties that propose to demarcate their society against external competition; winners support parties that advocate

further integration. If mainstream parties fail to adjust, new parties arise to exploit social discontent.

These analyses build on recent research on public opinion and party competition to theorise the transformative effect of European integration. Both stress that European integration raises cultural as well as economic issues; both emphasise that conflict over Europe escapes conventional economic left/right competition; and both anticipate partisan re-alignment and a rise in radical-right populism.[19]

This cleavage perspective is challenged by a technocratic conception of European integration. Giandomenico Majone (1994) has conceptualised the European Union as a regulatory regime in which decisions are taken by experts and supranational officials in non-majoritarian settings. Christian Joerges and Jürgen Neyer (1997) have emphasised the deliberative, problem-solving character of decision making in comitology. And Helen and William Wallace (2006) have identified five different decision modes in EU decision making – only two of which envisage a significant role for partisan actors.

How might one square this with the view that European integration has become enmeshed with domestic political conflict? One response is that technocratic bargaining applies to a limited, perhaps shrinking, subset of decisions (Peterson 2001). While referendums and elections rarely determine particular policy outcomes, they do appear to constrain public policy within a zone of acquiescence (Stimson 1999). Majone (2005: 220) observes that 60 years of functionalist spillover have hit a brick wall: 'Integration by stealth is no longer a viable strategy. The latest European elections have shown that the efficiency and legitimacy costs of the traditional approach have become so high that popular hostility to the very idea of integration is no longer a phenomenon limited to a few member states of the Union'.

Conclusion

When *West European Politics* was launched in 1978, few would have predicted a bright future for the European Economic Community, or for the study of EEC. Just nine of 198 articles in the first 20 issues of *WEP* were concerned primarily with the EEC. Today, the EU is regarded as worthy of attention on both substantive and theoretical grounds. By a conservative estimate, the 20 most recent issues of *WEP* contain at least 70 articles (of 191 total) that are primarily concerned with the EU.

This is a field in motion. In the late 1970s, the European Economic Community was conceived as a declining intergovernmental regime, insulated from national politics, and determined largely by national governments and specialised economic interests. The research that we have described in this essay suggests that the European Union has become a multilevel polity resulting from a two-sided dispersion of authority away from the central state; EU decision making has become politicised in ways that mobilise identity as well as economic interest; and European integration

is part of a broad process of national boundary deconstruction with profound consequences for the structure of political conflict.

We have observed that the European Union is a moving target. Theorising jurisdictional reform in Europe appears to be event prone – and therefore error prone. The twists and turns of the European Union have a habit of throwing up new and unexpected facts that wrong-foot extant theories. We write after a period of sustained politicisation, of public debates, mobilisation of populist parties, and referendums on Europe. But we doubt whether this can be extrapolated into the second and third decades of this century. European integration is self-reflexive in the sense that its causal processes are subject to purposeful manipulation. Rulers who have been burnt by referendums, or fear the heat of future referendums, want to change the process. Why not cut treaties up into smaller pieces that might escape broad public debate? Perhaps referendums could be avoided if European symbolism was downplayed? Why not shift decision making to agencies insulated from partisanship? The politicisation of European integration has intensified efforts to turn down the heat. Will these efforts be successful?

So we hear the owl of Minerva. Have we come to understand the wellsprings of European integration just as they are changing? European integration has a habit of confounding its students and its practitioners. This, at least, is one trend that we can boldly extrapolate into the remainder of this century.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. *West European Politics* was born when the European Community, the European Union's predecessor, turned 20. European integration dominated *WEP*'s inaugural issue. Ralf Dahrendorf wrote a lead article on European–American relations; Altiero Spinelli outlined the EC's institutions; Wyn Grant tackled British lobbying in the EC. But the journal's first issue was its high point for the study of the EC. Over the next two decades, few articles on EC topics were published in *WEP*, or elsewhere. Not until 1995 did European integration re-emerge in the journal, with a special issue, edited by Jack Hayward, on 'The Crisis of Representation in Europe'. In the past half-decade, European integration has figured in around 30 per cent of the articles appearing in *WEP*.

2. At this rate of change the EU will encompass 3,188,000,000 people by 2107, and will cover the globe by the end of the twenty-first century. The virtue of this extrapolation is that it is patently absurd, whereas efforts to extrapolate the causal underpinnings of European integration as a linear function of the past are merely implausible. The notion that national governments will control outcomes in the future because they (arguably) have in the past is an example of inappropriate extrapolation.

3. See also Caporaso and Keeler (1995), and Niedermayer and Sinnott (1995: 12), who state that 'integration theory suffered near fatal asphyxia in the Euro-stagnation of the late 1970s'. However, Markus Jachtenfuchs (2001) points out that research in the 1970s and

1980s was going strong in the subfields of public opinion, political parties and elections, and EU policy making.

4. 'Capable of power until it tried to wield it.'

5. '[T]he limits of the functional method: its very (if relative) success in the relatively painless area in which it works relatively well lifts the participants to the level of issues to which it does not apply well any more – like swimmers whose skill at moving quickly away from the shore suddenly brings them to the point where the waters are stormiest and deepest, at a time when fatigue is setting in, and none of the questions about the ultimate goal, direction, and length of swim has been answered' (Hoffmann 1966: 886).

6. In contrast to Hoffman, Moravcsik argued that the European policies of member states are driven by commercial objectives rather than geopolitics. Lieshout, Segers and van der Vleute (2004) provide a detailed examination of the evidence that Moravcsik presents.

7. Many scholars have labelled the European Union a federation or a federal system (e.g. Burgess 2000; Kelemen 2004; McKay 1999, Nicolaidis and Howse 2001).

8. Among the unresolved issues in the study of multilevel governance in Europe are the extent to which non-public actors are involved in authoritative decision making, the extent to which networking (rather than hierarchy) is present in relations among governmental actors and between governmental and non-governmental actors, and the extent to which authority across levels of governance is fragmented or mutually interlocking (Goetz, this issue; see also Bache and Flinders 2004).

9. European integration has encouraged the presumption that authority can be broken into discrete pieces which can be allocated across multiple levels. Europe has been built piecemeal, in a series of deals pitched at the level of individual policy issues treated as units of decision making to be allocated and reallocated at will.

10. Börzel codes formal Treaty rules to gauge the proportion of issues in a given policy field subject to EU legislation (breadth) and the extent to which decision making on an EU issue is supranational or intergovernmental (depth). She condenses her evaluations in a five-point scale for breadth, ranging from 1 (exclusive national competence for all issues in a policy area) to 5 (exclusive EU competence for all issues in a policy area), and a six-point scale for depth, ranging from 0 (no coordination at EU level) to 5 (supranational centralisation) (see Börzel 2005: 221–3). To facilitate comparison we have recalibrated these dimensions on a five-point scale.

11. Formal rules may not capture the practice of policy in fields such as agricultural policy and cohesion policy where, arguably, there has been some renationalisation.

12. The figures in the text are for countries that were, or became, members of the EU. They do not include referendums in which Norwegian voters decided not to join the European Union (1972 and 1994), on EEA membership in Liechtenstein (1992), and five referendums in Switzerland (1992 on EEA membership, 2001 on EU accession negotiations, 2004 on Schengen, 2005 on freedom of movement for persons, and 2006 on the Swiss contribution to EU cohesion policy). Of these eight referendums, four were no-votes (Norway: 1972 and 1994; Switzerland: 1992 and 2001).

13. We seem to be living in an age when governments are pressured to ask citizens to legitimate constitutional reform. This has been the case for EU constitutional reform, for democratic transition in former communist societies in Central and Eastern Europe, and for regional devolution (e.g. in France, Italy, Portugal, and Switzerland). In the United Kingdom, the cradle of parliamentary sovereignty, devolution for Scotland, Wales, Greater London, and the North-East has been submitted to referendum.

14. Neil Fligstein builds on Haas' and Deutsch's interest in identity as an outcome of European integration. In his forthcoming book, Fligstein (2008) argues that Europeanisation, which he defines as the process of building European-wide social arenas where people and organizations...routinely interact, has been limited to the 20 per cent of the population who have benefited from cross-border transactions: managers, professionals, and other highly educated people. This finding is consistent with recent research on support for European integration (McLaren 2006).

15. De Vries and Edwards also find that radical left-wing parties frame attitudes over Europe among individuals who feel economically insecure. This effect is less pronounced than that of populist right-wing parties for individuals with exclusive national identity.

16. Deutsch and Haas were ambivalent on the question of whether European and national identity were mutually exclusive. Haas did not exclude the possibility that multiple overlapping sources of governance at different territorial levels would generate corresponding 'tiered multiple loyalties' (Haas 1971: 31), and he argued that 'shifts in the focus of loyalty need not necessarily imply the immediate repudiation of the national state or government' (Haas 1958: 14). Much depends on the meaning of the word 'immediate', but it seems fair to say that Haas did not conceive of identity as zero-sum (Risse 2005).

17. Functionalists, like Mitrany (1948), and neofunctionalists, like Ernst Haas, believed that the economic forces they described would ultimately prevail over politics. 'The end result would be a community in which interest and activity are congruent and in which politics is replaced by problem-solving' (Caporaso 1972: 27). European integration was conceived as a project that was going to overcome cleavages – not create one. This view was rooted in a theory of modernisation (Kerr *et al.* 1960), which espoused 'that modern societies, including their politics, were shaped by technological imperatives that left little or no choice with respect to alternative modes of social organisation or, indeed, ways of life. In fact, faced with the overwhelming dictates imposed by the unrelenting progress of technology and industry, politics had mutated into rational adjustment of social practices and institutions to indisputable universal constraints, dealing with which was best left to technocratic experts trained in the parsimonious pursuit of functionalist best practice' (Streeck 2006: 3.) This bold (but time-limited) vision underpinned the construction of the postwar international order, motivated economic planning across Europe and beyond, and inspired proponents of European integration.

18. This is consistent with the observation of John Pinder, Fritz Scharpf, Wolfgang Streeck, and others, that European integration has been primarily about negative integration.

19. This line of theorising constitutes a break with functionalist and neofunctionalist thinking, as Philippe Schmitter (2005: 268) has stressed:

> [T]he real impediment to a revived neofunctionalist dynamic comes from something that Ernst Haas long anticipated, but which was so slow in coming to the European integration process. I have called it 'politicisation'. When citizens begin to pay attention to how the EU is affecting their daily lives, when political parties and large social movements begin to include 'Europe' in their platforms, and when politicians begin to realise that there are votes to be won or lost by addressing policy issues at the regional level, the entire low profile strategy becomes much less viable. Discrete regional officials and invisible interest representatives, in league with national civil servants, can no longer monopolise the decision-making process in Brussels (known in Euro-speak as 'comitology'). Integration starts to generate visible 'winners and losers' within member states, and loses its perception of being an 'all winners' game. Haas had an idiosyncratic term for this. He called it 'turbulence' and there is no question in my mind that the regional integration process in Europe has become 'turbulent' It will take a major revision of his theory before anyone can make sense of its changing dynamics.

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