



Kiran Klaus Patel. *Project Europe: A History*. Translated by Meredith Dale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Illustrations, maps, tables. 388 pp. \$26.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-108-49496-0.

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European integration history has now become a maturing field, covering dozens of European organizations founded since 1948, when the first one, the Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC), was set up in the wake of the Marshall Plan. It has proven indispensable to understand many postwar European dynamics, from the Cold War to the economic crisis. However, research in this field has blossomed to such an extent that books covering all its aspects are rare. Numerous essays have emerged on relatively wide topics, such as Philip Ther's 2016 masterpiece *Europe since 1989: A History*, but none have covered the whole field.

Kiran Klaus Patel's latest book is thus particularly welcome, as it fills a gap between textbooks and essays by providing a stimulating synthesis of decades of historical research. A professor of European integration history, first at the European University Institute, then at Maastricht University, and now at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Patel has a diverse European experience. His book, translated from its original German edition published in 2018 (*Projekt Europa: Eine kritische Geschichte*), covers more than seventy years of European integration history on all aspects and merges political, economic, and cultural approaches. While drawing mostly from secondary sources, it sometimes brings to the fore original

primary material for certain topics, using archival collections gathered in eight countries. The book focuses on the two most important organizations—the European Economic Community (EEC), founded in 1957, and the European Union (EU), set up in 1992—while taking into account other European institutions. As a result, the book's title, *Project Europe*, refers to all institutions that have organized the continent since the war, and not only to the EEC/EU or all ideas of European unification.

Organized into eight thematic chapters, the book starts with a chronological survey, before delving into the two main motivations of European integration, “peace and security,” on the one hand, and “growth and prosperity,” on the other (chapters 2 and 3). Patel then tackles difficult questions in such chapters as “Participation and Technocracy,” “Values and Norms,” “Superstate or Tool of Nations,” and “Disintegration and Dysfunctionality.” He ends with a more classical chapter titled “The Community and Its World.”

The titles of most of these chapters, as well as the subtitle of the original German edition, *Eine kritische Geschichte* (A critical history), clearly demonstrate that Patel considers European integration from all angles, without any hint of teleology. The criticism that this type of history has a federalist streak was set out by the most famous historian of European integration, Alan Milward,

as soon as 1992 in his masterpiece, *The Rescue of the Nation-State*. Later, in an influential article, Mark Gilbert pointed out the teleological tendencies of some historians in the field, while exempting many others from this bias.[1] In the meantime, a Thatcherite counter-narrative asserted itself with John Gillingham's book *European Integration, 1950-2003* (2003), materializing the growing influence of another teleology, one that considers the nation-state as the end of history and the EU as a relic of the past.

Patel manages to tread a fine line between the competing teleologies—one federalist, the other nation-centered—by decentering his lens, thus showing how European integration history has matured since the Milwardian controversies. Instead of taking the centrality of the European communities for granted from the start, he considers all the alternatives to them, some of which were created earlier on, such as the Council of Europe in 1949. Even as the EEC was being set up, a competing organization, the British European Free Trade Area (EFTA), was also set up, at a time when the “Common Market” elicited many doubts, including among liberal-minded Western Europeans. Patel quotes the German economist Wilhelm Röpcke, who in 1957 critically referred to the EEC as “Spaakistan,” referring to the Belgian politician Paul-Henri Spaak, who engineered the draft of the Treaty of Rome in 1956. As Quinn Slobobian confirmed in his 2018 book, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*, Röpcke was, like many ordoliberalists, critical toward the EEC, which he perceived as being too protectionist. This critical attitude hence explains the contest between the EEC and the EFTA, even though Britain lodged an application to join the EEC as early as 1961, only one year after the creation of EFTA.

This decentered perspective allows Patel to rightly point out that the subsequent association of “Europe” with the “European Union” is a synecdoche, since it leaves out many countries that chose not to join, such as Norway, which was ac-

cepted but which later refused membership after it held a referendum in 1972. As the German historian astutely reminds us, two territories had already left the EEC before Britain: Algeria, when it gained its independence in 1962, and Greenland, after a referendum held in 1982 that also addressed sovereignty and fisheries. Using new archival materials, Patel even shows that, counterintuitively, the new Algerian state was interested in keeping close trade ties with the EEC and that the French government supported their claim at first.

More broadly, the book engages with the global turn of history—which has also affected European integration history—by drawing on recent studies, such as Martin Rempe's 2012 work, *Entwicklung im Konflikt: Die EWG und der Senegal, 1957–1975*, on Senegal and its association with the EEC and Giuliano Garavini's 2012 study, *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South, 1957-1986*, about Europe and the rise of the South. He shows that the European African policy owes as much to France's quest for Eurafrica as it does to Dutch and German trade conceptions. Patel concludes that “to that extent the continuities of French colonialism in the EC [European Community] should not be overestimated” (p. 251). Using Dutch archives, Patel then reveals the level of innovation in the largely forgotten Lomé agreement between the EEC and forty-six poorer associated countries. Under pressure from new English-speaking countries that were brought in by the 1973 enlargement of the EEC to include Britain, the community abandoned trade reciprocity and granted more funds, notably, to stabilize export earnings. But tensions remained high on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and on human rights.

Such sensitive issues as the democratic deficit and the definition of European identity are treated in the same nuanced way. Regarding the former, the book engages in a careful examination of the complex institutional structure of the EEC/EU, drawing on recent literature that addresses the

emergence of European law and the internal functioning of the European Commission. It concludes by drawing a comparison between the European communities and the “Adiaphoron” of the Greek philosophers, a “matter having no moral merit or demerit” but that is nevertheless important (p. 138).

The elusive definition of European identity is examined in both a sociocultural and a political fashion, in particular through the European institutions’ attempt to frame it. The association of human rights with the communities was not particularly clear at first. When the Spanish dictatorship led by Francisco Franco requested close cooperation with the EEC in 1961, some governments reacted positively; but the European Parliament vehemently mobilized against this project with the Birkelbach report. The Greek coup of 1967 similarly triggered the mobilization of the European Parliament, as well as that of the Council of Europe. The defense of liberal democratic values was acknowledged by European Court of Justice (ECJ) jurisprudence, but it was not until Maastricht that a fully fledged reference was inserted into the treaties.

A seasoned historian of the New Deal (*The New Deal: A Global History* [2016]), the author naturally inserts his book in a transatlantic framework in many chapters. The close relationship with Washington that allowed European integration to emerge in the 1940s and 1950s was replaced by more tense relations under President Richard Nixon, as “European integration now tended to become a stress factor, rather than a stabilising influence,” due to the rising tensions over currency and trade (p. 239).

The book is not exempt of minor flaws. It is relatively superficial in two areas: the European Monetary Union, a field already well known, and the post-1992 years, a period hardly treated by historians since they have to wait for archives to be released after a thirty-year delay, even though Ther has recently taken up the challenge. Written in a

clear and concise style, with useful summaries ending each chapter, the book is probably too sophisticated for absolute beginners in European integration history. Rather, it should be seen as one of the best syntheses in the field, paying an elegant tribute to the most innovative academic research while overcoming its daunting diversity and its various teleological tendencies.

Note

[1]. Mark Gilbert, “Narrating the Process: Questioning the Progressive Story of European Integration,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 46, no. 3 (2008): 641-62.

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