

Europeans Before Europe: The Idea of Europe in the Context of the EU

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[Draft prepared for 2023 European Studies Association Conference]

Introduction

On May 27, 2021, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, gave a speech at the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of Greece's accession to the European Communities. The significance of this event was not limited to the context of European integration but extended to Europe as a whole. President Michel stated that Greece's accession signaled Europe's return to its origin, since "Europe was born in Greece" (European Council 2021). Throughout the speech, President Michel made no distinction between Europe and the European Union (EU) (or the European Communities preceding it), converging the European integration project with Europe as such. But this convergence is nothing unique to President Michel's perspective. The interchangeable use of 'Europe' and 'European Union' today is a common occurrence.

Nor is this convergence unique to current times when the integration project extends through much of the European continent. In 1952, at the inauguration of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), its President, Jean Monnet framed the establishment of the first supranational institutions as "la construction de l'Europe" [the building of Europe] (Monnet 1952). In the later years, the President of the European Commission under the European Economic Community (EEC), Walter Hallstein, made continuous efforts to associate the integration project with Europe rather than present it as a union of *some* European states (Krumrey 2018). But the treaties founding the first European supranational institutions were signed at the time when much of Central and Eastern Europe remained under Soviet occupation. Both the ECSC

and the EEC initially included only six states: France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Today, the EU far exceeds the early organizations both in scope and competence. But how does its claim to represent Europe differ?

Since the conceptual distinction between 'Europe' and 'EU' is evident, what purpose does their interchangeable use serve? What does this convergence imply? This paper examines whether the motivation to equate the European integration project to Europe has changed with the development and enlargement of the Union. How does it differ from the claim to represent Europe made at the early stages of European integration? What does it reveal about the identity of the EU,¹ its strategic as well as ideological priorities?

The claim of the integration project to represent Europe has some problematic implications. First, while the EU is a single entity, there is not, and most likely cannot be, a single conception of Europe. Consequently, the claim to represent Europe must pick and choose what belongs to European history and tradition and what does not, which potentially obscures some of the historical developments on the European continent and ignores not only different national but also regional historical experiences. Second, the convergence leads to a more teleological interpretation of the integration project. Its goals and priorities become of metahistorical importance where the success of the integration project is seen as a culmination of European history and tradition. This in turn runs the risk of overlooking the role of strategic interest and pragmatic considerations in the success of European integration, as their relative prioritization vis-à-vis more ideological considerations gets diminished.

Based on these implications, it can be hypothesized that the expansion and further development of the integration project may exacerbate the issues that stem from its claim to

¹ As distinct from a more general notion of 'European identity'.

represent Europe, as it becomes even more difficult to derive and maintain a certain idea of Europe. Therefore, I am interested in comparing the motivation behind and the implications of the claim to represent Europe made by the EU to the claim made by the organizations preceding it. I hypothesize that while the purpose of the initial association of the integration project with 'Europe' was to bring public and international attention to the emerging supranational authority, the nature of this association changed with the enlargement and increase in the perceived importance of political (as opposed to economic) conditions for the purposes of European integration. I specifically argue that the EU in its claim to Europe has come to emphasize democracy as a common and intrinsically European principle, leading to narratives that misrepresent the role of democracy, both historically (for Europe) and in the context of the integration project (for the EU).

This paper offers a close analysis of the relationship between the progress of integration and the nature of its claim to Europe. I analyze the speeches of three different presidents of the European Commission during the time that a major treaty was either signed or entered into force. I have collected speeches of the President of the High Authority under the ECSC, Jean Monnet, and the Presidents of the Commission of the European Communities, Walter Hallstein and Jacques Delors. My aim is to determine both differences and similarities in their rhetoric and examine how the nature of the integration project's claim to Europe changes over time. Before concluding, I discuss the problematic implications of the increasingly politicized idea of Europe in the context of European integration.

The Claim to Europe and the Origins of European Integration

Since the inception of the ECSC, the European integration project has made claims to represent Europe as such. This was part of the greater effort of the 'Founding Fathers' of the EU

to build up the significance of the integration project by exaggerating its scope. The purpose of integration was, and largely remains, peace on the European continent. In the post-World War II era, this primarily meant peace between Germany and France, who in the preceding half a century alone went to war with one another twice. Jean Monnet, whose keen understanding of supranational politics is largely responsible for the success of the ECSC, believed that the best way to prevent war was to control its resources (Fransen 2001). Therefore, Monnet wanted to make sure that Germany could not restore its military industry on its own and was bound by a supranational authority.² The latter would foster and maintain common economic interest, which Monnet believed to be the best way to guarantee a lasting peace (Monnet 1978).

Nonetheless, economic and security matters alone could not always draw interest to, and justify the necessity of, the emerging supranational authority. Therefore, Monnet, like other ‘founding fathers’ of the EU, made a conscious effort to idealize the essence of integration in discourse. The ECSC was presented as the future of Europe to cover the otherwise boring pragmatism behind its creation (Krumrey 2018). Contrary to a common assumption that the cultivation of a European identity was indifferent to Monnet, it has been rightly suggested that even though “Monnet’s plan consisted of a fairly narrow, economic agreement on how to coordinate the French and German coal and steel industries,” he also recognized that “it could hardly arouse very much enthusiasm and usher in a new community” (Swedberg 1994, 286). Therefore, the creation of the ECSC was “immediately surrounded as if by magic—the magic of “Europe”” (Sweberg 1994, 286). The ECSC needed to legitimate itself both to its own citizens and external actors involved (such as the U.S. and the U.K.), especially since the ECSC had to compete for funding and international exposure with other organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty

² Monnet also wanted to limit American influence over Germany and prevent it from taking control over its coal and steel industry (Fransen 2001).

Organization (NATO) and the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), which brought their own economic and security promises (Krumrey 2018, 4).

The claim to Europe persisted and even increased as the integration project developed further.³ The first president of the European Commission under the European Communities (and the first president of the EEC), Walter Hallstein, continued to make consistent efforts to build up the significance of the Communities in his discourse and associated the future of Europe with the future of the integration project (Krumrey 2018). Perhaps even more importantly, in the same year that the integration project underwent its first enlargement (with Denmark, Ireland, U.K. joining the Union), the representatives of the nine member countries of the European Communities met in Copenhagen to compose the ‘Declaration on European Identity’. The Declaration only deepened and, for the first time, formalized in writing the association of the integration project with Europe as such.

But if scholars have discussed the claims to Europe made by the ECSC, the EEC, and the European Communities, the question of a potential change in motivation for the continuous association of the integration project with Europe, especially since the establishment of the EU with the Maastricht Treaty, remains unexplored. The idea of Europe in the context of the EU has been mostly discussed in relation to European identity and the EU’s efforts to foster a sense of “European consciousness” among its citizens (Sassatelli 2002). However, such insights shed little light on the idea of Europe that emerges through these efforts and why the EU chooses to emphasize some aspects of European culture, history, and political tradition and not others. At the

³ Following the success of the ECSC, in 1957, the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC), which was based on the institutional design of the ECSC but with a broader competence. In the same year, another treaty established the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), a common nuclear energy market. The ECSC, EEC, and Euratom existed independently until they merged into a single entity, the European Communities, in 1967.

same time, it is certain that the implications of such a claim made by the ECSC, which included only six members, must differ drastically from the same claims made by the EU, which now consists of twenty-seven states and extends through most of the European continent. What is therefore missing is a comparative study of how the EU's claim to Europe differs from earlier discourses that contributed to the interchangeable use of Europe and European integration.

Notes on theory and method

Even though the claim to Europe made by the EU may appear more sensible than when the European Communities consisting of 'the nine' proclaimed to represent "a common European civilization,"⁴ it is in fact more problematic. Maintaining a common idea of Europe (and thus a common European identity) becomes more challenging, as the number of member states increases, and one has to account not only for national but also regional differences. Therefore, it is not enough to explain how the integration project makes claims to Europe, but also how the implications of such claims change over time. Today, the EU presents itself as much more than an economic union, acting as a protector and promoter of democracy, using it as a common, European idea. But the salience of political conditions was a later development in the history of European integration.

This is not to say that the political conditions of member states did not matter in the earlier years, but that their importance was sidelined. This does not come as much surprise if we look at the history of European integration through the prism of realism, a theoretical framework most famously applied to European integration by Milward (1996). This approach sees integration as the attempt to "rescue" the nation state and put it in a better position to meet the

⁴ From the Declaration on European Identity (1973).

political and economic demands of the time (Milward 1996). This perspective rejects the antagonism between national and supranational authorities, arguing that integration, far from being the realization of inter-/supra-national ideals, was instrumentalized by the states. Milward's interpretation, as any realist (and neorealist) theory (Waltz 1979; Williams 2009), refuses to attribute much importance to domestic regimes and sets them aside altogether.

However, if we choose not to subscribe to neo-/realist interpretation of the origins of European integration, another possible explanation of the lack of emphasis on political regimes is the fact that the original six members were democracies at the time that the ECSC treaty was introduced. So were Denmark, Ireland, and the U.K. whose accession process never raised any questions about democracy. Thus, as we will see, it was not until the possibility of the accession of Greece and the Iberian enlargement that political conditions and specifically democracy became explicitly associated with membership in the Union (Hillion 2014).

But these conditions were not elaborated on and officially formalized by any of the treaties until Maastricht. Article 2 of the EU Treaties established:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

Although the Declaration on European Identity of 1973 already recognized the importance of political (as well as economic) conditions, the language of the EU treaty was rather new for the context of European integration. But where and why did this language first appear? Was it perhaps present in discourse from the very beginning?

My hypothesis is the following: *while the purpose of the initial association of the integration project with 'Europe' was to bring public and international attention to the emerging*

supranational authority, the nature of this association changed with the enlargement and increase in the perceived importance of political (as opposed to economic) conditions for the purposes of European integration. I specifically argue that the EU in its claim to Europe has come to emphasize democracy as a common and *intrinsically European* principle, leading to narratives that misrepresent the role of democracy, both historically (for Europe) and in the context of the integration project (for the EU).

I therefore propose to examine how mentions of the terms included in Article 2 change over time in the discourse of the European Commission's Presidents. I consider democracy and the rule of law individually but group all other terms together, since they are less likely to appear in the discussion of the treaties. If my hypothesis is true, we can expect to see an increased number of mentions of the key terms around the time of the last two treaties. While democracy, the rule of law, and other values may appear in earlier contexts, their salience is likely to be lower. But if much of this is to be expected due to a narrow focus of European integration in the early years, what remains to be seen is how these values are in turn tied to the idea of Europe that the integration project has come to shape.

To examine how the claim to Europe changes over time, I have focused on speeches by the Presidents of the European Commission that address one of the major treaties from 1950 to 1993. Presidents of the European Commission have played an important role in representing the European project. Even before the transformation of the European Commission's role in recent decades (Nugent & Rhinard 2019), its Presidents in the past helped to shape European integration and inspire its further progress during various crises. Most importantly, because of the significant public visibility of the position, Presidents of the European Commission have at times utilized this exposure to promote the idea of Europe in the context of European integration.

I have relied on the *Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe* (CVCE) online archive to access the transcript of speeches and addresses given by the Presidents. In addition, I have accessed some of the speeches, particularly from later years, from the website of the European Commission. An important condition of my selection was to consider speeches that used 'Europe' when they referred to the European integration project. However, this condition excluded only a few speeches that addressed specific topics, such as, for example, Hallstein's speech from 1965, discussing details of agricultural policy. The selection was also limited to the years that a major Treaty was signed and the year it entered into force. But since this results in significantly fewer speeches for Monnet, I have also included the year 1950. The total number of speeches that matched my criteria was 28 (~15,000 words), with at least 4 and a maximum of 8 speeches per speaker for each year. It must also be noted that my overall analysis stops at the year 1993. If my hypothesis is correct, the change that occurs is consolidated with the Maastricht Treaty and the emergence of elaborate accession criteria. This is not to say that further developments are irrelevant. On the contrary, the EU only further extends its claim to Europe, almost eliminating any distinction between the two terms. But the post-Maastricht period remains outside of the scope of this paper, as so far, I have only attempted to establish the theoretical foundation for much broader research.

After I selected all the speeches that matched my selection criteria and grouped them by years, I searched for the key terms. I then went through each statement that included these terms to check for the context in which they appeared and excluded some of the statements which used these words with a different meaning implied. The most obvious example is the word 'value', which often appeared in the discussion of economic questions rather than political or normative

ones. Once I gathered all the statements where the key terms appeared in the relevant context, I began to compare them and look for the changes in rhetoric over time.

The next section presents the results of my speech analysis. I provide the statistics of the number of mentions of the key terms in the speeches of the Presidents of the European Commission, as well as interpret some of the statements they appear in and compare how the implications they carry change over time. I focus on both similarities and differences in their statements, remaining particularly sensitive to the change in tone or in the framing of a particular issue.

From coal and steel to principles and values

Jean Monnet

In 1951, at the session to initial the ECSC Treaty, Monnet gave an address where he repeatedly emphasized the historical significance of the Treaty for the six European countries involved. Although Monnet immediately presented the ECSC in the context of European history as such, he also specified that it was Western Europe that the Schuman Plan was to bring “the basic transformation” to. Monnet also stressed that the agreement between the six states must not be framed as a concession on anyone’s part, as for the first time, “six countries have come together not to seek a provisional compromise among national interests, but to take a concerted view of their common interest” (Monnet 1951). The initiation of the ECSC Treaty, according to Monnet, represented “a fundamental change in the nature of the relations among the countries of Europe, from the national form which opposed and divided them to the supranational form which reconciles and unites them” (Monnet 1951). But speaking of the change itself, Monnet focused almost entirely on the economic benefits. The speech describes how “the pooling of the production

of coal and steel and the creation of a single market” will benefit consumers and restrict the hitherto existing “restrictive cartel practices” (Monnet 1951). Notably, the speech mentions the importance of democracy, but within the organization of the ECSC rather than at the national regime level. Monnet’s claim to Europe remained a narrow one, making it clear that the (positive) implications of the initiation concern the six states (as opposed to all European states).

A year and a half later, at the inauguration of the High Authority, one of the institutions of the ECSC, Monnet, as its first President, gave a speech. Similarly to the speech at the session in the previous year, Monnet discussed the foundation of the ECSC in terms of its historical importance for Europe but also clarified that this was the Europe of the six. Nonetheless, he occasionally dropped the specification, and when talking about the common interest of the six, described them as European, as for example, when saying that “vital interests of Germany and France are under the control of an Authority which is no longer either German or French, but European” (Monnet 1952). Monnet concluded the speech with the statement that “the building of Europe” could no longer be delayed. But what did it mean to build Europe?

Based on the inaugural speech, the idea of building Europe was nothing more than the building of an economically integrated Europe, where the production of “resources which nature made the primary industrial asset of Europe” would be controlled by the supranational authority and protected from the attempts of a particular state to dominate the process. This then would unify the six European states by “erasing the divisions which men have arbitrarily made” (Monnet 1952). ‘The building of Europe’ also meant the establishment of supranational institutions that would transcend national authority and would force them to partially concede their sovereignty over the matters that concern all six, such as the production of coal and steel. This kind of ‘Europe’ has not been built before, because previous attempts of international organizations to bring European states

together allowed them to “retain their complete sovereignty,” and thus could not eliminate “national antagonisms” (Monnet 1952).

Therefore, the idea of Europe for Monnet was the idea of an economically integrated union that could create favorable conditions under which production of coal and steel would “develop to the best advantage of the common interest” (Monnet 1952). The role of political institutions, such as the Council of Ministers, was to “set up, not to exercise control and guardianship, but to provide this liaison and to assure the coordination of the policies of the High Authority and those of the member States” (Monnet 1992). Although the language of “coordination of the policies” may imply the need for a more politically (and not just economically) homogeneous union, Monnet was thinking in strictly economic terms. As he clarifies further, the task was “to mitigate the effects of economic fluctuations, to facilitate the expansion and modernization of these industries,” as well as “to forbid restrictive practices, and to prevent any excessive concentration of economic power” (Monnet 1952). The inaugural speech, despite emphasizing the necessity of coordination and cooperation between states, leaves political conditions out of the picture.

When discussing Monnet’s contribution to the first major success of the European integration project, many have emphasized his pragmatism and the ability to carefully navigate through national interests and effectively prioritize economic gain as a unifying factor (Ante 2021; Bruter 2005; Petit 2006). Monnet focused on what was practically possible at the time.⁵ He also made good use of the external aid available for Europe. Some even credit him for successfully resisting the Americans “from imposing their version of reconstruction on the French and Europeans” and “diverting Marshall Plan” into “modernization” (Fransen 2001, 85-86).

⁵ This distinguished him from many others who sought to lead the process of European integration and unity.

Following the establishment of the ECSC, Monnet continued to accentuate the role of common (economic) interests. It was particularly important for him to stress the point that the common interest of ‘Europe’ was intact with the “true” interests of each individual state. At the first meeting of the ECSC Special Council of Ministers, Monnet stated: “I have no doubt that everyone will very quickly realise that the true interests of each of our countries are ultimately served only if they are founded in the common interest” (Monnet 1952a). According to this logic then, he saw the role of the Council in formulating “a common position” rather than seeking “a compromise between specific interests” (Monnet 1952a). Monnet considered a compromise to be detrimental to European integration. Monnet once again reminded everyone involved of this at the inaugural session of the Common Assembly in September of 1952: “Our common supranational institutions are still weak and fragile; it is our duty to develop them, to make them strong and to protect them from our tendency to reach short-run compromises” (Monnet 1952b). He then concluded his speech by stating that “since they have sprung into being, the Europe which we wish to leave to our children is no longer only an aspiration. It has become a reality.”

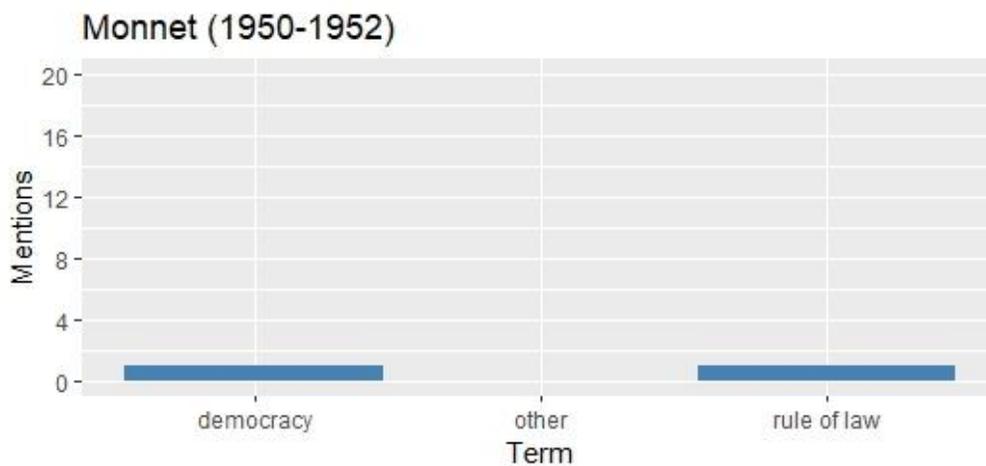


Figure 1

As we see clearly, Monnet often associated the European integration project with the future of Europe. But the Europe that he imagined was based on the ideals of a free market and strong supranational institutions able to guarantee economic growth and protect against any interest contrary to this goal. In none of his public speeches, as shown in Figure 1, mentioned the importance of values such as human rights and dignity. Democracy and the rule of law appear only once and in the context of the institutions of the ECSC institutions. Monnet emphasizes their importance for the functioning of the Special Council as well as the Court of Justice. However, he does not employ any of these terms to highlight their importance within individual states. Most importantly, Monnet does not present either democracy or the rule of law as 'European' values.

Walter Hallstein

The success of the ECSC in many ways inspired further development of European integration. In 1957, the same six states came together to sign the Rome Treaty, which established two more supranational organizations: the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. Each organization had its own Council and Commission (the High Authority in the case of ECSC), but they shared the Parliamentary Assembly (former Common Assembly) and the Court of Justice with the ECSC. Even though each organization had its own President of the Commission, I focus specifically on the EEC, as it became the main driver of European integration. The President of the European Commission under EEC was Walter Hallstein, a German legal scholar and politician. Like Monnet, Hallstein is considered one of the EU's founding fathers, and his contribution to the progress of integration is widely recognized (Von der Groeben 1998).

A few days before the Treaties of Rome were signed establishing the two new organizations, Hallstein gave a speech in the Bundestag, in which he emphasized the importance of the Treaties. He argued that the creation of a common market would remove trade barriers between European countries and essentially contribute to the promotion of peace and stability in Europe (Hallstein 1957). Hallstein arguments somewhat resembled Monnet's in that it saw common economic interest and economic cooperation as the best guarantors of peace on the continent.

The greatest difference in their rhetoric was Hallstein's legal approach and the greater emphasis on the centrality of the rule of law. Hallstein also made a more general claim to Europe, often failing to specify that the Treaties of Rome involved the 'original six'. A year after signing the Treaty, he delivered a speech in which he stated that the Commission of the EEC "acknowledges the importance of the tasks awaiting the Economic and Social Committee, the scope of its role in organizing the European Common Market and in formulating an economic viewpoint common to all Europe" (Hallstein 1958). But what was common to all of Europe was once again economic interest. His particular concern was agricultural policy. In another speech a few months later, Hallstein stressed the need for a common agricultural policy to support the development of a unified European market. He argued that the common agricultural policy should aim to increase agricultural production, improve the quality of products, and ensure fair prices for farmers, as well as modernize farming methods (Hallstein 1958a).

Hallstein's inaugural address to the constituent meeting of the Commission of the European Economic Community in 1958 outlined the vision for the future of European integration. Even though economic questions remained the most pressing, in this speech, Hallstein also pointed to the importance of the rule of law (Hallstein 1958b). If Monnet only mentioned the rule of law in

passing, Hallstein made consistent reminders of its importance for the purposes of European integration. But the logic behind their adherence to the rule of law is quite similar. Hallstein, as a legal scholar, certainly upheld the principle of the rule of law; however, in the context of European integration specifically, he perceived it as instrumental for economic cooperation and against specific interests that threatened to lead the integration project astray. Hallstein saw the Commission's role as critical for this task: "By the 'essence' of our obligations we mean the fact that we serve Europe — Europe, rather than specific interests of any type whatever, be they national, professional, economic or personal" (Hallstein 1958c). This sentence also illuminates the nature of Hallstein's claim to Europe. He presents the integration project not as a novel invention but rather as the realization of "the great ideal of European unity" (1958c). At the first meeting of the EEC Council Ministers on January 25th, 1958, he reinforced this point: "We are also aware — and this ultimately encourages us in our efforts — that, in striving for political unity and union for Europe, we are not seeking to create something completely new in a vacuum, as it were. No, we merely wish to put the existing European unity, which has been concealed by the national developments of the recent past, into an appropriate form" (Hallstein 1958d). But such a representation of the integration project, as much as it may be celebrated today, was not only historically dubious but contributed to one of the first major crises in the history of European integration.

The ECSC, EEC, and Euratom existed independently until they merged into a single entity, the European Communities, under the Merger Treaty signed in 1965. But its entry into force was delayed. Later that year, because of his policy disagreements with the European Commission, Charles de Gaulle, then the President of France, withdrew France from all European institutions, creating what is known as the 'empty chair crisis' (Ludlow 1999). Among many reasons for de

Gaulle's dissatisfaction was the fact that Hallstein "ardently espoused the theory of the super-state and devoted all of his considerable talents to shaping Community after this image" (cited in Krumrey 2018, 18). But for Hallstein, the crisis only reinforced the importance of the rule of law within the European Communities. In the address given by Hallstein to the European Parliament towards the end of the empty chair crisis, which lasted until January of 1966, Hallstein continued to adhere to the rule of law as a fundamental principle for the success of European integration. Moreover, for the first time, Hallstein grounded its importance not only in the present context but claimed it to be a *European* principle: "The treaties must be observed, first, because we should otherwise obviously be abandoning a principle that is one of the proudest possessions of Western culture — respect for the law" (Hallstein 1966). But such framing of the integration contributed to Hallstein's continuous confrontations with de Gaulle, which eventually ended his time as the President of the European Commission.

As Figures 2 and 3 show, Hallstein's main emphasis remained the rule of law, which he essentially began to tie to the idea of Europe. But although Hallstein certainly deepened the integration project's claim to Europe and began to politicize the idea by tying it closely to the rule of law, neither democracy nor other identified key terms that appear in Article 2 can be traced back to him. Hallstein wanted to guarantee economic cooperation by establishing greater control over individual states and uphold supranational authority by consolidating it in law. This of course does not mean that they dismissed the importance of democracy or other values, but that it remained a separate matter.

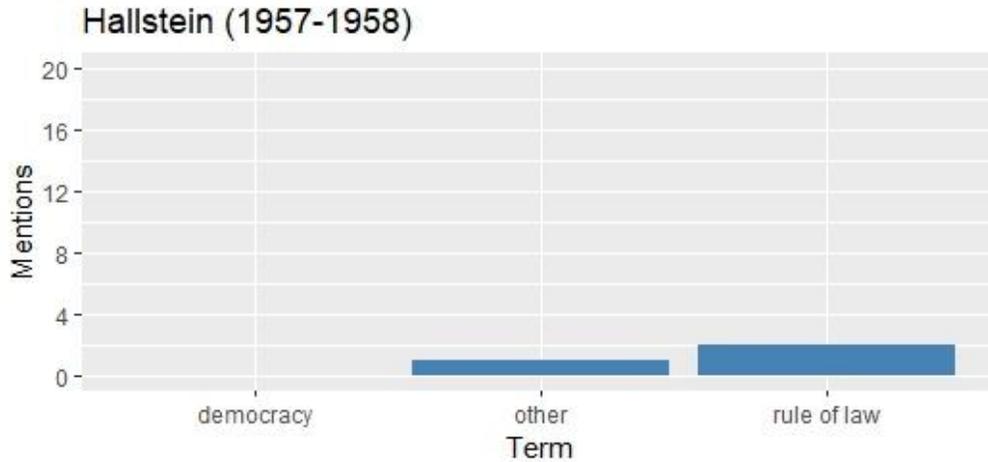


Figure 2

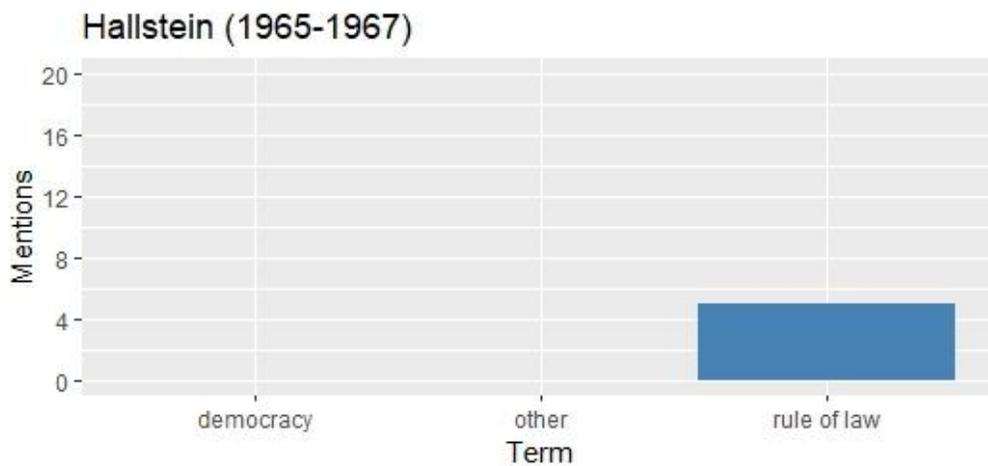


Figure 3

Jacque Delors

The benefits of economic integration began to attract additional prospective members in the early 1960s. Most importantly, the British, who despite their support for European integration initially preferred to remain outside of it, “began to fear the costs of non-membership in a politically integrated Greater Rhineland economic space” and applied to join in 1961 (Loriaux

2010, 305). The U.K.'s accession was delayed by de Gaulle's opposition, as well as the crisis in the Communities in general, but on January 1, 1973, it joined the European Communities alongside Denmark and Ireland.

However, the first enlargement was followed by the time when "European integration experienced a phase of stagnation" (Varsori 2014, 106). The period between the late 1970s and mid-1980s saw "radical changes in political leadership in Britain, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany" (Varsori 2014, 107) and was defined by Euroscepticism (Moravcsik 1991). Nonetheless, the European Communities managed to overcome the stagnation, as, despite these struggles, an opportunity presented itself to rediscover "a sense of the Community as an international actor in a polarized world that appeared to be shaped by the clash between the USSR and the United States (Varsori 2014, 108). Because the global tension presented a concern for all of the member states, it also provided an opportunity to "repropose" European integration as a response to the international problems of the time (Varsori 2014, 108). The possibility of the accession of Greece and the Iberian enlargement raised the salience of political conditions, mainly because the accession of Spain and Portugal also followed a long and complex process of political and institutional change in their transition away from the totalitarian rule (Royo 2007). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that we see an increase in mentions of democracy and other values of Article 2 in the speeches of President Jacques Delors.

The Single European Act (SEA) of 1986 introduced "procedural changes for political cooperation and the co-ordination of foreign policy and a slight enhancement of the European Parliament's role and looked ahead towards creating an EMU" [European Monetary Union] (Dedman 2006, 127). Most importantly, the SEA extended qualified majority voting (QMV) "over all internal market legislation," easing the process of decision-making "to avoid complete deadlock

[...] if an enlarged EC of 12, including Spain and Portugal, had to achieve unanimity” (Dedman 2006, 127). However, the significance of SEA extends beyond ‘material’ and institutional changes. It is often represented as the moment of a renewal of the integration project and the “relaunching” of Europe (Moravcsik 1991). It also carried a deep symbolic meaning, as it signified the end of the stagnation of the integration project.

In 1986, Delors gave a talk at the European University Institute in Florence about the SEA, which was yet to enter into force. He opened the speech by stating that European integration must find a balance between overtly ideological approaches on the one hand and “purely utilitarian vision” on the other (Delors 1986). Delors then laid out his vision of further development of European integration. Even though he did not mention democracy, Delors stated twice that the Community must be based on the rule of law. But what is most striking in the speech is his idea about the role of Europe in the world:

Thirdly — and we are at present suffering from the lack of this — speaking with one voice in the world and acting together on the international arena, in order not only to defend our legitimate interests but to respond to the demands being made of Europe from all quarters, from Africa, Latin America and Asia, and to further peace, freedom and justice. Are we in Europe to be the last to believe in Europe? Every one of you, when you go outside Europe, will find that we are being asked to act, to speak, to intervene, and to help to restore order in the world. (Delors 1986)

What is unique about Delors’ ‘claim’ to Europe in comparison to previous Presidents is that he also establishes its role as a protector of certain values beyond its own borders. The idea of Europe in the context of integration was associated with political conditions already with Hallstein, but Delors represented it as a criterion of integration’s success and began to elaborate on European political values. It is clear that Delors sees them as European in origin, as he suggests that others require Europe’s help to guarantee ‘justice’ and ‘freedom’ (Delors 1986).

By the time the Maastricht Treaty, establishing the European Union, was signed, the idea of Europe as a protector and promoter of democracy and democratic values was consolidated in Delors' rhetoric. The mentions of terms such as human rights, dignity, and freedom increased significantly. Delors continued to credit 'Europe' for embodying these values. But most importantly, Delors made democracy an explicit condition of membership in the Union. Unlike Monnet and Hallstein, he emphasized the importance of democracy not only on the supranational level but also within individual states, stating that in "a democratic society objectives can only be defined by political authorities which have democratic legitimacy" (Delors 1992). Nonetheless, Delors represents the EU as having achieved this goal, even to the extent that others "envy" the Community that is "based on the rule of law and this explains its growing influence" (Delors 1992a). Democracy was what united Europe, while others "on our planet" still remained "far from being the ruling principle for everybody." It was thus Europe's (in fact, the EU's) responsibility to "support economic reforms" and "promote the emergence of democratic values and practices" (Delors 1992b). Interestingly, Delors then somewhat contradicts this point by suggesting that democracy within the EU also needs help:

With greater responsibility comes the need for greater solidarity. That is one of the strongest messages to emerge from Maastricht, and it is reflected in the establishment of a Cohesion Fund for four Member States (Spain, Greece, Ireland and Portugal) and measures to strengthen the structural policies to assist regions lagging behind or undergoing radical change. (Delors 1992)

As shown in Figure 5, Delors mentions democracy—the term that in all of Monnet's and Hallstein's speeches combined appears only once—12 times. But this was not simply Delors' rhetoric. In 1993, the Copenhagen criteria outlined elaborate conditions for accession that emphasized not only the economic and institutional requirements but also the political capacity of prospective member states. The establishment of the Copenhagen criteria not only elaborated on

the previously vague conditions of membership, but enabled the EU to determine what makes one “European enough” to join (Kochenov 2008). The idea of Europe within the EU was thus conditioned to be associated primarily with democracy, as well as the principles and values necessary to accommodate it.

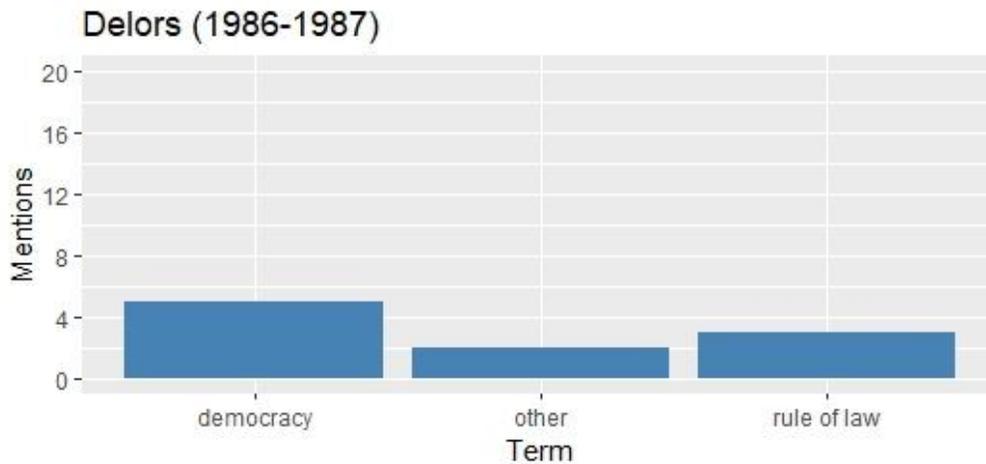


Figure 4

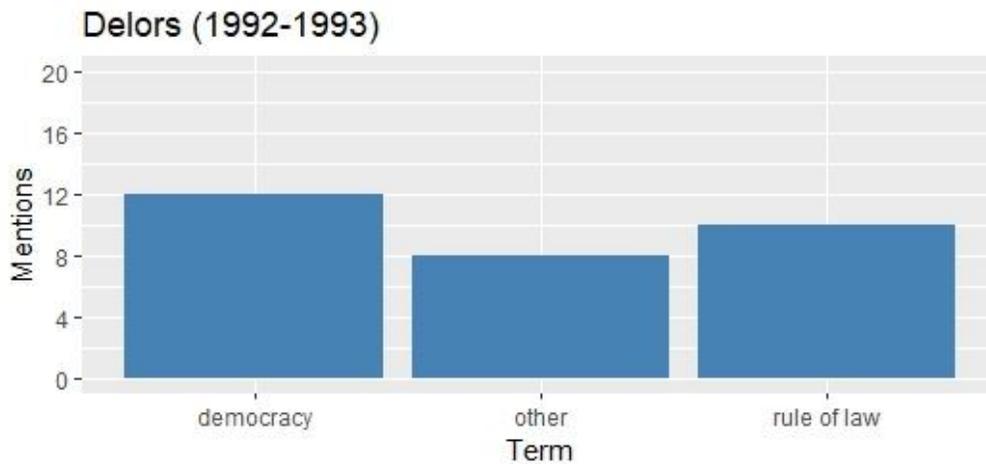


Figure 5

Europeans before Europe?

The convergence of ‘EU’ with ‘Europe’, and the consequent association of the latter with democracy carries problematic implications. First of all, the narratives that support the image of the EU as a promoter and protector of democratic values often misrepresent historical facts. When President Michel pronounces that Europe was born in Greece, he supports it by saying that “democracy was born in Greece” (European Council 2021). He brings up Socrates as the symbol of democracy, which in turn, reminds him of Europe’s Greek origins. This narrative, however, is anachronistic.

In ancient Greece, Europe remained mostly a geographical designation of the region that was distinct from Asia and Africa. According to Weller (2021), the first written record of Europe belongs to Homer, but it is Herodotus’ *Histories* that provide a more elaborate discussion. Notably, Herodotus recognized the difficulty in establishing Europe’s “borders” and the distinction between Europe and Asia but decided not to engage further with these questions (Herodotus, *Histories*, Book 4). Notably, ancient thinkers did not associate Greeks with Europeans. The distinction was made by Aristotle, who identified Hellas as between Asia and Europe yet belonging to neither. Europeans, Aristotle maintained, were rich in spirit, but not intelligence, with the opposite being true about Asians. Greeks, “intermediate in geographical position,” managed to unite “the qualities of both sets of peoples” (Aristotle, *Politics* VII. 7). Europe then, although present in Greek antiquity and already associated with a particular “spirit” and freedom, remained outside of Greek culture and thought. Moreover, ancient Greek thinkers had a rather controversial view of democracy. Both Plato and Aristotle, although can be interpreted differently, were critical of democracy, considering it one of the undesirable regimes (Coleman 2004).

The attempt to ground European integration in history, leading to a more teleological interpretation of its success, is not limited to politicians. In academic literature too, some have suggested that the origins of the EU must be understood in the context of “a long tradition of political thought about European unity stretching back several centuries” (Burgess 2000, 32). According to this account, federalism has been historically intertwined with European politics, the European idea, and the development of the nation state. Nonetheless, many European federalists who theorized or were involved in the integration project always held the American experiment as the primary example of a successful (democratic) federation (Spiering & Wintle 2002)

The relative prioritization of democracy vis-à-vis economic interest in the idea of Europe that the integration project has claimed also misrepresents its own essence. Democratic principles and values have always been important for the integration project given the context in which it originated and developed. The first steps towards integration were made at a time when the world was attempting to reconcile the fact that such rights, far from being universal, could be destroyed overnight. Moreover, these values continued to be undermined by the Soviet regime and authoritarian governments within Europe itself. But despite their paramount (normative and moral) importance, these principles and values alone do not sufficiently explain how the supranational theory of politics was successfully translated into practice.

The integration project is and has always been about peace in Europe (Dedman 2006; Loriaux 2010). However, the idea of fostering cooperation between historically conflicting states was based not on shared values or political ideology but on common economic and strategic interests. This is not to say that political conditions did not matter. Neither Spain nor Portugal could join before they democratized. However, democracy, with its principles and values later included in Article 2, could not be the primary guarantor of peace because of its potential to fail

and backslide. The recent historical trajectory of democracy in the founding six members raised concerns over the sustainability of democracy. As a result, it was more of an ideological rather than a pragmatic goal. Initially, the logic behind integration, as we saw in the previous section, was to tie states together economically. Not only would this help with the economic recovery of Europe after World War II, but it would also serve to pacify the relations between otherwise rival states. Moreover, as it is possible to argue further, economic interest remained the priority of the European integration project, despite the increase in the relative prioritization of democracy *in discourse*.

Conclusion

As the European integration project developed, the idea of Europe became more politicized and came to be associated primarily with democracy. This paper has suggested how European integration's claim to Europe has changed over time and why that carries problematic implications. However, this is only the first step in understanding the nature of the EU's claim to Europe and its consequent conditioning of the idea of Europe on democracy. The scope of this paper remains rather limited.

One potential avenue for further research would be the expansion of scope to cover both more years and more European leaders. This would certainly provide a more comprehensive analysis of the change in discourse on European integration. While I have focused only on the years of signing and entry into force of major treaties, greater attention to the years in between may provide additional insight. Moreover, this paper covered a limited timeframe, stopping at the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. A future study must expand the analysis to include the Nice and Lisbon Treaties.

But despite these limitations, the analysis has clearly demonstrated a shift in the nature of Europe integration's claim to represent Europe. Initially motivated by common economic interest and the necessity to exaggerate the scope of the project, the EU's claim to Europe later changed to emphasize political conditions as their perceived importance increased with further enlargement. But it is important to tread carefully through the narratives employed to maintain the idea of Europe that primarily prioritizes political conditions, particularly democracy. While the EU's claim to Europe may have shifted over time, it is essential to recognize the underlying motivations behind such shifts and the potential implications they may have for the future of the EU.

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