

EU Institutions and the Drive for Peace The Power of Ideas

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Abstract

This paper explains how international institutions contribute to peace among states in the international system. To do so, it reviews the various schools of thought that advance theories about the relationship between institutions and peace, and then focuses on the case of Europe. The main argument is that ideas are a core part of why institutions matter and how they shape state behavior. In particular, the idea of federalism has been one of the most influential and enduring ideas defining the trajectory of European integration. It is often recounted that early thinkers and leaders, especially the so-called founding fathers, debated whether federalism or functionalism was the path to take after WWII, and that they ultimately settled on the latter. Perhaps because the EU is only quasi-federal today, the origins and development of the federalist idea are rarely investigated. Drawing upon fresh archival research, this paper focuses on the early actors involved in spreading the notion that federalism was the best form of political organization to preserve the future of peace in Europe. The federalist movement in Europe became much stronger and more widespread than is often recognized, and it continues to influence what is possible today. The paper concludes that, partly as a result of this, EU institutions are enduring and legitimate, despite the numerous crises that Europe has faced in its development.

Keywords

EU – European Integration – Ideational Power – Institutions – Legitimacy

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Introduction

The international system is in the midst of a long peace, the likes of which have not been seen since the Roman Empire. The most powerful actors in the international system – or, the 44 richest countries in the world – have not gone to war with each other since World War II.¹ Much of this can be attributed to developments in Europe over the past 70 years. This paper seeks to explain how and why European Union (EU) institutions have brought about regional transformations that have significantly contributed to this long period of peace.²

Since at least the 17th century, temporary periods of peace and the gradual creation of diplomatic norms were often achieved through major multilateral diplomatic congresses like those leading to the 1648 Treaties of Westphalia and the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht.³ Beginning in the early 19th century, when the Congress of Vienna set up the Concert of Europe, a coalition of great powers sought to achieve a longer-term peace through more regular diplomatic interactions designed to maintain a balance of power.⁴ But it was really with the outbreak of war in 1939, and the devastating failure of the Versailles Treaty, that it became clear to many that the existing system of diplomacy was profoundly insufficient. New leaders rose to prominence in the mid-20th century inspired to create an entirely different form of political organization for the achievement of peace. Their ideas manifested in the establishment of a multitude of international and regional institutions to foster cooperation among states in an emerging era of global governance. During this time, it was not uncommon for leaders to talk about taking this even further, calling for the establishment of a world government. As Thomas Weiss, President of the International Studies Association, writes, ‘throughout the 1940s, it was impossible in the United States to read periodicals, listen to the radio, or watch newsreels and not encounter the idea of world government’.⁵

While the establishment of a *world* government may have been too ambitious, a core group of European leaders was determined to make this a reality at the regional level through the pursuit of *integration* – the pooling of sovereignty – among states. They believed that only through ceding national sovereignty to the supranational level would peace truly be possible. Ultimately, this initiative, originating in Europe, became the most advanced and successful experiment in transforming a region with centuries of violent conflict into one of enduring, and even permanent, peace. In the

¹ S. Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, New York, NY, Viking, 2011.

² In referring to EU institutions, I also include their precursors: European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), European Economic Community (EEC), and European Communities (EC).

³ M. K. D. Cross, *The European Diplomatic Corps: Diplomats and International Cooperation from Westphalia to Maastricht*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

⁴ M. Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*, New York, NY, Penguin, 2012.

⁵ T. G. Weiss, ‘What Happened to the Idea of World Government’, *International Studies Quarterly* 53(2), 2009: 253-271, p. 259.

21st century, the EU is recognized as a model for how to achieve peace through institutions, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012.

This paper proceeds as follows: The first section reviews the more general debate in the international relations literature that seeks to explain how international institutions lead to peace, and then looks more specifically at the debate surrounding the nature of EU institutions. The second section provides an account of the development of the EU over time from the 1940s to today, to shed light on the stability of the current institutional arrangement in Europe, and specifically how the creation of EU institutions consolidated regional peace over time. The final section examines whether the character and quality of these institutions has consequences for democratic legitimacy in Europe.

Debating institutions and European peace

An international institution is a formal organization in which multiple states participate in the pursuit of commonly agreed-upon goals.⁶ With the flourishing of international institutions beginning in the mid-20th century, most states in the international system belong to several institutions, and membership in each comes with different rules and responsibilities. All together this form of political organization at the international level has made the system more reliant on diplomacy, more stable, and less prone to war. International institutions encourage states to conceive of the world in terms of absolute gains (all states can benefit together), instead of just relative gains (when one state benefits, another loses).

There are many explanations for how international institutions contribute to peaceful interactions among states. To simplify, these perspectives can be grouped into three main camps, based on how much of an independent role international institutions are seen to have compared to states. The first camp, *neo-liberal institutionalism*, assumes that international institutions have little independent role. This approach departs from realism only insofar as its adherents recognize that international institutions allow cooperation through overcoming collective action problems, reducing transaction costs, and increasing transparency and information. The second camp, *liberalism*, sees more of an independent role for international institutions. It rejects the realist premise that states mainly seek to maximize material self-interest. This camp instead emphasizes that states may want to pursue a higher common interest that they share. Liberals believe that socialization and the spread of norms can actually change the preferences of states over time. The third camp, *institutionalism*, argues more strongly that international institutions take on a life of their own, beyond states. Scholars in this camp focus on the internal workings of international institutions and the influence of the bureaucrats and experts that work within these institutions. Despite disagreement about the extent to which international institutions have an independent impact on International Relations (IR), all three camps argue that institutions enable

⁶ There are also international institutions in which non-state actors are members, but they typically have more specific policy goals and do not represent the interests of states directly.

interdependence, making war much less likely. It is worth elaborating upon each of these approaches in turn.

The most basic theories of international institutions adhere closely to realism, but depart from it insofar as they recognize that power-based explanations alone are not enough to explain long-term peace. Realists generally assume that temporary peace is only possible if there is a balance of power among two or more states, or if a dominant, hegemonic state is willing to maintain an international regime that prevents war. Like realists, neo-liberal institutionalists stick closely to rationalist assumptions (i.e. that actors always pursue their individual self-interest), while seeking to understand the role international institutions might play. Much of this school of thought focuses on the economic dimension of interdependence. For example, taking one step beyond realist hegemonic stability theory, Duncan Snidal argues that cooperation takes up where hegemony leaves off.⁷ He argues that with the decline of US hegemony, and persistence of a free-trade regime since the 1980s, hegemony is neither necessary nor sufficient to explain stability. Similarly, Robert Keohane's book, *After Hegemony* (1984), also bridges the gap between hegemonic stability theory and neo-liberal institutionalism.⁸ He argues that intensive interaction among a few players can substitute for the control of a hegemonic power creating an international regime. According to Keohane, the mechanisms for stability are thus the ability for states to adapt and engage in mutual adjustment, rather than simply pursuing their own rational self-interest. Fundamental to the creation of international regimes are the contradictions of capitalism. Adam Smith's *invisible hand* does not typically work in international relations because state A can be disadvantaged when state B's policy affects it negatively, and vice versa, even if they are both engaged in capitalist aims. Therefore, Keohane concludes that to avoid these *negative externalities*, states find it advantageous to cooperate. In other words, both state A and state B agree to reciprocity because they try to change their behavior so that both are better off. The implication of this is that international institutions or regimes are easier to maintain than to create. In sum, taking a cost-benefit approach, neo-liberal institutionalists argue that cooperation through institutions results from reciprocity, contingent adjustment, and mutual gains.

Beyond these more rationalist calculations of the role of international institutions in getting states to pursue cooperation instead of conflict, the liberal school of thought goes further than simply looking at national self-interest. Scholars in this camp explain peace through institutions from a broader basis of understanding.⁹ Rather than only focusing on short-term calculations, they argue that states are capable of long-term cooperation, and not just on economic issues, but on a range of common goals. They argue that international institutions do not simply alter the pay-off structure for states, but create predictability and legitimacy because states renounce the use of military

⁷ D. Snidal, 'The limits of hegemonic stability theory', *International Organization*, 39(4), 1985: 579-614.

⁸ R. O. Keohane, *After hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2005.

⁹ J. S. Nye and D. A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*, London, Pearson Higher Ed, 2012.

force when they are able to instead work through these institutions. In other words, states are capable of changing their preferences over time such that they are not simply focused on national self-interest. For example, Stephen Krasner argues that beyond realist notions of self-interest and power, international regimes mitigate anarchy through their diffusion of norms, beliefs, customs, and knowledge.¹⁰ Similarly, John Ikenberry argues that when the United States encouraged the creation of international institutions it was also willing to bind its own power in an open, democratic, and non-discriminatory rules-based order, rather than using these institutions mainly to amplify its own power.¹¹ Going well beyond realist thinking, liberals tend to agree that three outcomes occur when states form international institutions. First, they agree to settle differences in a peaceful manner without the use of force. Second, they see national interest as aligned with the broader interests of the international community. Thus, if dealing with an aggressor, those states that are members of international institutions work together to defeat it. Third, they develop trust in each other over time. The longer states remain members of international institutions, the easier it is to trust one another.

More recently, institutionalists – who have typically focused more on domestic institutions – have turned their attention to the international level. Institutionalists are the furthest removed from realist explanations in that they find that institutions can become actors in their own right, or are more than the sum of their parts. Oftentimes, those in the constructivist school of thought or the English School adhere to this approach. The emphasis is more on the importance of international society, and the ability of international institutions to change the nature of states' identities. Ideas and norms spread and socialize new actors, processes of learning over time constitute the behavior of states, and non-state actors can also be heavily influential in the international system. In particular, those bureaucrats and diplomats who work within international institutions actively shape the norms advanced by those institutions. For example, John Ruggie argues that the principled beliefs, communicative action, and ideas of individuals and epistemic communities matter in determining the outcomes of international institutions.¹² Even though states create institutions, institutions can re-create states and even bind them to certain standards of behavior because the people who comprise institutions are effective at persuading and pushing for new norms. Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore analyze international institutions as bureaucracies to argue that they have power in their own right. Bureaucrats often determine the rules of interaction among states.¹³ While this means that international institutions take on a life of their own, Barnett and Finnemore caution that this freedom of maneuver can ultimately backfire if bureaucrats become too obsessed with their

¹⁰ S. D. Krasner, 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables', *International Organization*, 36(2), 1982, p. 186.

¹¹ J. G. Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2009.

¹² J. G. Ruggie, 'What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge', *International Organization*, 52(4), 1998: 855-885.

¹³ M. Barnett and M. Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2004.

own influence and fail to notice whether the institutions are ultimately inefficient or self-defeating. Overall, this approach argues that institutions can create peace through human agency and that ideas matter.

Each of these three approaches might be appropriate to explain various institutions, but the EU is a special case as it is the most advanced example of the power of institutions. As the next section of this paper will demonstrate, the EU fits best with institutionalist arguments as member states have formally given up some of their national sovereignty to these institutions, empowering certain key individuals and ideas. Thus, EU institutions are a special category within the general study of international institutions. Given the importance of the EU, a literature has emerged specifically devoted to explaining it.

Some of the key questions addressed in this literature echo those in the general debate about the role of international institutions. Are EU institutions simply foils for member states' self-interest? Or, do they have power in their own right, comprising more than the sum of their parts? Have they evolved over time through some kind of unconscious spillover effect? Or, do they reflect the norms and social processes that occur within them? These debates are at the heart of numerous attempts to understand the creation and impact of EU institutions. Moreover, scholarship on the EU has been running alongside its actual development, always seeking to offer better and new theories, but continually challenged by its ever-evolving nature.

To name the most prominent approaches, the theory of *neo-functionalism* – spillover of integration from one policy area to another – was a reaction to the rapid integration that took place in the first decades of the European Economic Community.¹⁴ In turn, *intergovernmentalism*, which re-emphasized the sovereignty of member states, was a reaction to the slowing of integration in the 70s and early 80s.¹⁵ The rise in popularity of *supranationalism*, a form of institutionalism, clearly reflected an effort to explain the strengthening of EU institutions from the mid-80s through the 90s, and emphasizes the impact of their particular internal characteristics.¹⁶ *Multi-level governance* in the 2000s sought to put a range of previous theories together in a kind of 'catch-all'

¹⁴ E. B. Haas, *Beyond the Nation State: Functionalism and International Organization*, Colchester, ECPR Press, 2008.

¹⁵ S. Hoffmann, 'Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-state and the Case of Western Europe', *Daedalus*, 95(3), 1966: 862-915; A. Moravcsik, 'Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 31(4), 1993: 473-524.

¹⁶ G. Tsebelis and G. Garrett, 'The Institutional Foundations of Intergovernmentalism and Supranationalism in the European Union', *International Organization*, 55(2), 2001, 357-390; P. L. Lindseth, 'Democratic Legitimacy and the Administrative Character of Supranationalism: The Example of the European Community', *Columbia Law Review*, 99, 1999: 628-738; R. O. Keohane and S. Hoffmann, *Institutional Change in Europe in the 1980s.*, London, Macmillan Education, 1994; A. S. Sweet and W. Sandholtz, 'Integration, Supranational Governance, and the Institutionalization of the European Polity' in A. S. Sweet and W. Sandholtz (eds) *European Integration and Supranational Governance*, Oxford Scholarship Online, 1998.

explanation.¹⁷ Subsequently, *constructivists* have sought to explain the fine-tuning of EU integration, which has often involved informal processes and norm diffusion.¹⁸

This rich debate is valuable in understanding certain aspects of cooperation and integration in Europe. However, these perspectives tend to be fundamentally tied to the time period in which they arise, and the policy area on which they are focused. In other words, there has been the tendency to create theoretical explanations when events have called for them, but these explanations struggle to account for the whole trajectory of integration. Recognizing this early on, Ernst Haas argued in 1958 that it would be better to understand the process of European integration through examining the dominant interests and values *of the time*. He writes:

Rather than relying on a scheme of integration which posits “altruistic” or “idealistic” motives as the conditioners of conduct, it seems more reasonable – assuming the pluralistic basis of politics here used – to focus on the interests and values defended by the major groups involved in the process, experience showing that these are far too complex to be described in such simple terms as “the desire for Franco-German peace” or the “will to a United Europe.”¹⁹

This is certainly a reasonable proposition, but it has the drawback of not being able to uncover the root causes and driving forces of European integration over the longer term. Some scholars have endeavored to step back and reflect upon the whole European experiment, but this is still rare and there is a tendency to focus on a particular sub-set of policies. For the purposes of explaining why international institutions contribute to peace more generally and why the European region has been so much more successful than other efforts, it is valuable to seek to understand the greater trajectory of the European project.

The next section examines the development of the EU, with a focus on how and why in the late 1940s and early 1950s European leaders were finally able to make long-held ideas about uniting Europe a reality. Why was the first experiment at supranationalism or federalism able to be launched? How did this initial idea develop over time to arrive at the present state of EU integration? Why is the current institutional arrangement in Europe actually quite stable? What can this tell us about the intersection of institutions and peace? The case of the EU is ideal to consider given its pioneering progress in achieving peace. In an effort to shed light on the longevity of the European project,

¹⁷ L. Hooghe and G. Marks, *Multi-level Governance and European Integration*, Oxford, Rowman & Littlefield, 2001; L. Hooghe. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-level Governance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

¹⁸ J. T. Checkel, ‘Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change’, *International Organization*, 55(3), 2001: 553-588; J. T. Checkel, ‘International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework’, *International Organization*, 59(4), 2005: 801-826; K. R. McNamara, *The Currency of Ideas: Monetary Politics in the European Union*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1998; N. Jabko, *Playing the Market: A Political Strategy for Uniting Europe, 1985–2005*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2006; M. K. D. Cross, *Security Integration in Europe: How Knowledge-based Networks are Transforming the European Union*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2011.

¹⁹ E. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1958, p. 13.

rather than a particular time period or policy area, the emphasis will be on the way in which the federalist idea drove the creation of these early institutions, and continued to shape the EU into the actor that it is today.

European institutions and the power of ideas

To comprehend the nature and strength of the current arrangement, it is necessary to consider the past. The goals set for the European project at its inception demonstrate the importance of how early versions of European institutions embodied the transformational ideas of key leaders at the time. In particular, the centrality of the idea of federalism for Europe was crucial, and set the path for the future momentum of EU integration that continues today.²⁰

The idea of a united Europe has had a long history, stretching back to at least the philosophers of the 17th century. Prior to 1947, it was more often than not considered a utopian ideal than an achievable goal. During the interwar period, however, ideas surrounding the establishment of a federal union flourished, and subsequently re-emerged with greater strength in the war-time resistance movement. The most influential examples of this were Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi's 1923 book *Pan-Europa*, and Altiero Spinelli's 1941 Ventotene Manifesto, calling for the immediate creation of a federal constitution for Europe.²¹ Some spoke of this in the context of world government, others focused more on the possibility of transatlantic federalism or an Atlantic Union, and still others associated it more narrowly with regional federation: the UK and France at the core of what would become a United States of Europe.²² In 1947, the federalist idea became far more of a potential reality. Open support for this at both the popular and elite level was astounding, especially by today's standards.

This section advances the argument that the idea of federalism is not a story of the rise and gradual decline of an idea, as is often assumed. Instead, the idea has fundamentally shaped the nature of EU institutions all along, contributing to peace among European states. In addition, the federalist idea has tended to galvanize more support when framed as transformational (i.e. bold and visionary) rather than just transactional (i.e. individualistic and incremental). And finally, opinion leaders who have been able to pursue transformational ideas *outside* of the EU's formal institutional structures have often been more effective in impacting institutions than those who have operated from the inside.

²⁰ M. Burgess, *Federalism and European Union: The Building of Europe, 1950-2000*, New York, NY, Routledge, 2000.

²¹ D. Dinan, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 1999, p. 12.

²² R. Mayne and J. Pinder, *Federal Union: The Pioneers*, New York, NY, St. Martin's Press, 1990.

The European Movement and Council of Europe

Across Europe in the late 1940s and 1950s, a European federalist movement blossomed at the societal level.²³ Several leaders of various organizations in favor of a united Europe founded the *European Movement* in December 1947. The key leaders of this movement were highly politically prominent and had close ties to governments, which gave them access to decision-makers. These individuals included: Paul-Henri Spaak, Winston Churchill, Konrad Adenauer, Leon Blum, Alcide de Gasperi, Jean Drapier, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and Robert Schuman. However, it is important to note that the various chapters of the movement extended well beyond the original six members of what would become the fledgling EU (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg) to include countries in Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, and so on) as well as countries to the North (Great Britain, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and so on).²⁴ Indeed, the point of the European Movement was to bring all of the various federalist organizations across Europe under one umbrella. Young people were a major force behind the European Movement with organizations like *Jeune Europe* pushing for more vitality and action behind words. The European Movement's Action Committee for the European Supranational Community (founded in 1952) even aimed to take 'militant action' to push for more integration in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). This group was a big proponent of the European Defence Community (EDC) before the latter failed to pass the French parliament.²⁵

It was very much expected among those in this European Movement that the Council of Europe, founded in 1949, would be the venue where European federalism would be achieved. The caliber and seriousness of the discussions in the Council of Europe about how to proceed with the creation of a United States of Europe is little recognized. However, during and immediately after WWII, the discourse surrounding the need to create a new political organization for Europe through the creation of new institutions was thought to be both necessary and urgent. Even as the EDC was proposed and failed, as the Western European Union was launched, and as the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) took on responsibilities, representatives at the Council of Europe continually emphasized their institution's core role in uniting Europe. The other institutions, including the ECSC and Euratom, were regarded as

²³ M. Serrarens (Netherlands), 'Official Report of the Fifth Sitting, 16th August 1949', Council of Europe documents, p. 103 (Nobel Peace Archive).

²⁴ Foreign Service Despatch No. 918 from Sheldon B. Vance, Second Secretary of Embassy, American Embassy in Brussels to the Department of State Washington, February 21, 1956 (National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) of the United States).

²⁵ Foreign Service Despatch No. 918 from Sheldon B. Vance, Second Secretary of Embassy, American Embassy in Brussels to the Department of State Washington, February 21, 1956 (NARA).

more specialist organizations that would work on certain issues in support of the Council of Europe's overall centrality.

In 1955, Harold Macmillan, then British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, reflected on these early years, capturing the climate of the times:

The Council of Europe and, especially, the Consultative Assembly were born out of the European Movement. This arose after the war by an almost spontaneous surge of emotion. I well remember the first gathering at The Hague in 1948. This meeting was organized by purely unofficial and voluntary efforts and yet it comprised the leading men and women of many countries [...] Those were the glorious, exciting, sometimes disorderly, but memorable days when our Movement began and the Council of Europe was founded. We had made it, not the Governments. Indeed, we had almost forced it upon the Governments. It was not just a political or a parliamentary phenomenon. It touched the imagination and raised the hopes of men and women in all walks of life, far transcending the normal confines of the political world.²⁶

After the devastation of the war, the view among the representatives at the first session of the Council of Europe was that there was *no choice*, but to create a united Europe that would be federal in character. They met as 'representatives of Europe trying to consider and solve problems in the interests of Europe as a whole'.²⁷

On 16 August 1949, the first substantive topic discussed at the Council of Europe was the future political structure of the entire continent. André Philip, a French representative who was the first to address the Council in this debate, said:

What has brought us together at Strasbourg on this occasion is not merely the hope of achieving an ideal which dates back a long time in the traditions of our Continent, but also our consciousness of a situation of extreme urgency. It is the fact that public opinion in all our countries now realizes that the economic and political unification of Europe has become a matter of life and death for us all, and that unless we make rapid progress towards that unification we shall very soon find ourselves in what may become a tragic situation.²⁸

²⁶ Council of Europe Consultative Assembly, Seventh Ordinary Session (First Part), Official Report, Third Sitting, Wednesday, 6th July, 1955 (NARA).

²⁷ Council of Europe Secretariat-General, 'European Unity: Achievement and Prospects', SG (58) I Part II, Strasbourg, 25th April 1958. p. 7. (Nobel Peace Archive).

²⁸ Official Report of the Fifth Sitting, 16th August 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 78 (Nobel Peace Archive).

He goes on to argue that the shared goal had to be a supranational Europe, a point of emphasis that all subsequent delegates present echoed strongly.²⁹ In essence, the first debate in the Council of Europe, which was later recognized as a 'landmark' event,³⁰ featured unanimous support for a united Europe on a strong path to federalism.

But naturally, some views were more cautious, and others were more ambitious. Mr. Cappi, an Italian representative, expressed the more cautious side of the spectrum, pointing out the risks at stake on the first day of deliberations. As if foreshadowing the failure of the European Defence Community and European Political Community just five years later he said:

Wisdom teaches us that politics – and we are engaged in politics in the most sublime sense of the word – is the art of the possible. Indeed, if we wish great historical events to be abiding and fertile, they must ripen in spirit and in fact, that is to say, they should be justified by circumstances. If some attempts fail because they are too hasty, if they are followed by bitter disappointments, these disappointments might be used to our disadvantage by many sceptics and opponents to our idea of a united Europe.³¹

The risk was high because all present understood very clearly that they were *not* launching the Council of Europe merely to replicate a regional version of the League of Nations or United Nations. As Macmillan put it:

Neither the League of Nations nor the United Nations organization is in the least comparable. These were, and are, meetings of national delegations, on an official or governmental basis, with national loyalties. Ours is a very different body... We are all inspired by a higher responsibility and duty. Much perhaps divides us. One thing unites us. We meet as Europeans – free, unfettered, each responsibility only to his own conscience and the over-riding conception of European unity which brings us all here.³²

At the same time, there was recognition that this was not going to be the same as the United States of America.³³ To be sure, there were competing ideas – unionists,

²⁹ Ibid, p. 80 (Nobel Peace Archive). Interestingly, countries that would not be part of the EU for several decades were just as fervent in their support of European unity and supranationalism as the others: Turkey, Greece, UK, Ireland.

³⁰ Council of Europe Secretariat-General, 'European Unity: Achievement and Prospects', SG (58) I Part II, Strasbourg, 25th April 1958. p. 7. (Nobel Peace Archive).

³¹ M. Cappi (Italy), 'Official Report of the Fifth Sitting', 16th August 1949, Council of Europe, p. 82.

³² H. Macmillan (UK), 'Official Report of the Sixth Sitting', 17th August 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 125.

³³ M. Düsünsel (Turkey), 'Official Report of the Sixth Sitting', 17th August 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 143.

functionalists, federalists, and so on – but it was also understood that these camps were not truly in opposition. The unionists, like Churchill, wanted to unite Europe in a broad sense, while the federalists, like Spinelli and the Union of European Federalists, also wanted the same, but more specifically through the signing of a federal constitution.³⁴ The functionalists too wanted federalism, but thought that a gradualist approach to get there would be preferable. Thus, they all wanted to end up with a united Europe, but differed somewhat on the best path to get there. The British, Irish, and some Scandinavian representatives were more cautious, while most continental Europeans were more ambitious.³⁵

In response to these variations in viewpoints, Mr. Le Bail of France struck a strong chord at the end of the first day of debate in the Council of Europe:

Those in favour of caution say we must beware of an Assembly which starts to look like a congress; beware of an enthusiasm which has no outcome, and we must not make a great deal of noise about nothing! But those in favour of boldness also call on us to beware! Beware of these legal quibbles which harden and paralyse the highest ideals! [...] I must say at once that I am on the side of the bold and opposed to the cautious. What is to become of us, in a few months or a few years time, if we are already timid? A great impulse has gone forth – a great creative impulse. It must be maintained at any price. How can we do this? By clearly perceiving the aim, which is very easy. Europe will not be created unless it is constantly allowed to outstrip its previous achievements.³⁶

However, as the first few days passed in these early sessions of the Council of Europe, the hope placed in achieving federalism through this venue began to wane. The Assembly resolved to create a Committee on General Affairs, led by Bidault, to come up with a resolution on the political structure of Europe. However, just 20 days after the start of discussions, the final report was largely underwhelming, and seemed to focus more on accounting for differences among viewpoints, rather than consolidating a common goal. Italian representative Mr. Parri described the resolution as a ‘first-class funeral, especially when compared to the eloquent discussions which took place in this Assembly during the Debate’.³⁷ He went on to say that he was ‘anxious that the Assembly of Europe should declare that it has not forgotten the reason for its

³⁴ D. Dinan, *Ever Closer Union*, 1999, p. 13.

³⁵ E. De Valera (Ireland), ‘Official Report of the Sixth Sitting’, 17th August 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 141.

³⁶ M. Le Bail (France), ‘Official Report of the Sixth Sitting’, 17th August 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 119.

³⁷ F. Parri (Italy), ‘Official Report of the Fifteenth Sitting’, 5th September 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 481.

existence'.³⁸ Similarly, French representative Mr. Bardoux said, 'this text is not only summary and cursory, but it is also thin and meagre; it lacks body; it is lifeless and it makes no appeal to the imagination. Yet Napoleon said: it is through imagination that people can be led'.³⁹ This capitulation to differences and national sovereignty had already become a matter of concern for Paul-Henri Spaak, President of the Council of Europe, who told *Le Monde* the day before that 'Our task must surely be that of thinking and feeling as Europeans, in all the branches of the Assembly, whether in its Permanent Committee or on the floor of the house'.⁴⁰ Naturally, those who were not fully in the federalist camp were satisfied with the resolution, particularly as it had unanimous approval by the committee.

This brief look at the debate that launched the first effort at creating federalist institutions in Europe demonstrates how even with large scale political will – both at the popular and elite levels – putting a transformational idea into practice can still be easier said than done. The next stage in this effort involved a more focused number of players whose ideas converged more closely.

European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

Just a few months after the opening session of the Council of Europe, French Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman announced Jean Monnet's plan (known as the Schuman Plan) for the European Coal and Steel Community, with France and West Germany at its core. Thus, in 1950, discussions in the Council of Europe shifted to how this other, much more limited arrangement would come to embody true European political integration. The Secretary-General of the Council of Europe later described the advent of the ECSC as the 'concrete expression to the political decisions taken by the Assembly in favour of creating a European Authority', in effect interpreting the ECSC as an offshoot of the Council of Europe.⁴¹

This was not necessarily an accurate portrayal. Although it seemed to be narrow in its aim, the ECSC was far more ambitious than the Council of Europe because it involved true supranationalism from the start. It would be more accurate to say that the early shortcomings of the Council of Europe inspired the launch of the ECSC. Indeed, Jean Monnet himself made a speech at the Council of Europe in 1950 calling upon the others to join the Schuman Plan. Several representatives, including the British, responded

³⁸ Ibid. p. 482.

³⁹ M. M. Bardoux (France), 'Official Report of the Fifteenth Sitting'. 5th September 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 483.

⁴⁰ As quoted by E. Bonnefous (France), 'Official Report of the Fifteenth Sitting', 5th September 1949, Council of Europe documents, p. 495.

⁴¹ Council of Europe Secretariat-General, 'European Unity: Achievement and Prospects', SG (58) I Part II, Strasbourg, 25th April 1958. p. 11. (Nobel Peace Archive).

that their countries would not be able to join this new initiative, betraying the limits that had emerged in the first few months of the Council of Europe's activities. When the Council of Europe's president, Spaak, resigned early in December 1951 this clearly signaled that the impetus had shifted to the ECSC.⁴² Several years later, reflecting upon how this happened, Secretary-General of the Council of Europe wrote that the ECSC:

[...] was brought into being exclusively by the determined efforts of certain enlightened political circles. When the governments were found wanting, it was the European institutions themselves which took over. They would no doubt have been unable to survive a complete and final reversal of the European policy of the principal governments concerned, but the proof was given that they could at least survive the most serious jolts and jars of fluctuating national policy.⁴³

Institutions and the key individuals influencing their development were important. To be sure, the process of launching the early stages of the European Community was not easy. It was preferable at the beginning to avoid settling for only 'Little Europe', which included the original Six, but actually pushing for a community that would encompass Great Britain and Scandinavia as well. Given that these countries were most reluctant to embrace federalism, a Little Europe it was to be. As Carlo Schmid, a politician in the Social Democratic Party of West Germany said during a radio interview on January 25, 1956, 'No politically responsible man dares to think of a freely elected All-European parliament today'.⁴⁴ Ultimately, even though ratification of the Schuman Plan among the Six had its stumbling blocks, these leaders determined that the ECSC would be the best place to build this idea in practice.

In particular, Jean Monnet, the architect of the ECSC, actually felt from the very beginning that the Council of Europe would go nowhere as long as it maintained the national veto.⁴⁵ By contrast, he designed the institutions of the ECSC without this possibility. Moreover, Monnet had a clear idea of how the federalist idea would reach fruition through this new organization. He said:

⁴² D. Dinan, *Europe Recast: A History of European Union*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. p. 25.

⁴³ Council of Europe Secretariat-General, 'European Unity: Achievement and Prospects', SG (58) I Part II, Strasbourg, 25th April 1958. p. 13. (Nobel Peace Archive).

⁴⁴ Foreign Service Despatch No. 1567 from Elim O'Shaughnessy, Counselor of Embassy, American Embassy Bonn to the Department of State, Washington. January 30, 1956. (NARA).

⁴⁵ J. Monnet, *Memoirs*, [Translated from the French by Richard Mayne], Garden City, NY, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978, p. 273, 281.

By the pooling of basic production and the establishment of a new High Authority whose decisions will be binding on France, Germany, and the countries that join them, this proposal will lay the first concrete foundations of the European Federation which is indispensable to the maintenance of peace.⁴⁶

He clearly saw this as 'the first step towards European federation' with an 'ultimate objective to contribute essentially to the creation of a United States of Europe'.⁴⁷ Thus, when Jean Monnet spoke of the ECSC he emphasized the importance of its institutions, and the necessity of giving up some element of national sovereignty to them. He said, 'Any of these institutions may be changed and improved in the light of experience. What cannot be challenged is the principle that they are supra-national - in other words federal - institutions'.⁴⁸

Again, just because the initial launch of the ECSC was limited to supranational control of coal and steel production did not mean that ambitions were modest. Many ardent federalists were pushing for more, but came up against confederalists and functionalists who saw their proposals as too far-ranging. The failure of the European Defence Community, which would have created a full-scale European army, in the French Parliament was the ultimate expression of this. Nonetheless, the European Defence Community and European Political Community signaled the still highly political thinking of the EU's founding fathers. It was just that there were still difficult obstacles in these early years after the war. As Walter Hallstein said in 1961, 'Both failed - not so much because of a general lack of the will to achieve them, as because of particular political circumstances, among others a virulent and largely Communist inspired propaganda campaign against them'.⁴⁹ Even failed ideas matter as they shape the terms of the debate and extend the parameters of what might be possible.

Action Committee for the United States of Europe

Once the ECSC was set up, Monnet was still not satisfied and in November 1954 resigned his position as President of the High Authority in order to push for more European integration. The failure of the EDC had left public opinion uninterested in the prospects for real integration, and when the foreign ministers of the Six spoke to the press after the 1955 conference in Messina, they had an agreement to set up the

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 298.

⁴⁷ Statement before 'Randall Committee' investigating United States foreign trade policy, November 11, 1953, in Paris (NARA).

⁴⁸ J. Monnet, Speech to the Council of Ministers, September 8, 1952. (NARA).

⁴⁹ W. Hallstein, 'Economic Integration and Political Unity in Europe', speech before the joint meeting of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, May 23, 1961, p. 9. (Monnet Fondation, Lausanne).

European Economic Community, but without much enthusiasm.⁵⁰ In this context, and after the failure of the European Defence Community, Monnet saw the need to energize the European movement once more. When he stepped down from his post at the helm of the ECSC, he said, 'I think I can be of more use to you outside'.⁵¹ His aim was to 're-launch' Europe,⁵² and by resigning from the High Authority he was free to become more active. He did so as a private individual through the creation of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe on October 13, 1955, relying on funding from his family's cognac business.⁵³ Like with the Schuman Plan negotiations, Monnet adopted a particular kind of diplomatic approach that would favor some ideas over others. He kept the group small, and focused on members of political parties and trade unions, but not neo-fascists, communists, Gaullists, and other militant European groups.

Others in the European federalist movement were at first alarmed by Monnet's departure from the High Authority, and the press also speculated that Monnet had abandoned the project. To the contrary, after months of bringing together nearly all of the leaders of the Socialist, Christian Democrat, and Liberal political parties,⁵⁴ as well as trade unions across Europe, the Action Committee's work began in January 1956, and it continued on for two decades.⁵⁵ The stated goal of the Action Committee was 'to arrive by concrete achievements at the United States of Europe'.⁵⁶ Significantly, membership in the committee rested with the organizations – political parties and trade unions – rather than the individuals who met on behalf of these organizations.⁵⁷

The sheer amount of work Monnet put into this new push for a United States of Europe, demonstrated that the momentum for the federalist idea had shifted to the Action Committee. The Action Committee met roughly once per year after its inception, and held fourteen meetings between 1956 and 1970. The first ten were in Paris, followed by meetings in Bonn (1965), Berlin (1965), Brussels (1967), and London (1969). Each meeting was closed to the public, but upon its conclusion, a public announcement was made on the mutually agreed resolution. With all of the groundwork laid in advance of each meeting, most agreements were arrived at

⁵⁰ 'Note sur l'histoire du comité', Jean Monnet Foundation, AMK 1/1/4.

⁵¹ J. Monnet, *Memoirs*, p. 405.

⁵² C. P. Hackett, *Monnet and the Americans: The Father of a United Europe and his U.S. Supporters*, Washington DC, Jean Monnet Council, 1995, p. 22.

⁵³ C. Bingham, 'The Australian Financial Review', February 2, 1961.

⁵⁴ All non-Communist parties, representing around 60 million voters and 12 million trade unionists, equivalent to 67 per cent of all citizens and 70 per cent of organized labor.

⁵⁵ J. Monnet, *Memoirs*, pp. 405-417.

⁵⁶ 'Action Committee for the United States of Europe', Note, 1970, Accessible at Jean Monnet Fondation, record code AMK 1/2/11.

⁵⁷ W. Yondorf, 'Monnet and the Action Committee: The Formative Period of the European Communities' *International Organization*, 19(4), 1965: 885-912.

unanimously, but any abstentions or disagreements were noted in the public press conference. On occasion, national political parties also vetted some aspects of these agreements in advance, giving them stronger legitimacy.⁵⁸

There were initially three main goals of the Action Committee. The first key task of the committee was to expand the supranational precedent set by the ECSC to the creation of Euratom – a federal approach to nuclear energy. Indeed, the first few meetings were virtually exclusively devoted to this. And importantly, Monnet wanted to ensure that the institutional precedent set by the ECSC was the model for Euratom. The High Authority, in his view, needed to be endowed with significant federal power. The second main task was to ensure the establishment of the common market or European Economic Community (EEC). Third, the entry of Britain into this arrangement was a key goal.

In some respects the proposal for a common market, and a shift towards economic goals, was a reaction to the failure of the European Defence Community. As Paul-Henri Spaak, then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, put it in a speech on October 21, 1955:

We then considered that having failed on the political plane, we should take up the question of the economic plane and use the so-called functional method, availing ourselves to some extent [...] of the admittedly successful experiment already made with the European Coal and Steel Community.⁵⁹

But Spaak, who later became known as one of the main founding fathers of the EU, went on to lament that it is much more difficult to arouse the interest and passion of the European public in following a functionalist instead of federalist path. In his words, 'The economic and functional method, therefore, is less likely to attract and retain the attention – let alone enthusiasm – of the masses than the constitutional method which is based on ideas of a more general nature and so easier to assimilate'.⁶⁰ He appealed to decision-makers not to focus primarily on technical details, but instead on political resolve. He said, 'The day that this political resolve gathers its full force there will be no technical problem that cannot be solved'.⁶¹

European Economic Community (EEC)

As Europeans proceeded on the basis of a gradualist approach to integration, the main idea driving these initiatives was still the creation of a federal United States of Europe,

⁵⁸ 'Action Committee for the United States of Europe' Note, 1970, Accessible at Jean Monnet Fondation, record code AMK 1/2/11.

⁵⁹ Council of Europe Consultative Assembly, Seventh Ordinary Session, Speech made by M. Paul-Henri Spaak, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium at the twenty-first Sitting of the Consultative Assembly, held on Friday, 21st October 1955. p. 3 (NARA).

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 6.

but it began to fade from prominence as the more direct benefits from integration began to be felt. Once the EEC was agreed upon, its striking success provided much momentum for the Six to surpass even their own goals. In 1960, trade among EEC member states was around 28 per cent higher than the year before, and the Community's international trade increased by around 23 per cent. Industrial production was 11 per cent higher and GNP was 6.5 per cent higher in 1960 compared to 1959. This economic success far exceeded initial projections about the impact of the common market.⁶²

The more functionalist logic focused on the need to create free movement of persons, services, and capital, and to prevent discrimination within the common market, such as financial penalties. As these more specific rationales began to take over, the idea of the far more ambitious United States of Europe began to recede, just as Spaak had predicted.⁶³ In 1961, Hallstein gave speeches in the US that focused on the EEC, with only indirect mention of a United States of Europe. Instead, he emphasized that political integration must exist alongside economic integration, a far less ambitious framing than before. But he still noted that political integration would not be some kind of automatic process. A political choice had to be made. Moreover, he said, 'There are two words by which I should like to characterize the development of the European Community in the past years and months: these words are success and recognition'.⁶⁴ In the early 60s, documents from Monnet's Action Committee clearly betrayed a sense of disappointment with the lack of true federalism. Transactional ideas could not inspire the public in the same way as transformational ones, but integration was by this time infused into institutional life and continued forward nonetheless.

Expanding membership and continued integration

The achievement of federalism may not have happened all at once as some had hoped, but the idea had clearly put Europe's institutions on a strong trajectory towards more formal integration over time, even alongside the challenge of expanding membership from six to 28. From the 1970s onward, the EEC continued on a steady path of both enlargement and integration. At times, such as during the 1970s and early 80s, progress towards integration slowed. At other times, such as during the late 80s through to the early 2000s, with the signing of the 1986 Single European Act and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, integration proceeded more rapidly. The relative speed of integration coincided with the rise and fall in popularity of the federalist idea, highlighting the ongoing centrality of the founding idea of federalism.⁶⁵ Importantly, federalism's popularity was not directly tied to increased economic gain as neo-liberals might assume. For example, during the 60s and 70s, Europe fared better than the

⁶² Speech by W. Hallstein, 'The European Economic Community', January 23, 1961 in Paris. p. 9 (Monnet Fondation, Lausanne).

⁶³ Gilles Grin connects the decline of federalism with the development and growth of the EEC. See G. Grin, 'The Community Method: from Jean Monnet to Current Challenges', *The EuroAtlantic Union Review*, 2(2), 2015: 15-29.

⁶⁴ Speech by W. Hallstein, 'The EEC and the Community of the Free World', in Zurich to the Schweizerische Europa-Union, 24 November, 1961. p. 2. (Jean Monnet Foundation).

⁶⁵ This can be traced through membership numbers in the Union of European Federalists over time (data pending).

United States economically, and yet integration both accelerated (1960s) and slowed (1970s) during the same period.

Various informal pro-federalist organizations thrived in parallel to the formal evolution of EU institutions. These included the Crocodile Club, the Conference on European Federation, the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, the European Movement, the European Union of Federalists, Altiero Spinelli Action Committee for EU, and the Spinelli Group, among many others. In particular, the Spinelli Group was where many ideas for advancing federalism were spawned and debated before taking them to the main floor of the European parliament. Many of the most prominent EU leaders were also members of these pro-federalist groups. With the precedent Monnet had set – pushing the federalist idea from outside of the formal institutions, rather than from within them – the importance of these informal groups in nurturing the federalist idea should not be underestimated. Support from across the Atlantic was also part of the backbone of integration. As Jean Monnet said:

This is the first time in history that a great power [the United States], instead of basing its policy on the keeping-up of divisions, has continuously and resolutely supported the establishment of a great community founded on union between peoples hitherto living apart.⁶⁶

Indeed, the idea of European federalism so fascinated American elites that there was even serious talk of crafting a transatlantic union instead of leaving it just for Europeans to pursue. The European Movement itself had close ties to the American Committee for a United Europe, chaired by William A. Donovan, and it received funding from the Ford Foundation, which sponsored a series of publications on European federalism.⁶⁷

In the lead-up to the 1990s, ongoing support for federalism finally broke through the barriers that had separated foreign and security policy from the integration process since the early failure of the European Defense Community and the European Political Committee in the 1950s. This was highly symbolic as security is typically thought to be at the very core of national sovereignty.⁶⁸ It is noteworthy that in the 1960s, Monnet's new proposals to launch a common foreign policy and defense were a significant part of the Action Committee's work.

In 1970, the Six were able to put into place European Political Cooperation (EPC), but it was separated from European Community structures and not backed by treaty agreement. It was not really until after the Cold War and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty on European Union that the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) enshrined political and security cooperation into a treaty. There was even some debate over whether the word 'federal' would appear in this treaty, but it was ultimately taken out of the final text. Nonetheless, the fact that the idea was still part of formal discussion

⁶⁶ J. Monnet speech to the Common Assembly, Strasbourg, June 19, 1953. (NARA).

⁶⁷ Foreign Service Despatch No. 918 from Sheldon B. Vance, Second Secretary of Embassy, American Embassy in Brussels to the Department of State Washington, February 21, 1956. (NARA).

⁶⁸ M. K. D. Cross, *Security Integration*, 2011.

in the early 90s shows its endurance and influence in framing what was possible. With the advent of CFSP, the stage was set for more common external action. It called for the EU:

[...] to assert its identity on the international scene...including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence...The Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity. They shall refrain from any action, which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations.⁶⁹

Then, in December 1998 during a summit in Saint-Malo, France, French President Jacques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed that the EU needed a true defense capability.⁷⁰ In other words, the two main security actors wanted the EU to 'have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces'.⁷¹ Blair and Chirac were both witnessing Europe's utter inability to act in the midst of the crisis in Kosovo and the collapse of Yugoslavia. The Saint-Malo Declaration represented a big shift in British policy, as the UK had resisted the idea for decades.⁷² In 1999, member states approved the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP),⁷³ reflecting the goals of Saint-Malo. Finally, in 2003, after decades of effort, the EU finally made ESDP (now, CSDP) operational, sending troops out to conduct humanitarian operations under the EU flag. For the first time, the EU had not only articulated a desire for a common foreign policy, it had actually put concrete action behind these words following this up with some 30 military operations and civilian missions across three continents. Even now, there is debate over how strong the EU is on the international stage, with some arguing that its power is rather limited,⁷⁴ while others describing the EU as an emerging superpower.⁷⁵

The federalist idea in the second decade of the 21st century is alive and well. However, getting here has been something of a rocky path, and as a result of a two-decade transformational period from the mid-80s through to the first few years of the 21st century, the process has become more transactional. When the French and Dutch referenda rejected the 2005 Constitutional Treaty, the text of which invoked strong

⁶⁹ Treaty on European Union, Article J, 1992.

⁷⁰ The story behind how this agreement was reached is well told in J., Howorth, 'Discourse, Ideas and Epistemic Communities in European Security and Defence Policy', *West European Politics*, 27(2), 2004:29-52; and F. Mérand, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the Birth of European Defense', *Security Studies*, 19(2), 2010: 342-374.

⁷¹ European Council, Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit, Saint-Malo, France, 3-4 December, 1998.

⁷² J. Lindley-French, *A Chronology of European Security and Defence 1945-2007*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 247.

⁷³ ESDP is now known as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

⁷⁴ A. Toje, *The European Union as a Small Power: After the Post-Cold War*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

⁷⁵ J. McCormick, *The European Superpower*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007; A. Moravcsik, 'Europe: The Quiet Superpower', *French Politics*, 7(3), 2009: 403-422.

federalist symbolism, this signaled another turning point. Even though a nearly identical version of that treaty was approved as the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the subsequent decade since the failure of the Constitutional Treaty has been one of skepticism about the future of federalism in the EU. For example, as Mark Mazower argues, 'Integration has been driven by a bureaucratic elite that continues to see national sovereignty as an obstacle to be overcome, but this elite has largely lost sight of the principles of social solidarity and human dignity that Spinelli wished to resurrect'.⁷⁶ This sense of disillusionment seems common, but is there any basis for it? As I discuss in the next section, there is little reason to assume that the EU lacks legitimacy. Some of the negativity surrounding the EU can be attributed to the media's tendency to exaggerate and sensationalize⁷⁷ – bad news sells – and some can be blamed on the recent dearth of inspirational leaders like Spinelli, Monnet, Spaak, Delors, and many others. But despite this, opinion polls consistently show that Europeans trust EU institutions more than their national institutions, and around 70 per cent support a stronger EU foreign and security policy.⁷⁸

While it is common to deride the EU as stumbling from crisis to crisis, especially in the 21st century, it is clear that the EU is remarkably resilient.⁷⁹ If one is to believe the press, doomsday scenarios abound: either certain key member states are ostensibly on the verge of leaving the EU, or the European economy is on the brink of collapse, or a cornerstone policy of EU integration – the Euro, the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the common market, Schengen – is about to be thrown out. Every few years, like clockwork, it seems that the European integration project is said to be facing its demise in one way or another. The instances are many and are typically described as such, with notable examples stretching from the 1965 Empty Chair crisis to the 1999 Commission resignation crisis right up through the recent Greek debt and ongoing refugee crises.⁸⁰ Whether these crises are internal in origin – such as the 2005 Constitutional crisis – or external in origin – such as the 2003 EU crisis over Iraq – they are typically portrayed in the international media with a heavily negative slant. Journalists, commentators, politicians, and other public figures quickly jump on the bandwagon, often invoking predictions about the imminent demise of the EU. And yet, none of these predictions have actually come true. Doomsday scenarios continually prove to be overblown, even while these errors in perception are repeated over and over again. The latest crisis always seems to be the worst, and thus, that is what tends to stick in people's minds.

At the same time, the creation and buildup of crises that seemingly threaten the very existence of the EU is only part of the story. What is perhaps equally interesting, and ultimately more important, is how Europeans then grapple with and overcome these crises. After these crises reach their height of intensity, seemingly bringing the EU to

⁷⁶ M. Mazower, *Governing the World*, 2012, p. 408.

⁷⁷ M. K. D. Cross and X. Ma, 'EU Crises and Integrational Panic: The Role of the Media', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(8), 2015:1053-1070.

⁷⁸ European Commission, 'Standard Eurobarometer 86. National Report. Public Opinion in the European Union', Malta, Autumn 2016.

⁷⁹ M. K. D. Cross, *The Politics of Crisis in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

⁸⁰ W. Thies, 'Is the EU Collapsing?', *International Studies Review* 14(2), 2012: 225-239.

the brink of failure in the eyes of many, they then dissipate and leave in their wake a renewed will to find consensus. Indeed, European leaders repeatedly take some dramatic steps towards *more* integration in the wake of these sorts of existential crisis. It is often casually recognized, usually with the benefit of hindsight, that European actors seem to use crises as opportunities to further shape European order beyond what can be achieved incrementally. An *Economist* article quipped that, 'Europe's model of change has long been based on lurch then muddle'.⁸¹ The 1986 Single European Act, 2003 European Security Strategy, 2009 Lisbon Treaty, and 2011 Fiscal Compact, among many others, all followed seemingly serious existential crises.

The EU's founding fathers thought that by forming institutions, their ideas would live on. They were concerned that future leaders in Europe would not have the same far-reaching, transformational ideas. Perhaps they would not remember the necessity and urgency to unite Europe that characterized European thinking in the wake of WWII. As this analysis shows, to a significant extent, the founders were right. EU institutions have served the role of holding onto what has already been agreed, creating a kind of path dependence. The ideas have still resided in leaders and in the people, but these ideas have also achieved impact through institutions. When Jean Monnet stepped down from the helm of the ECSC to form the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, he demonstrated the importance of influencing formal institutions from the outside. This trend has continued. Of course, there are instances in which influential leaders, such as the popular 1985-95 Commission President Jacques Delors, championed federalism from within institutions. But all of this shows that it would be premature to assume that just because 'federal' does not make it into some treaty text or agreement, it no longer influences institutional processes. Indeed, strong and enduring ideas help to frame the parameters of what is possible, even if sometimes behind the scenes.

Conclusion: Legitimacy through institutions?

In sum, this paper argues that ideas filtered through institutions can be highly influential, in line with the institutionalist school of thought. In Europe, the federalist idea did not simply have a narrow window of popularity nor has it been in gradual decline over the decades, as is often assumed. Rather, the idea has risen and fallen in waves, and continues to impact the trajectory of EU integration. A theme throughout these past seven decades is that ideas often percolate outside of the institutions they ultimately most influence. Without the European Movement, the first major impetus to create institutions would not have existed. Then, federalist debates surrounding the EDC and ECSC mainly took place in the Council of Europe. As the institutions that would become central to today's EU began to solidify, and as the Council of Europe went down a markedly different path, federalist ideas were discussed in clubs, groups, and committees that comprised a vibrant international society of individuals. The idea of federalism was kept alive in these settings, whenever the EU took on a more

⁸¹ 'The European Union: Restoring Europe's smile', *The Economist*, October 24, 2002.

transactional style of development. However, when this did occur, the European public tended to lose passion for federalism.

This begs the question, how legitimate is the EU? The EU has been able to inspire possibilities in other regions of the world through its institutional model. But is it legitimate in and of itself? Is the EU 'opaque and unrepresentative', in the words of one scholar?⁸² In this conclusion, I argue that even though this has been an elite-led integration process that is transactional at times, the EU is still remarkably legitimate and accepted at the popular level. Indeed, while the European public may not always be enthusiastic about the EU, they have nonetheless consistently supported its existence. As Serricchio, Tsakatika, and Quaglia write, there is, 'a distinction between mass attitudes towards the current workings of the EU and mass attitudes towards the project of European integration'.⁸³ In other words, critics of the EU are not necessarily *against* the EU. For example, during the Eurozone crisis, Greek citizens had declining trust in the EU, but they still overwhelmingly wanted to stay in the EU and keep the Euro.⁸⁴

It is important to recognize that as integration has increased over time, EU institutions have carefully cultivated democratic participation in tandem. The European Parliament has grown in power and capacity, individuals can protect their rights directly through the European Court of Justice, various forums allow citizen participation, and the latest treaty enables Europeans to put forward proposals for new laws directly to the European Commission, among other things. In systematic comparisons of EU democracy with other federal systems like Switzerland and the US, the EU actually fares well, if not better.⁸⁵ While some interpret routine breakdowns in consensus in Brussels as European dysfunction, in fact, such friction is a normal part of democracy. After all, it is to be expected that within democracies – particularly within 28 different democracies – there will be debate, disagreement, and political gridlock. Comparison with the US is instructive – the polarization of just *two* political parties in the American system is often more of a problem than disagreement among 28 EU member states over issues debated in Brussels. And unlike the US, the EU's government has never shut down.

Criticism of the EU is a healthy part of the democratic process. When put to the test, Europeans have repeatedly strengthened their resolve to continue with the project after each crisis. This has been most visible in the wake of major crises when Europeans face the possibility of dis-integrating. As Jean Monnet remarked long ago, 'People only accept change when they are faced with necessity, and only recognize necessity when

⁸² M. Mazower, *Governing the World*, 2012, .p. 412.

⁸³ F. Serricchio, M. Tsakatika, and L. Quaglia, 'Euroscpticism and the Global Financial Crisis', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 51(1), 2013: 51-64, p. 52.

⁸⁴ K. Nanou and S. Vernet, 'The Eurozone Crisis has Increased Soft Euroscpticism in Greece, where Greeks Wish to Remain in the Euro, but No Longer Trust the EU', *LSE European Politics and Policy (EUROPP) Blog*, 02 March 2013.

⁸⁵ T. D. Zweifel '... Who is Without Sin Cast the First Stone: The EU's Democratic Deficit in Comparison', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 9(5), 2002: 812-840; F. Decker, 'Governance Beyond the Nation-state. Reflections on the Democratic Deficit of the European Union', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 9(2), 2002: 256-272.

a crisis is upon them'. Even in transactional periods, crises seem to inspire transformation. This does not necessarily have to be the case, but the historical record has demonstrated time and time again that there is ultimately loyalty at the heart of the European project.

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