

Creating something unique

What exactly has been going on in the European Union? The onward march of the European project, from EEC to EC to EU, with its seemingly incessant deepening and widening, poses some peculiar intellectual-cum-political problems. The EU does not fit into any of the reach-me-down constitutional categories into which it is commonly forced. If it is a mere association of sovereign states, jealous of their power, then how has it come to regulate such an astonishing range of activities that were hitherto firmly within the prerogative of national governments? Yet if it is a federal superpower in the making, how does one explain not only the obstinate survival of sovereign states within the Union, but also the curious fact that defence is still largely the preserve of another body with different membership (NATO), while human rights are the preserve of yet another body (the European Court of Human Rights) not directly connected with the EU?

The title of *The Choice for Europe* could be mistaken as promising yet another prescriptive work on the choices Europe faces. In fact, this is a purely retrospective study (and all the better for it), examining why sovereign governments in Europe have repeatedly chosen to co-ordinate their core economic policies and surrender sovereign prerogatives within an international institution. Andrew Moravcsik, who is a Professor of Government at Harvard, sets out to "test alternative explanations of these decisions and, in so doing, to advance a revisionist explanation of my own". Betraying his calling as a political scientist rather than historian, he asserts "the generalizability of the conclusions across EC history and, ultimately, beyond Europe".

Moravcsik is sceptical of the theory commonly advanced to explain Europe's unique degree of supranationalism, namely the vivid memories of the failure of the European states system in two World Wars, and the desire to create structures to prevent a repetition. He is also sceptical about grand theories, for example about the alleged dynamics of the integration process. He looks closely at five major treaty-amending turning points in the history of the EC, from the negotiation of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 to the Maastricht Treaty of 1991. In each case, he considers carefully the pressures in the major states involved which supported further moves towards integration, as well as the forces which opposed such moves. He concludes judiciously: "European integration has not been a pre-ordained movement toward federal union but a series of pragmatic bargains among national governments based on concrete national interests, relative power, and carefully calculated transfers of sovereignty." In particular, Moravcsik stresses the importance of economic considerations and pressures from business as contributors to the onward movement of the European project. He also highlights the interesting proposition that governments adopted binding European agreements and procedures because they saw this as an effective way of "locking in" decisions on which, at some later date, governments (whether of their own or another country) might be tempted to cheat.

The case argued by Moravcsik is powerful, well buttressed by evidence, and weighty in the manner of what might be termed an American academic-tenure book. However, there are a few chinks in his generally impressive armour. His central purpose is to assess the relative importance of various factors, in particular of "geopolitical interests" on the one hand and

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Andrew Moravcsik

THE CHOICE FOR EUROPE

Social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht

514pp. UCL Press. £40 (paperback, £15.99).

TLS £38; paperback, £14.99.

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Elizabeth Pond

THE REBIRTH OF EUROPE

290pp. Brookings Institute; distributed in the UK by Plymbridge. £20.95.

TLS £15.95

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Maurice Keens-Soper

EUROPE IN THE WORLD

The persistence of power politics
205pp. Macmillan. £45.

TLS £42.

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"economic interests" on the other. The term "geopolitical interests" has a pejorative ring to it, and is defined narrowly as reflecting "perceived threats to national sovereignty or territorial integrity, whether military or ideological". This seems to leave little space for such a fundamental consideration as a state's conception of its essential nature and destiny. Yet it was precisely such a conception which powerfully motivated leaders as different as de Gaulle, Thatcher and Kohl in their policies towards Europe. At one point, geopolitical interests are referred to in disparaging tones as "geopolitical prestige", which implies a dismissal of the seriousness of the concerns of states about their internal cohesion and external role, especially in matters of defence.

Moravcsik's treatment of de Gaulle's rejection of UK membership of the EC illustrates the theme of the book as a whole. He does recognize the importance of "une certaine idée de la France" – the opening line of de Gaulle's wartime memoir. However, he goes on to argue that the General's opposition to UK membership was based more on the price of wheat than on his suspicion of the UK's incorrigible transatlanticism. While both types of factor were certainly important, he does not produce convincing evidence that de Gaulle was really more swayed by the economic factor than the political one. Both contributed to the outcome. The fundamental issue which needs more sustained discussion than it gets here is whether in reality the progress towards European Union was the offspring of two types of factors: both an overall sense that Europe needs to transcend the disastrous system that led to such tragedy in the first half of the twentieth century, and a practical economic interest in whatever particular deal was currently under discussion. The need for both these factors to be present is further illustrated by the extraordinary story of the creation of the euro – an episode outside the time-frame of Moravcsik's work. The principal progenitor of the euro, Chancellor Kohl, made speech after speech in which he not only outlined the anticipated economic benefits of a common currency, but also presented the euro

as the way to move Europe irrevocably beyond its erstwhile divided and war-prone condition. The need for the two factors to be present may also explain why, in the twentieth century, no other region of the world achieved a level of integration between previously sovereign states that compares even remotely with that of Europe. Moravcsik wants, wherever possible, to subsume European integration under general theories; but the European case remains, despite his best efforts, defiantly *sui generis*.

Although impressively researched, Moravcsik's book is based more on secondary sources than on original documents; and by addressing "testable hypotheses", rather than telling the story of major European decisions in a more traditional manner, he sometimes misses the particular character of events and the dramatic tension which surrounded them. Yet whatever its possible lines of weakness, this is an original and challenging account of European integration, which will have an important part in academic debates about the past history, future destiny and international implications of the European Union.

Elizabeth Pond is an experienced American journalist specializing in European issues, and with particular expertise on Germany. Her book *The Rebirth of Europe*, written primarily for an American audience but of interest to others too, is a crisp, informed and highly readable account of the European integration process. Its theme, more teleological and inspirational than Moravcsik's, is well conveyed at the outset:

A congenitally war-prone continent has, with our help, turned into one of the safest and most humane places on earth – and is now reinventing itself. It is pioneering a postnational, post-modern "pooling of sovereignty" that is supplanting the nation-state system of the past three centuries. The European Union is not and probably never will be a united federation, but it is already far more than a loose confederation. It is asserting, in Americanesque fashion, that history is not destiny.

Pond is well aware of the paradoxes of the European project. She notes how Helmut Kohl was twice re-elected as Chancellor in the 1990s on the basis of an Adenauer-like promise of no experiments, and then plunged Germany into the biggest experiment of all – the replacement of the legendary Deutschmark with the untested euro. She asserts, perhaps in defence of Kohl, that "contemporary statesmen see themselves as carpenters, not architects". If so, they are remarkable carpenters. She observes wryly that the citizens of post-Cold War Europe, wary of grand designs and the architects who produce them, have in fact witnessed the creation of a colossal new edifice.

Pond accepts that the European project has serious limitations. Much of the EU construction is the result of uninspiring back-room trade-offs. There is no serious sign yet of effective European management of security issues, in respect of which the US presence as manifested in NATO will continue to be needed. Yet overall she is remarkably upbeat. Europe is proving successful, and what goes on here matters for the rest of the world. She rightly chides American papers (with the exception of the *Wall Street Journal*) for not bothering to have staff reporters in Brussels. Her conclusion is classic American internationalist inspirationalism: "As Europe is reborn at the beginning of a new millennium, history has granted us the grace of miracles. Now it is up to the United States and Europe to live up to them.

Transatlantic relations, too, are a work in progress."

A possible criticism of Pond's approach is that she underestimates the doubts in Europe about what the carpenters are up to. Her account is deeply influenced by her time in Germany, and offers a Kohl-like vision of European developments. While she reports well on the questions raised in Germany about that country's capacity to absorb the East and make itself more internationally competitive at the same time, she says little about the British, who, by their own choice, are not fully part of Europe's "community of shared fate". She also says little about the anxieties in many European countries about the extent to which Europe's unloved bureaucrats and politicians are making decisions on a stratospheric level, untroubled by hard facts and local particularities. France's quarrel with the EU over British beef is a reminder of how fragile is the hold which European institutions have, even in those member states which are part of the "community of shared fate".

Maurice Keens-Soper, a Fellow in the Centre for the Study of Diplomacy at Leicester University, has written a sceptical tract, the twin themes of which are: (1) that power politics (including the use of national muscle to obtain wanted political and economic outcomes) is alive and kicking in the European Union, even while at the same time common institutions of great importance are being constructed; and (2) that we British are in danger of allowing our scepticism about Europe to distort our understanding of what is going on. *Europe in the World's* flavour is well conveyed in the following passage:

Britain therefore had traditional reasons of state for securing a position within Europe close enough to the centre of events to ensure that a balance of power dominated by the Franco-German alliance was compatible with its interests The error represented by this way of construing the EU is not that it sheds no light, but rather that its single-minded perspective is unable to pick out anything that falls outside its beam.

Keens-Soper's account began life as an essay, and has not made the transition to book altogether successfully. There are too many wrong dates, misspelt names, typographical errors and heavy conclusions resting on weak foundations. At times, when commenting on the failure of statesmen and diplomats to understand the harsh realities of international life, he sounds like the power-politics equivalent of a Marxist accusing the working class of false consciousness.

Yet there is good sense in Keens-Soper's approach. While the EU is indeed a "unique political order salvaged from the wreckage of Europe's twentieth century power politics", its internal wranglings are still settled by Foreign Ministries, not EU institutions; and Europe's very success brings it into contacts and clashes with other troubled states and continents, themselves in part the product of European colonial influence. "The present-day world brings together the diplomatic envoys of states representing more acute differences of thought and feeling than anything faced by the provincial diplomatic system of Europe."

These three books, each from a different perspective and with a different line of argument, have one thing in common: an acceptance that the development of common policies and institutions in Europe in the past forty-five years has resulted in the creation of a unique entity, which is neither a mere international alliance nor a superstate in the making. To understand the political and economic order in which we live, we have to move beyond the tidy but outdated categories that still dominate our thinking.