

circumscribed, blaming its socioeconomic problems on ECLAC's policy prescriptions seems even less tenable. After all, this was a region that for most of the 1990s was firmly in the neoliberal camp. More importantly, even to the extent that leftist presidents (such as Lula in Brazil) came to power, their ability to change the status quo was fairly limited. While the author is keen to blame these failures on the intellectual retreats of neostructuralism, his analysis does not sufficiently address the obvious alternative explanation—that they were pragmatic responses to the domestic and international constraints facing Latin American reformers. Therefore, the reader is left with a lot of important unanswered questions about the politics underlying the ideological retreat of neostructuralism, both at ECLAC—the intellectual cradle of classical structuralism—and among Latin American policymakers.

As a result, it is unclear that *Latin American Neo-Structuralism* succeeds in its stated objective to challenge the neostructuralist claim of being the only viable and credible alternative to neoliberalism in present historical circumstances. While the analysis provides a number of useful insights into the shortcomings of neostructuralism, it is less persuasive in providing a viable alternative, given that neither the revival of classical structuralist policies nor the examples of Bolivia and Venezuela, which Leiva describes as two “theoretically informed and politically vibrant . . . status quo-transforming neodevelopmentalist strategies” provide a sufficiently coherent blueprint for such an alternative developmental paradigm (p. 225). That said, the issues raised by the book are likely to be increasingly important as both Latin American politicians and international elites continue to wrestle with the deficiencies of the neoliberal model.

**The European Union and the Destruction of the Rhineland Frontier.** By Michael Loriaux. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 350p. \$34.99.  
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— Andrew Moravcsik, *Princeton University*

In this book, Michael Loriaux seeks to show the importance of changing the “myths” concerning the Rhine border in Franco-German geopolitics and foreign policy over the past 2000 years. This smart, sophisticated book seeks to revise the conventional wisdom on a big question. It contains much to admire.

One has to appreciate, first, its scope. Loriaux reviews the history of the Rhineland border from the Roman Empire to contemporary European integration, commands the intricacies of the French and German languages, and consults a wide range of literatures, from critical legal studies to modern diplomatic history to abstruse continental discourse philosophy. One admires, second, his bold effort to advance an unfashionable argument with regard to geopolitical discourse in recent European regional politics. His basic claim is that the “European Union is

about deconstructing a discursively constructed frontier that bisects Europe's most vital regional economy”; that is, federalist ideals were deliberately used to eliminate the tendency for Franco-German conflict. Historians argued thus 30 years ago, but few do so these days; it is bold to attempt a resurrection. One welcomes, finally, the author's gut feeling for historical irony and discontinuity—a quality in short supply among contemporary political scientists. He seeks to show that borders are the result of essentially arbitrary historical claims and counterclaims, and discursive formulations and reformulations. One example: Loriaux shows how U.S. behavior with regard to the League of Nations was contradictory, in that it simultaneously advanced and undermined the role of nations in international order in unexpected ways.

Yet Loriaux is often coy and sometimes downright vague about the precise nature of the central argument. The core issue here, as in so many recent analyses about the role of ideas in international politics, is the essential status of causality. Is this a book of engaged political philosophy that deliberately eschews rigorous causal claims, or is it a work of historical social science that provides empirical support for a concrete interpretation of the EU's origins? Either way, there is some reason for skepticism.

On the first view, the central purpose of the book is to interrogate myths of self and other in EU discourse, which he believes obscure the European Union's original purpose (p. 2, 11–15). Early on, Loriaux denies that his purpose is to ascertain causality. Instead, it is to direct “attention to the European Union's original geopolitical purposes” in order to “make available to us a more legitimating and mobilizing representation of the European project” (p. 11). Talking up geopolitical anxieties about the Rhineland as a motivation for the EU, he states later, “frees the imagination from totalizing discourses of identity” and permits us to better imagine a future “plurilingual” Europe, thus potentially reassuring unsettled Europeans today, increasing the EU's legitimacy.

If this book is a policy intervention in this sense, is there any reason to think it would work? To convince the reader, one might have expected—at a minimum—a detailed analysis of the sources of current public and elite views in the EU. Absent such an analysis, many controversial claims go unsupported. For example, Loriaux appears to believe that the EU's geopolitical origins are underappreciated, yet in fact this is true only among scholars. Among elites, the myth of the importance of avoiding a Franco-German conflict as an early motivation continues to dominate political rhetoric and popular histories of the EU. Moreover, if the relevance of the Franco-German security problem has declined, thus contributing (so goes the conventional wisdom) to the current “legitimacy crisis,” what difference will a scholarly book make?

Loriaux's response to such concerns—his sociology of the reception of his own work as policy writing—is

confusing. He appears to believe that the key is its contribution to our (Derridian) ability to “free ourselves” from myth by interrogating our own history. Yet why should Europeans be soothed and reassured to know that the half-century project that they have inherited was the result of (what Loriaux believes to be) a set of happenstance, unplanned, chance events designed to deal with a problem that has now vanished? He suggests, in passing, that it might convince them they are not subject to a unified English-speaking globalization conspiracy. A whole-hearted embrace of existential uncertainty and anti-Anglo-Saxon rhetoric might appeal to some French *intellos*, but it seems unlikely to turn most Europeans toward Brussels.

Still, despite his denials, I believe that Loriaux’s book is—and thus must be judged as—a conventional work of social scientific history. There is little reason for scholarly readers to accept that the EU was *really* about Franco-German pacification unless it is empirically valid. The author seems to accept this. The book’s primary purpose, on this reading, is to identify the ideological causes (in Loriaux’s words, the “original purpose” or “object”) of European integration, arguing that it was, at least in large part, deliberately to “deconstruct” the “Rhineland frontier.” He insists on its continued “centrality” in today’s Europe of 27 nations. Elsewhere he stresses “the importance of geopolitical urgency in the formation of the EU, and traces the reemergence of Carolingian discourse to that urgency”—a view he contrasts to economic interpretations (pp. 298–299). The analysis makes sense only if the book’s central purpose is to test theories and interpretations of the past.

This opens the analysis to some serious concerns, however. First, Loriaux tests no precise theory of discourse—where it comes from, when and how it affects policy—which makes it unclear what evidence would support his ideological claims and what evidence does not. Since the evidence is invariably mixed, with Western leaders sometimes appearing to pursue policies inspired by “Carolingian” (that is, federalist) discourse and sometimes appearing to override such policies in favor of economic or classic realpolitik policies, it is *in principle* impossible without such a theory to interpret the case material. So, for example, when we read that postwar Europeans sought to create an independent Rhineland to soak it for reparations, and Americans then blocked such efforts in order to create a strong anti-Soviet Germany, it is unclear what we are meant to conclude. Is this an example of “non-Carolingian” geopolitical ideology? Is it a disconfirming case? Is it a “predictable exception”? Without a theory, it is impossible to know.

Second, the book provides relatively little evidence. The analysis might have been more persuasive if it had focused intensively on critical events in the 1950s and 1960s, rather than touching lightly across 2000 years of history. Loriaux offers some interesting conjectures about the possible role of ideas, but he cannot fully engage, let alone overturn, an extensive secondary literature that places primary empha-

sis on economic factors. For example, Loriaux shows that the French government used the Coal and Steel Community to make the establishment of the Bundesrepublik palatable, but does not—as he himself admits—weigh the importance of this factor against economic concerns. Instead, in this case, as in discussing the European Economic Community, he offers a handful of citations from a few selectively sympathetic scholars who are either essentially nonempirical, such as Chris Shore, or several generations behind the research frontier, such as Walter Lippens. At times, as with the Common Agricultural Policy, a lynchpin of the economic argument, he seems simply to concede the case to nonideological causes. As Ian Lustick has argued, this is not acceptable social scientific sampling practice, and it is unclear why we should reject existing interpretations on this basis.

Third, to defeat more empirically minded analysts, Loriaux ultimately takes refuge in methodology, a decidedly odd choice for someone who sometimes denies that we should be engaged in causal inquiry at all. In an illuminating passage near the end of his discussion of the origins of the EU, for example, he admits that primary sources suggest that economic factors have been more salient in the conduct of EU negotiations than the ideological factors he seeks to stress. His response is to reject primary-source analysis as “not foundational.” Why? “There is no reason to assume that negotiations about economic cooperation should address anything besides issues of economic cooperation,” and thus they of course will fail to pick up the “chronic *anxieties*” (italics in the original) of “Greater Rhineland geopolitics” . . . Archives are not foundational. The hermeneutic circle is inescapable,” (p. 298). Loriaux is making a philosophical argument when he should be making an evidential one—and the argument he makes is simply incorrect. Why? Because, if he had checked the evidence, or secondary authors like Milward, he would see that national leaders like de Gaulle could and did confidentially discuss their underlying geopolitical objectives in discussions surrounding EU negotiations when they thought they were important. Loriaux is a good enough historian to know such evidence exist: Why did he choose to ignore it? Fair enough, but then, at the very least, he should suggest an alternative. If not archives, what sources would constitute an unbiased sampling procedure? In the absence of any proposed criteria, there is, again, no reason to revise the existing consensus—particularly when, as we have seen Loriaux’s own data selection procedures so manifestly violate existing maxims of qualitative methods.

Loriaux’s previous work has demonstrated a consistent ability to pen contemporary history that is both insightful and well documented. In this case, despite (or perhaps because of) the provocative and daring nature of the topic and thesis, *The European Union and the Destruction of the Rhineland Frontier* ultimately fails to persuade in the same way.