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## History aplenty: but still too isolated

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## *History Aplenty – but still too isolated*

Like most political anniversaries, the fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaty of Rome, marked by multiple events in the spring of 2007, has rapidly faded from memory. In its brief moment of prominence, however, the occasion did serve to underline quite how long the European integration process has lasted. The EC/EU itself is more than fifty years old; some form of institutionalised level of cooperation at a European level has been in existence now for over six decades; and the idea of European unity and cooperation has a much longer history even than that. There is hence plenty for historians of European integration to get their teeth into, even making allowances for the normal reluctance of historians to study subjects which are too close to the present and for which access to archival documents is limited. A varied and wide ranging historiography has been the result. The first part of this chapter will briefly review what has been written by historians about the integration process; the second part will then assess the strengths and weaknesses of this work; and a third part will suggest a number of fields to which historians appear to be (or in some cases, ought to be) turning their attention.

### **From ideas to states and institutions and back again?**

The first focus of European integration history was the Second World War, or more precisely, the Europeanist ideas which emerged amongst resistance groups and governments-in-exile during the 1940-5 period. The work of Walter Lippens, in particular, identified those engaged in a battle against Nazism as the pioneers in that change of European attitudes towards nations and nationalism which would make possible postwar cooperation and integration. Nazism and Fascism had discredited nationalism; still more importantly, the experience of military defeat and/or occupation undergone by all European states except Britain and a handful of neutrals, demonstrated the inability of individual nation states, acting alone, to fulfil their most basic obligation of protecting their citizens. As a result, war-time opponents of Nazism came to a shared realisation that the international architecture of the postwar world could not be built upon

fully sovereign nation states alone. This readiness to transcend the nation state was a vital precondition for the success of postwar integration (Lipgens and Loth, 1977, Lipgens and Loth, 1988, Lipgens and Loth, 1991).

This thesis fitted well with the multiple memoirs of protagonists in the early integration process which had been published in the 1960s and early 1970s. (Hallstein, 1972, Monnet, 1978, Pineau and Rimbaud, 1991, Spaak, 1969, Adenauer, 1965, Adenauer, 1966, Adenauer, 1967, Adenauer, 1968) These too tended to present the European integration experiment as an attempt to break away from the nationalistic rivalries which had twice led Europe into war in the Twentieth Century. It also fitted well with the rhetoric of the European institutions which again liked to present themselves as being fundamentally about peace rather than merely economics. And it seemed to have the additional merit of explaining Britain's ambivalence towards European integration. The UK, it was argued, had not suffered defeat and occupation during the Second World War and had hence come out of the conflict with faith in its own institutions and in its own ability to steer an independent course in the world reinforced rather than weakened. Britain had thus looked askance at the ambitious supranational schemes espoused by its continental neighbours and rejected invitations to participate. This failure to join either the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) or the European Economic Community (EEC) from the outset – a choice later British governments appeared to regret - was, in Monnet's telling phrase, 'the price of victory' (Charlton, 1983).

Unfortunately, though, the identification of World War II resistance leaders as the originators of a major break with Europe's nationalist path did little actually to explain how the integration process began. The first effective move towards supranational integration had after all only been accomplished with the Schuman Plan in 1950, by which time the majority of those politicians who had emerged into prominence through their role in the wartime resistance movements had either lapsed back into obscurity or had been compelled to reinvent themselves in a decidedly more nationalistic mode so as to survive in the rough and tumble of peacetime politics. Neither chronology nor continuity of personnel thus suggested a strong link between wartime ideas and the actual

decisions which led to the ECSC or the EEC. Explaining the breakthroughs of 1950 or 1955 would need another type of explanation.

In the event, two rival schools emerged, one emphasizing the political motivations which underlay the establishment of the ECSC and the EEC, the other highlighting an economic chain of causality. The former was most closely associated with the two so-called *Power in Europe* volumes, which gathered contributions from an impressive array of the most prominent international historians at work in France, Germany, Italy and the UK (Becker and Knipping, 1986, Di Nolfo, 1992). These presented the key integration choices (or non-choices in the British case) of the four main Western European states as being a result of their altered power status within postwar international relations. The Treaty of Rome was thus, as Pierre Guillen put it, 'a cure for French impotence'. In similar fashion integration represented an opportunity for Germany and Italy to regain some of the status and international respectability forfeited by wartime defeat and, for the Federal Republic of Germany, a means to bind itself securely to the West in such a fashion that neither its allies nor subsequent German governments could cast doubt on its Western alignment (Küstners, 1982). For exponents of the second school by contrast, led by the economic historian Alan Milward, these same choices could be explained primarily in economic terms. The Schuman Plan thus constituted a French scheme designed to prevent its postwar economic recovery plan (masterminded by none other than Jean Monnet) from being thrown off course by the re-emergence of West Germany as a major steel producer (Milward, 1984). The EEC meanwhile began life as a Dutch device, intended to make irreversible the degree of trade liberalisation within Western Europe which had already occurred by the early 1950s and upon which small, advanced economies like that of the Netherlands had come to rely (Milward et al., 1992). The success of this Dutch idea was greatly facilitated, however, when it was seized upon by a small coterie of French leaders as a mechanism which could wean France off its traditional protectionism by offering the opportunity of controlled liberalisation within a small and potentially tightly regulated common market (Lynch, 1997).

Despite their very obvious differences, however, both schools shared two important assumptions. The first was that the key actors in the integration story were states and not the loose collection of Europeanist thinkers who had populated the pages of

Lipgens' account. It was through the actions of the governments of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Britain that the emergence of the ECSC and the EEC could best be explained. Second, both the contributors to the *Power in Europe* volumes and Milward and his entourage, de-emphasised the role of Europeanist idealism and instead stressed the vital importance of hard-headed calculation. Those national bureaucrats and politicians who made the key choices which initiated the integration process were not motivated by a desire to transcend the nation-state and nationalism, but instead to further national needs and ambitions (either economic or political) through a strategy based on far-reaching cooperation and the pooling of sovereignty. Milward's striking title, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* could in essence apply to either school.

This was an important breakthrough. Both the writings of Lipgens and the early memoir accounts had suggested a level of altruism and idealism in the early decisions about European integration which sat uncomfortably with the normal behaviour of national politicians. The new explanations by contrast, whether emphasising economic or political factors, were much more akin to the type of arguments that historians have employed to explain other international phenomena like the outbreak of the two World Wars, the decolonisation process, or the breakdown of East-West relations. The emphasis on state actions, furthermore, indicated that historians of the integration process could make use of the well-trodden research paths leading to the national archives of each of the states involved. A huge outpouring of literature ensued, much of it probing the actions and motivations of individual national governments or even of individual ministries or ministers within these governments.

A significant amount of this research took the form of contributions to edited volumes. The conference volume seemed a particularly appropriate vehicle in the field of European integration history, able to bring together studies of how each country took the decision for or against involvement in the nascent European institutions. Collaborative works of this sort also meant that a new field could make the most of the pre-existing reservoir of expertise on national political histories. The usual pattern of work was hence for the contributions on French policy to be written by well-established French historians, those on Germany to be penned by German specialists and those on the UK to be the work of leading British historians. The key series of volumes taking this approach re-

examined wartime cooperation, the Schuman Plan, the failed European Defence Community project, and the chain of events leading from the Messina conference of 1955 to the signature of the Rome Treaties themselves in 1957 (Poidevin, 1986a, Schwabe, 1988, Serra, 1989, Trausch, 1993). Another more thematically organised collection investigated the theme of European identity – although again with a lot of emphasis on national calculation and governmental action (Bossuat and Girault, 1994, Deighton, 1995, Fleury and Frank, 1997, Girault, 1994, Girault and Bossuat, 1993, Bitsch et al., 1998)

The tendency of European integration history writing to be organised around national studies was also visible in the first wave of monographs on the subject. One striking example was Gérard Bossuat's heavyweight study of France, the Marshall Plan and European integration (Bossuat, 1997). Others to follow a similar approach included Laschi's work on Italian agriculture and Europe, Rhenisch's investigation of German business and early European integration, and Hitchcock's account of early postwar French policy (Hitchcock, 1998, Rhenisch, 1999, Laschi, 2000). Thiemeyer, Noël and Weilemann did constitute valuable exceptions to this rule with their multinational focus on individual policy areas, but were not enough seriously to undermine the trend (Noël, 1988, Thiemeyer, 1999, Weilemann, 1983). Nor was this concentration on the policy of individual states confined to books about the six states which did participate in the first European institutions. On the contrary, a sizeable literature emerged both on the policies of the most prominent sceptic towards European integration – the United Kingdom – and on the actions of European unity's greatest external cheerleader, the United States. The former ranged from John Young's investigation of British policy towards European integration under the first postwar Labour government, via two detailed assessments of why Britain chose not to accept the Schuman Plan, to James Ellison's analysis of the free trade area scheme with which London had hoped to temper the harmful effects of its self-willed exclusion from the EEC (Dell, 1995, Ellison, 2000, Lord, 1996, Young, 1984). Mention also should be made of the three detailed monographs written on British policy towards the European Defence Community project and the question of German rearmament (Dockrill, 1991, Mawby, 1999, Ruane, 2000). The most thorough investigation of Washington's supportive role was probably that by Pascaline Winand

(Winand, 1993). But there were also useful studies by Lundestad, Killick, Giauque and Skogmar, as well as highly relevant sections in the biographical studies of McCloy, Dulles and Conant (Giauque, 2002, Hershberg, 1993, Immerman, 1990, Killick, 1997, Lundestad, 1998, Schwartz, 1991, Skogmar, 2004). All of these confirmed the degree of activism shown by US policy makers in encouraging Europe to unite.

The biographical approach was also effectively used on some of the European figures who had played leading roles in the early history of integration. Possibly the first major contribution in this respect was Raymond Poidevin's reconstruction of Robert Schuman's political life (Poidevin, 1986b). But this has been followed by equally accomplished studies of Adenauer, of De Gasperi, of Bidault, of Van Zeeland, of Spaak, of Eden, of Macmillan, of de Gaulle, of Pompidou and of Monnet himself (Duchêne and Monnet, 1994, Dujardin and Dumoulin, 1997, Dumoulin, 1999, Dutton, 1997, Horne, 1989, Lacouture, 1991, Roussel, 1994, Roussel, 1996, Roussel, 2002, Schwarz, 1986, Schwarz, 1991, Craveri, 2006, Bézias, 2006). Most of these sought to contextualise each politician's European decisions within the wider framework of their approach to foreign policy, thereby reinforcing the trend away from an emphasis on Europeanist ideology and towards integration as a means of advancing national interest. Schuman's decision-making in the run-up to the European plan that would bear his name, was not thus intrinsically different from that which led to his decisions in the fields of East-West relations or of France's bilateral relations with the United States (Poidevin, 1986b). Likewise the most recent and thorough study of De Gasperi rejects the portrayal of the Italian statesman by earlier biographers as a convinced federalist, and suggests instead that his enthusiasm for Italian involvement in the integration process was a much more complex and multi-causal affair (Craveri, 2006).

The fact that all of this literature was based primarily on archival materials from national collections also influenced the chronological focus of the research. Western governments tend to operate what is known as a 'thirty year rule' – a system under which previously secret government materials are made available to historians three decades after they were written. This means that the frontier of historical scholarship usually lies a little over thirty years before the present (allowing for the time needed to process and write up the archival findings). Thus the 1990s saw the beginning of substantial work on

the operation and initial development of the European Community in the 1960s. One focus for attention was the way in which the EEC's early success obliged those European countries which had originally chosen not to take part to reconsider their position. A succession of volumes thus investigated the Community's first encounters with the issue of enlargement in 1961-3 and again in 1967 (Griffiths and Ward, 1996, Kaiser, 1996, Milward, 2002, Parr, 2006, Pine, 2007, Schaad, 2000, Tratt, 1996, Wilkes, 1997, Daddow, 2002, Ludlow, 1997). The British case naturally loomed large in most of these books – decisions taken in London were after all the trigger for all three rounds of enlargement discussions in the 1961-1973 period - but many of the edited volumes also contained work looking at the manner in which the Danes, Irish and Norwegians applied alongside the British, as well as the positions adopted by countries like Sweden or Spain. Some of these titles also analysed the enlargement episode from the Community's point of view, demonstrating that while the terms 'widening' and 'deepening' only entered general usage after the Hague Summit of December 1969, the perceived tension between these two ambitions dated back to 1961 at least. Work on the actual first enlargement, by contrast, has been somewhat slow to emerge. The general overview by Kaiser and Elvert of how the Community's membership has grown did offer some discussion of the 1970-2 negotiations, as did the special issue of the *Journal of European Integration History* dedicated to enlargement (Kaiser and Elvert, 2004) (*JEIH* 11/2 (2005)). A further special issue of the same journal also provided valuable analysis of the Hague Summit which arguably cleared the way for EC expansion (*JEIH* 9/1 (2003)). Previously unknown details of the Heath-Pompidou discussions at the May 1971 summit were revealed in Roussel's biography of the French President (Roussel, 1994). And the official British history of the negotiations written up by Sir Con O'Neill was made public by Frank Cass (O'Neill, 2000). But none of the detailed doctorates devoted to the membership negotiations of the early 1970s which are underway or have recently been completed have yet been published.

Books on the Community's internal development also gradually proliferated. The best starting point for someone wanting to master this literature are the three edited volumes which resulted from conferences organised by the EU Liaison Committee of Historians (Loth, 2001, Milward and Deighton, 1999, Varsori, 2006). These

demonstrated the way in which a focus on the post-1958 period obliged authors to flank the traditional studies centring on individual member states (which naturally continued) with new research on both the Community institutions and the gradual emergence of common policies. Such institutional investigations followed a trail which had been successfully blazed by the well-produced official history of the High Authority of the ECSC (Spierenburg and Poidevin, 1993). It was followed by a series of other volumes exploring the early growth of the EC's institutional system (Bitsch et al., 1998, Heyen, 1992, Kaiser et al., 2009, Loth, 2005, Varsori, 2006). 2007 also saw the emergence of a second official history this time focusing on the European Commission between 1958 and 1972 (Dumoulin and Bitsch, 2007). This contained some genuinely useful new material, but did highlight the dangers of the Commission's decision not to accompany the writing of an official history with the type of systematic attempt to catalogue and organise its archives in the manner which had so strengthened the Poidevin and Spierenburg volume. Few of the historians involved in the new project appear to have found the oral testimonies of ageing former *fonctionnaires* a fully adequate replacement for the multiple gaps in the Commission's archival record.

Book length studies of the Community's policies have been slow to appear: the first monograph devoted to a common policy looks likely to be an in-depth investigation of the Common Agricultural Policy (Knudsen, 2009), but the succession of recent doctorates devoted to other Community policies, from the common commercial policy and the Kennedy Round of GATT negotiations, to competition policy, suggest the beginnings of an overdue and highly welcome trend. There had been several chapters and articles devoted to common policies (Kaiser et al., 2009, Ludlow, 2005, Varsori, 2006). Ludlow meanwhile made a first attempt to combine national, institutional and policy-oriented approaches so as to produce a comprehensive overview of the Community's evolution in the second half of the 1960s (Ludlow, 2006).

National studies have continued of course. Good examples include Henning Turk's investigation of the European policies of the Grand Coalition government in Germany between 1966 and 1969 and Antonio Varsori's multiple collections, both of individual chapters on different aspects of policy-making in Rome and of core documents relating to Italy's European policy (Ballini and Varsori, 2004, Türk, 2006, Varsori and

Romero, 2006). Gehler's work on Austria or Crespo MacLennan's on Spain also demonstrates that the path towards involvement with the EC of those states who had initially not been members remains a subject of ongoing investigation (Gehler, 2005, MacLennan, 2000). National chapters have gone on being a feature, moreover, of the first few edited volumes devoted to European integration in the 1970s (Knipping and Schönwald, 2004, Van der Harst, 2007). A healthy sub-genre of bilateral studies has also emerged, exploring the development of European cooperation through a focus on the relations between key European states. Predictably perhaps the relationship between France and Germany has been the most extensively investigated (Bitsch and Mestre, 2001, Lappenküper, 2001, Soutou, 1996), but there have also been detailed investigations of relations between Italy and France, Italy and Germany, Britain and Germany, Britain and France, Britain and the Netherlands, and Germany and the Netherlands (Bagnato, 1995, Decup, 1998, Schaad, 2000, Wielenga, 1997, Ashton and Hellema, 2001, Masala, 1997).

The last few years has also seen a significant re-emergence of interest in the ideas that underpinned European integration and the political movements within which they flourished. Christian Democracy, the political tradition out of which emerged the majority of those dubbed the 'founding fathers' is understandably the political tradition focused upon most (Gehler and Kaiser, 2004, Kaiser, 2007, Risso, 2007). But there has also been work both on the Socialists and Europe (Anaya, 2002) and upon those who rejected Europe. Robert Dewey's forthcoming study on British Euroscepticism in the 1960s will be of great significance in this respect (Dewey, 2009), but interesting work is also being done on the opposition of the Italian Communists to their country's participation in the building of Europe. Over two decades on from the decisive rejection by historians of Walter Lippens' earlier emphasis on ideas and idealism as the main motivating forces behind European integration, a new generation of specialists seems to be rediscovering that neither national nor institutional motivations alone are sufficient to explain the transformation of Europe since 1950. Instead the ideas, beliefs, fears and political milieux of those politicians and officials who took the crucial decisions is once again coming under deserved historical scrutiny.

### **Broad but too uncritical and isolated?**

The key strength of this historiography has been its breadth and variety. The topics covered range from the precise economic incentives of prominent European industrialists (Dumoulin, 1993), to the world view of military thinkers, passing en route the motivations of civil servants, politicians and intellectuals, and the anxieties and aspirations of those who chose to promote the process and those who chose to contest it. Geographically there has also been an encouraging diversity, both in terms of the countries written about and the national provenance of those doing the historical research. Only the countries which used to lie behind the Iron Curtain have been largely untouched by the spread of interest in European integration history – an understandable situation given that points of intersection between the national development of these countries and the integration process were few and far between prior to 1989. In the last five to ten years, there has also been a welcome loosening of the assumption that only scholars from a given country can study in depth the European policies of that country. A healthy number of the younger specialists are thus working on nations other than their own, not to mention those other researchers who have focused on institutions, policies or political parties instead of national governments. The days of the conference paper on France being reserved for the senior French historian present, or the young English researcher being automatically expected to do the ‘Britain and x’ chapter in a volume would appear to be numbered.

Also welcome has been the relatively high degree of institutionalisation which the field has undergone. This matters greatly in a subject area where so many depend upon receiving information about and assistance in using archival resources elsewhere in Europe. Similarly, the existence of established networks helps the flow of information about key new publications in the field and dissemination of information about conferences, work-shops or collaborative projects. The oldest of these networks is what is now called the EU Liaison Committee of Historians, which began life over twenty five years ago as a Commission funded initiative. Direct EC funding has long since dried up, but the group continues to meet regularly, to organise periodic conferences designed to showcase the latest research, and to publish the *Journal of European Integration History*. Another, larger and slightly looser network, with a membership which overlaps

substantially with that of the Liaison Committee, is the product of the large transnational project, originally set up by René Girault to explore European identity, and now directed by Robert Frank in its investigation of 'Les Espaces Européennes'. Professor Frank has also just put in place a further collaborative network linking specialists in the field across Europe for a project which will study the 'Dimensions and dynamics of European Integration'.

Alongside these networks of well-established specialists, there are also two highly active networks of younger researchers, both of which have emerged in the course of the last five years. One, originally based in Paris, but now with members across Europe and beyond is called RICHIE (Reseau International de Chercheurs de l'Histoire d'Intégration Européenne); the other, which emerged in Britain but has also spread substantially, is called HEIRS (History of European Integration Research Society). Both organise regular conferences and share an email circulation list which has become vital for spreading information about publications and events. This matters all the more in a field where researchers are widely spread geographically and often lack fellow specialists in their own universities. And like the existence of a specialist journal and the more senior networks, both RICHIE and HEIRS serve an important role in insulating emerging scholars against the current unfashionability of international and especially international political history within the wider historical profession. The numbers involved in each network and the geographic and methodological variety of their output also suggests a degree of intellectual vitality which is highly encouraging.

Writing the history of the integration process is not without its difficulties or controversies, however. As Mark Gilbert pointed out in a thoughtful recent piece in the *Journal of Common Market Studies*, writing about the EC can all too easily drift into patterns associated with Whig History – i.e. narrating the establishment of the Communities and then Union as if part of some progressive and possibly teleological tale the positive outcome and import of which is beyond doubt (Gilbert, 2008). This can involve the careless use of emotive language about 'advance', 'relaunch', and 'stagnation' all of which imply unquestioningly that the progress of integration is a good thing and its slowing or even reversal an unwelcome development. It can also over-emphasise the personal role of the founding fathers, and of Monnet in particular, in a

fashion which most branches of history rejected decades ago as outdated and hagiographic. And it can lead to a portrayal of those, like de Gaulle or Thatcher, who have harboured serious misgivings about the integration process, as blinkered reactionaries, standing in the way of enlightened advance.

Another set of potential difficulties are related to the way in which historical attention has for the most part focused on the making of institutions and policies and not upon their wider impact. This means that the main documentary sources have been the records of those governments and institutions that devised and pushed for further integration – i.e. precisely those who are likely to have regarded this ‘advance’ in the most positive light – whereas the views of those who may have been affected by the integration process, but who had no role in its genesis, have seldom been taken into account. Inevitably some of language and to a lesser extent some of the judgements reflecting this lopsided source base find their way into historians’ accounts. Similarly judgements about the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of an institution or policy have tended to be grounded upon the institution’s or policy’s repercussions within the integration process – on whether, for instance, it strengthened or weakened French governmental support for further integration, or helped create the momentum for some subsequent institutional ‘advance’ – rather than being based upon the repercussions of the institution or policy on the citizens of Europe or of the world beyond. This point was well illustrated at a recent historical conference on the origins and development of the common agricultural policy (CAP), where the papers emphasising the ‘success’ of the policy in the 1960s and 1970s as measured by its effect in galvanising the integration process, stood in stark contrast to other contributions which assessed the farm policy’s overall commercial impact or, still more strikingly, the deleterious effects which European agricultural protectionism had on the groundnut producers of Senegal. Needless to say the judgements and choice of language in the latter papers, were much more negative about this aspect of European integration, than papers in the first category had been.

Equally serious, to my mind, is the highly fragmented nature of most detailed work on European integration history. As is the case with a lot of contemporary history writing, those analysing the Community/Union’s past have often preferred to write densely footnoted and impeccably researched micro-studies of small and isolated

episodes in integration history rather than seeking to explain the broader pattern of development. Such studies are in part a function of the sheer volume of archival material that any one Twentieth Century national government, let alone multiple governments plus assorted Community institutions, produce in any given month or year. With so mountainous a pile of paper to analyse it is perhaps not surprising that most sensible historians choose to master a small portion, rather than generalise on the basis of much less in-depth research. This choice may also reflect the current unfashionability amongst historians of anything which might be denounced by postmodernist critics as a 'meta-narrative'. And at an even more prosaic level, the tendency to produce small miniatures rather than vast frescos may partly reflect a university culture which, all over Europe, becomes ever more obsessed with the regular production of detailed research articles and books, rather than tolerating the type of long gestation which a truly commanding overview of the integration process between 1947 and 1990 for example would require. An academic Michelangelo of the late 20<sup>th</sup> or early 21<sup>st</sup> century, might well find themselves obliged to churn out small scale portraits, rather than aspiring to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling!

The overall effect, however, is to produce a very patchy tableau of integration history, with some areas filled in with huge levels of detail, but other equally large portions lacking any real paint at all. The missing interconnections between the various points where details have been painted in and the vast areas where only the barest outline of events has been sketched out, rob the overall picture of any easily discernable shape or structure. As a result, the existing historical literature often fails to offer fully convincing answers to the questions that historians specialising in other fields or European specialists from other intellectual disciplines might be most expected to ask, such as 'did this all matter?', 'has integration changed Europe, for better or worse, in the way that its proponents (and opponents) have claimed?', or even 'why has a process begun over five decades ago been able to sustain itself, let alone expanding in both geographical scope and the range of policy areas involved?' Instead integration historians have been somewhat prone to expend most of their energies in detailed discussions of why exactly the Community evolved as it did over a brief five year period, without being able to communicate effectively why such minutiae matter.

The end result has been an unacceptable degree of isolation from both the discussions of other historians and the debates of European specialists looking at the EC/EU from within political science, international relations, economics, or law. As far as other historians are concerned, the problem is evident both from the missing integration dimension of many discussions of 20<sup>th</sup> century European history and from the tendency of integration historians to produce works which fail, and often barely even try, to link the integration story with the wider evolution of Europe in the post-1945 period. The first of these difficulties becomes apparent from even a brief look at recent survey texts. Some confine their discussion of the integration process entirely to its economic effects – and even at this level regard it as a secondary factor (James, 2003). Others, like Tony Judt's *Postwar* pay greater lip service to the idea that integration has somehow transformed Europe, but seem unable to provide much indication of how this transformation might actually have been wrought (Judt, 2007). In-depth discussion of how the progressive institutionalisation of interaction between European countries might have altered the manner in which they related to one another – not merely making intra-European conflict less likely, if not impossible, but fundamentally blurring the dividing line between domestic and foreign policy – is largely absent, as is any real debate about how the growth of a European level of governance may or may not have affected national politics. Nor are integration historians much better at making linkages between their own specialist concerns and the wider sweep of European history. Americanization, the cold war, the decolonization process, or the development across Western Europe of a highly distinctive pattern of welfare states all play a much less prominent role in many accounts of the EC's development than might be expected.

A similar lack of dialogue characterises the relationship between integration historians and their peers in other academic fields. A few brave political scientists have sought to engage with the Community's historical development and begin a conversation with those who work primarily on its past – Andrew Moravcsik and Craig Parsons would be the most obvious examples – although their results have sometimes been as eloquent about the mutual frustrations involved in such exchanges as about their potential (Moravcsik, 1998, Parsons, 2003). And a minority of integration historians have responded in kind, seeking to deploy a limited number of concepts and ideas borrowed

from those who work on the contemporary EU, to an analysis of its development over time (Kaiser et al., 2009). But such exceptions barely dent a generalised rule of non-communication. The ‘background’ chapters of many a political science text book on the EU thus remain a frightening redoubt of myths about the institutions’ past which most historians discredited years ago; the writings of those who dub themselves ‘historical institutionalists’ contain next to nothing that a historian would recognise as relating to his or her own work. Meanwhile much of the output of historians remains wide open to the charge of being conceptually underdeveloped and based on scant working knowledge of how the EU is viewed as functioning today.

The situation is even worse, furthermore, when it comes to engagement with the fields of law and economics. The former is particularly striking given the centrality of law to the whole integration process and the way in which academic specialists on European law were among the first university experts to begin serious study of what was happening in Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Brussels. Yet in the main historians neither read lawyers – past or present – nor lawyers read historians. The development of the European Court of Justice thus remains largely uncharted; the allusions to the landmarks of European jurisprudence are brief and sparing in most history texts; and the legal literature itself seems deeply uninterested in the way that the emergence of European law interacted with the parallel development of the Community/Union, still less the evolving Western European political and social context. Nor has the prominence of a number of economic historians in the historiography of European integration led to a much better situation with regard to interchange with economics. Milward’s writings for instance show a distinct preference to engage with economic theorising dating back to the 1950s and 1960s, rather than tangling with any economic debate of more recent vintage. His *Politics and Economics in the History of the European Union* refers to Viner, Meade, Lipsey and Sciatovsky – all of whom were writing when the integration process had barely begun - but contains only two footnotes which mention an economic text published since 1980 (Milward, 2005). Needless to say, such disdain is returned in more than equal measure by most economists who continue to write about the economics of European integration in a fashion which suggests hardly any interest in, or knowledge of, anything which occurred before 1985.

### **So where now?**

The easiest future trend of European integration historiography to predict is the gradual advance of that chronological barrier represented by the thirty year rule. The focus of much research has already shifted from the 1960s to the 1970s, and it is almost certain that over the next decade increasing forays will be made by historians forward into the largely unexplored territory of the 1980s. For integration specialists this means that a variety of new topics are likely to become the subject of enquiry. These range from the consequences of enlargement (both the first and the second), to the broadening of the EC's policy agenda in the 1970s and 1980s. Also predictable – indeed already underway to some extent – is a more general reconsideration of the 1970s, which are all too often still labelled as a stagnant decade, despite the series of vital institutional, policy, and legal changes that occurred. And also likely in the medium term is growing interest not merely in the historical roots of the 1980s *relance*, but also in the extent to which the Community/Union affected and was affected by the geopolitical transformation of the European continent in 1989-90. Hopefully this last will oblige integration historians to engage with the historiography of the cold war – and force cold war historians to acknowledge the importance of European integration – to a degree which has not occurred so far.

There is also some chance that the rigid adherence to the thirty year rule will begin to fade. This reflects the way in which several European countries and the Community institutions themselves have begun to alter their legislation on the release of confidential government documents. Both Britain and the EU institutions have thus adopted freedom of information legislation which ought to make possible targeted requests for the early release of documents; France has shifted from a thirty year rule to a twenty five year rule and also allows outgoing Presidents or their heirs to set independent rules for access to *Elysée* papers. Frustratingly this means that most of the papers of General de Gaulle are still locked up, but those of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and François Mitterrand have already been profitably raided by some historians. The Netherlands has long operated a twenty year rule. The United States, moreover, which has often been the EC/EU's key interlocutor, also releases many documents well before three decades have

elapsed. A resourceful researcher thus might well be able to range well into the 1980s and possibly beyond substantially earlier than would traditionally have been the case under the thirty year rule.

This ability to overcome the usual chronological restrictions on European integration history might become even more pronounced were historians to jettison some of their customary hesitations about the use of oral history. At present oral history within a Community context has tended to be restricted to interviewing eye-witnesses about events well over three decades old. Inevitably this has placed clear limits upon the reliability of such evidence – memories are seldom entirely accurate after such a long interval – as well as severely restricting the number of potential interviewees. But Pierre Gerbet demonstrated over fifty years ago, and Peter Ludlow has confirmed, both with his work on the making of the European Monetary System written in the late 1970s and early 1980s and with his much more recent writings on European Council meetings over the last five years, valuable results can be obtained by marrying the approach of a historian with off-the-record interviewing of protagonists more usually employed by journalists or political scientists (Gerbet, 1956, Ludlow, 1982, Ludlow, 2004). Such work could also benefit from the multiple EU related documents that are already within the public domain, and the many more which are likely to be shown unofficially to a determined but tactful investigator. A historian willing to break with convention and focus their attention on a much more recent period of EU history might therefore reap substantial rewards. This is all the more true given the widespread doubts that exist about the extent to which good archiving practices persist in national and Community civil services which now work primarily by email, telephone and informal face-to-face meetings. The treasure trove of official papers relating to the 1980s and beyond may, in other words, prove less valuable when it finally does emerge, than has been the case for the first three quarters of the twentieth century.

Another welcome change would be an increased level of investigation into the impact of integration. To a certain extent this is almost bound to happen as the chronological centre of gravity of historical research rolls forward. In the 1950s and 1960s, the period upon which the bulk of historical research has been done hitherto, the main protagonists of the integration story were elite decision-makers, able to act in a

manner which was relatively unencumbered by public opinion. Prior to 1968 there is little evidence of strong popular engagement either for or against European unity. From the 1970s onwards, however, the appearance of public referendums on European topics, the entry into the Community of a number of countries with a strong current of Euroscepticism, and the beginning of direct elections to the European Parliament, all mean that historians will be obliged to address public sentiment about European integration to much greater degree than before. Research into such topics from the 1970s onwards is likely to be further facilitated by the greater availability of opinion poll data. The rediscovery of pro and anti-European ideas as legitimate subjects for historical research and the renewed attention given to the role of political parties in mobilising for and against European integration, both noted above, are also likely to encourage movement in the same direction. But even in such favourable circumstances, a conscious effort will need to be made to flank the current top-down emphasis of most historical research, with a greater degree of investigation into popular attitudes towards Europe and the views and opinions of those groups directly affected by the integration process but largely uninvolved in shaping its course. Farmers, fishermen, steel workers, scientists receiving EUREKA and other funding from the early 1980s onwards, the first generation of ERASMUS students, as well as those European business leaders pressing for a truly uniform European market prior to 1985, would all be worthy subjects of detailed studies into how European policy was received rather than conceived.

Another valuable area of future enquiry would be the way in which the European institutions functioned. It has already become clear from research into the 1960s, that patterns of behaviour in Brussels fairly quickly diverged from the expectations of those who had initiated the integration process. Equally clearly this was not simply – or even mainly – due to de Gaulle. But we still know much too little about how the early institutions interacted with one another, about who populated Community Brussels, about the interchange between the European level of governance and the national, and about the way in which the second generation of Community policies – early monetary initiatives, the initial stirrings of regional policy etc – were affected by the successes and shortcomings of the first. Did the Community back away from the type of automatic spending commitments involved in the CAP, as farm expenditure mushroomed out of

control in the 1970s and 1980s? What was the impact upon the workings of the whole institutional system of the European Council's creation in 1974? How did the arrival of cohorts of British, Danish and Irish Eurocrats alter the way Brussels operated? Or was the pioneer spirit already ebbing away sometime before the newcomers took up their new posts in the enlarged Community? These and many other questions need to be investigated by the next generation of historians to pore over the records of the Brussels institutions and the multiple national ministries involved in playing the European game.

Even more fundamentally, however, some of those interested in European integration history need to start debating the overall importance and impact of the integration process in a way which might capture the interest both of other historians and of political scientists, lawyers and economists. At one level this is likely to involve beginning to answer the currently unaddressed questions about how much European integration has contributed to Europe's overall development since World War II. Has it really been the key factor in maintaining peace in what had been a highly volatile continent? Or did this have much more to do with NATO, the American military presence and the over-arching cold war framework? How much, if at all, has economic integration shaped the continent's economic fortunes in the course of the fifty plus years since 1958? How has institutionalised cooperation in Brussels affected the course of party politics within each member state, the range of policy options available to national leaders, and the trends of public opinion across Europe? Has European integration contributed to those elements of social convergence across Europe identified by social historians like Hartmut Kaeble (Kaeble, 2007)? Or was such convergence instead a precondition without which integration could not have worked? And if the impact of European integration on the course of national politics has only been gradual and has become of major significance only in its latter stages, when and why did a process which began so long ago begin to have an important effect upon national politics? Beginning to answer such queries, would turn integration history into a field which other historians of Europe since 1945 could not afford to ignore, even if they were intent upon suggesting a rather different assessment of its overall importance.

Likewise integration history ought to become a little more self-assertive in its interaction with other aspects of European studies, broadly defined. To a limited extent

this may involve borrowing or importing concepts and vocabulary developed by political scientists, sociologists, economists or legal experts who also work on the EU. More crucial, however, is a readiness to point out when historical research suggests that ideas developed to interpret the current integration process do not fit with its past and may hence be debatable analyses of its present. Integration historians do need to read a bit more of what other European specialists write - not primarily so that they can parrot the rival terminology, but instead so that they can deploy their expertise in order to challenge some of the rival fields' assumptions. Such challenges may well of course be contested. But at very least contestation should lead to a rather more intensive and extensive dialogue across disciplinary boundaries than tends to occur at present. And dialogue between different approaches is likely to become even more feasible were some historians at least to swallow their qualms about writing about periods of history rather more recent than three decades ago.

## **Conclusion**

Overall then, integration history, while not without achievements, has a great deal still to discover. It has already put forward quite an extensive set of competing, but ultimately complementary, explanations as to why the process got underway. It has also gone a long way in adding both complexity and depth to the rather simplistic account of the Community's early decades of operation promulgated by the memoirs and public pronouncements of those who took part. In addition it has devised both the structures and the patterns of behaviour to ensure a lively ongoing debate about the details the integration process in the 1960s, increasingly the 1970s, and before too long the 1980s. But its most urgent challenge is to break out of its largely self-imposed isolation and establish channels of communication both with the wider community of historians working on the making of the contemporary world and with the multiple other specialists from other academic disciplines who take part in the never-ending attempt to de-mystify and explain the EU. No individual of fifty plus could be sensibly analysed or assessed without extensive reference to his or her past; likewise, no political system which has been in constant evolution for over five decades can seriously be dissected and

understood without a much greater contribution from those who specialise in understanding its past.

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