

Introduction

History and theory

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History and theory of European integration have for a long time been widely diverging and sometimes conflicting areas of study. Whereas political scientists tended to treat historical accounts primarily as useful pieces of evidence for their predetermined conceptual frameworks, historians focused their work on narrowly describing and analysing what they discovered in archival sources and primary documents, without asking themselves the broader and more fundamental questions. Simply said, where historians addressed the “what” of Europe’s post-war development, theorists mainly concentrated on “how” and “why” Europe evolved as it did. As a consequence, historians generally proved reluctant to involve themselves in the theoretical debate on European integration. From the late 1950s till the early 1970s, IR theory was dominated by the so-called neofunctionalist school of thought, which was not only a-historical but also a-European, since dominated by American political scientists like Ernst Haas, Leon Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold.¹ Neofunctionalists studied European integration as a process, stimulated by various forms of spillover pressures and cultivated by an activist European Commission. They predicted an evolutionary development towards a supranational Europe, in which the nation-state would gradually grow obsolete. Neofunctionalist ambitions fitted in the “grand theory” way of thinking which prevailed in US academic circles in those days. In comparison, historians were much less “daring” in their way of approaching Europe: most of the historical work at the time was written from either a national perspective (based on domestic archival research) or from a classical federalist/functionalist point of view, with a prominent role attributed to the WW II resistance movement² and the “great men who created Europe” (Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, etc.).³ Likewise, in the 1970s, the broader reflection on the transition from supranationalism to intergovernmentalism was initiated by political scientists (Stanley Hoffmann in particular, followed later by Andrew Moravcsik). The historical work done in this period was empirical and often parochial.

It was not before the mid-1980s that this changed in a rather sudden and unexpected manner. In 1985, the European University Institute in Florence organised a debate on the current state of European integration studies between the

1. See e.g. O. WAEVER, *The Sociology of a not so International Discipline: American and European Developments*, in: *International Relations, International Organization*, 4(1998), pp.687-727.

2. See e.g. W. LIPGENS, *Europa-Föderationspläne der Widerstandsbewegungen, 1940-1945: eine Dokumentation*, Oldenbourg Verlag, München, 1968.

3. See e.g. R. MAYNE, *The Recovery of Europe. From Devastation to Unity*, Harper and Row, New York, 1970; A.J. ZURCHER, *The Struggle to Unite Europe 1940-1958*, New York University Press, New York, 1958.

American political scientist Philippe Schmitter (a former student of Ernst Haas) and the British economic historian Alan Milward. At this occasion, the renowned Schmitter defended the legacy of neofunctionalism⁴, albeit that Haas' original concepts had been amended substantially and - as often in these cases - had taken a form of sophistication close to sheer non-intelligibility. It was during this debate that Milward expounded his conceptual ideas about the start of post-war integration, founded on his seminal work "The Reconstruction of Western Europe" which was published shortly before the event.⁵ For Milward, Europe was neither the product of the "great men" nor the indispensable result of spillover pressures by supranational organisations and transnational lobbies aiming at an erosion of the nation-state. Basing his argument on the empirical evidence traced in the government archives of the member states and the United States, he argued that there could be no talk of an integration logic towards a supranational Europe - on the contrary, the few results booked in the area were the outcome of laborious negotiations between governments and bureaucracies, emphatically clinging to their sovereignty and defending (perceived) national interests. Only when they were able to find a lowest common denominator of their individual preferences - mostly on economic issues - supranational solutions were within reach. Most of the times such a denominator proved unavailable. For Milward, European integration was not a zero-sum game, as it had been for traditional intergovernmentalists: national states did not necessarily "lose" what they delegated to the supranational level. Due to their involvement in the European Community, they were in the position to perform beneficial tasks for their citizens, most notably in the area of economic and social welfare, which they probably would not have been able to deliver in the absence of integration. As a result, Europe contributed to an increase of legitimacy of governmental elites whose motivation for integration was the preservation of executive capacity at the national level, not its erosion. In other words: Europe helped to "rescue" the nation-state.⁶

Enunciating his views, Milward made huge impression on his Florentine audience in the 1980s and, later on, on many audiences and readers of his work. To his widespread reputation of economic historian was added a similar reputation as a theorist of European integration. In fact, Milward was among the very few historians who managed to gain an established position in the theoretical debate on Europe.⁷

4. Which he continues to do up to the present, see e.g. P.C. SCHMITTER, "Neo-Neofunctionalism", in: A. WIENER, T. DIEZ (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, pp.45-73

5. A.S. MILWARD, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-1952*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1984.

6. A.S. MILWARD, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, Routledge, London, 1992; another highly accessible introduction to Milward's theoretical thinking is: A.S. MILWARD c.s., *The Frontier of National Sovereignty. History and Theory, 1945-1992*, Routledge, London, 1994, pp.1-32.

7. See e.g. B. ROSAMOND, *Theories of European Integration*, Macmillan, Hounds mills, 2000, pp.22-23 and 138-140.

This volume of the *Journal of European Integration History* attempts to deepen the link between history and theory, by presenting contributions from both established and younger historians. It is a very welcome development that the latter group shows a determined interest in applying theoretical concepts to their empirical work, an impression which is confirmed by recent activities of the PhD networks RICHIE and HEIRS. The young historians also tend to approach European integration research from a transnational perspective, no longer making their work strictly dependent on the accessibility of archival documents in the place of residence. In this volume, the relationship history-theory is studied from three different angles, which all contribute to a deeper understanding of the growing symbiosis between the two areas of study:

- Explaining historical developments with concepts derived from European integration theory. Wolfram Kaiser and Brigitte Leucht analyse the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community by making use of a policy (or political) network approach. They argue that the thus-far prevailing historiographical focus on national governments and administrations precludes an adequate explanation of the first steps towards supranational integration. The authors show that transnational (Christian-democratic and transatlantic) networks were crucial in making the Schuman Plan (May 1950) and its implementation a reality. Ann-Christina Lauring Knudsen and Morten Rasmussen address the period of the 1960s and posit that committee structures (most notably COREPER and the Special Committee for Agriculture) were instrumental in creating a new political system in Europe, dominated by processes of socialisation among officials and administrations, both at the national and supranational level. They observe a development of “creeping” integration, since such a far-going political-administrative merger at the European level had not been anticipated at the moment of drafting the EEC Treaty. Laurent Warlouzet has investigated internal divisions within the European Commission in the mid-1960s, by using neofunctionalist and federalist frameworks of analysis. He compares the conflicting views of Commission president Walter Hallstein and the French commissioner Robert Marjolin: while the former launched a bold federalist offensive in 1964-1965 (aiming at a new institutional “accord”), the latter based his European strategy on (neofunctionalist) economic and technocratic arguments. Warlouzet’s analysis is innovative, especially seen in the light of traditional neofunctionalist preferences attributed to Hallstein, who made no secret of being fascinated by the theoretical concepts of thinkers like Lindberg and Scheingold.⁸
- Analysing political science work on Europe from the viewpoint of an historian. Melissa Pine has made thorough study of the European publications of the - renowned but controversial - liberal intergovernmentalist Andrew Moravcsik. She thereby adds an original historical perspective to an earlier critical

8. ee e.g. J.P.J. WHITE, *Theory Guiding Practice: the Neofunctionalists and the Hallstein EEC Commission*, in: *Journal of European Integration History*, 1(2003), pp.111-132.

political-scientist assessment of Moravcsik's work in the *Journal of Cold War Studies* (2004).⁹ Pine concludes that, although Moravcsik's work is highly problematic for historians working in European integration (mainly because of the latter's impressionistic use of primary source material), it is also a catalyst for further empirical research and for a more explicit assessment of scholarly practice in history.

- (Critically) reviewing the position of historians in the theoretical debate on post-war European integration. Wilfried Loth analyses the conceptual views held by Walter Lipgens and Alan Milward and arrives to the conclusion that neither of the two has been entirely convincing in explaining the start and development of postwar Europe. To remedy this, Loth presents a model of "four driving forces" behind European integration: preserving peace among sovereign states, offering a solution for the German question, meeting the requirements of economic productivity, and self-assertion in the face of new world powers. Making use of these driving forces, one can explain both the timing of new integration initiatives, as well as the choice for a specific type of integration at a specific moment. John Gillingham claims that the field of European integration history suffers from a serious theoretical vacuum. In his view, parochialism still pervades the historical literature. Gillingham blames historians for a lack of objectivity: they tend to stick too close to their sources (including financial ones), while - instead - they should learn to examine their subject more critically. If not, historians will never be able to explain how and why the European integration project currently got itself into trouble, as argues Gillingham.

We started this introduction by illuminating Alan Milward's merits for the development of historical theory on Europe. These merits are still irrefutable, but fortunately this volume also gives ample evidence of a continuing evolution of conceptual analytical thinking on European integration. The historical-theoretical debate on Europe is in a constant flux, which is how it ought to be in a proper academic environment. Another outcome of this volume is the salutary effect of applying theory to historical empirical work. Theory generally teaches us to pose the right questions and often helps us to reinforce the analytical value of academic research. Historians should continue to do what they are good at, but openness towards other disciplines will lead to a better understanding of what the intricate field of European integration is all about.

9. R.H. LIESHOUT, M.L.L. SEGERS, A. Van der VLEUTEN, *De Gaulle, Moravcsik and the Choice for Europe: Soft Sources, Weak Evidence?*, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4(2004). Despite urgent requests on the part of the JCWS editorial board, Moravcsik so far has refrained from defending himself against the vehement criticism on his work by the three authors.

Explaining European Integration: The contribution from Historians

Wilfried LOTH

Normally historians are not expected to develop theories. Their purview is the facts, the details, the particular course of events, the many deviations from the norm. Detractors assert that historians merely have to go into the archives in order to find evidence for the theories of political scientists; this, so they claim, is the appropriate division of labour between the disciplines. If one wants to put it less problematically, one could say that historians are to pursue detailed case studies and upon this foundation the actual social scientists then erect their explanatory theories.¹ Making use of available information on developments and decision-making processes, historians take upon themselves the review of theories, and it is one of the secret pleasures of their profession to cause mighty theoretical edifices to tumble in the face of incontrovertible facts.

At the same time, there are also productive links between historians and theory discussions in a double sense: on the one hand, historians continually work with theories, attempting to search among the full range of facts for the essential ones and establish links between them. The selection of what is essential to consider as well as the reconstruction of links depend on theoretical presuppositions – independently of whether the historian is aware of them or not. Thus, even those historians who are outspokenly opposed to theory in their works are themselves influenced by theory.² Even more important is the fact that the results reached by historians not only disprove theoretical presuppositions but also offer explanations themselves. These explanations focus above all on the individual case being investigated but they can also be generalized, approaching theoretical pronouncements more closely as the subject of the investigation is more fully grasped. The willingness to undertake such comprehensive presentations varies among historians, as does the ability to do so successfully. The tendency of historians' work is toward comprehensive pronouncements, however.³

1. This is the tendency of the contributions in P.G. LAUREN (ed.), *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, Free Press, New York, 1979; and M.G. FRY, *History and International Studies*, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Washington, DC, 1987. For an organized dialogue between diplomatic historians and political scientists, see C. ELMAN, M.F. ELMAN, *Diplomatic History and International Relations Theory. Respecting Difference and Crossing Boundaries*, in: *International Security*, 1 (Summer 1997), pp.5-21; as well as the subsequent contributions to the debate by J.S. LEVY, St.H. HABER, D.M. KENNEDY, St.D. KRASNER, A.L. GEORGE, Ed. INGRAM, P.W. SCHROEDER, and J.L. GADDIS, pp.22-85.
2. Cf. the articles in: J. KOCKA, Th. NIPPERDEY (eds.), *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte*, Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, München, 1979.
3. The history of European integration can be regarded as a part of the field of "international history." On that field, cf. W. LOTH, J. OSTERHAMMEL (eds.), *Internationale Geschichte. Themen - Ergebnisse - Aussichten*, Oldenbourg, München, 2000.