Preface

The Next European Century?

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Abstract

This Special Section uses the 100th Anniversary of the Armistice that ended World War One as an opportunity to reflect on the past, present and future of Europe in a global context. In this preface the section editor, Dr Kenneth McDonagh, introduces the contributions and places them in the context of the section as whole.

Keywords

PREFACE

November 2018 marked the centenary of the end of World War I. The hundred years since the Armistice have been the most turbulent and destructive in European history. From the rise of fascism to the Holocaust, from the wars of decolonisation to the Balkan Wars, to terrorism old and new, few parts of Europe or indeed the world have remained untouched by violence and turmoil over the past century.

But that is only part of the story, after the Second World War, Europe embarked on a remarkable transformation in both domestic and foreign policies. The welfare state, the spread of liberal democratic institutions and the construction of an innovative and stable international legal order are as much a part of the legacy of Europe's last hundred years as the violence and turmoil mentioned above. Having survived the financial crisis of the last decade but faced with the ongoing challenges of an unpredictable Brexit process, an ongoing refugee crisis that challenges Europe's normative self-image, and the return to government of far-right parties, nativist politics and illiberal democracy, Europe in 2018 faces an uncertain future.

This special section asked experts across a number of disciplines to outline what they see as the key challenges Europe faces and to assess how well Europe is prepared to deal with them. The contributions reflect on the challenges facing the European legal order, the historical processes playing themselves out in Europe's current crises, the resilience of European economies to future shocks, and the philosophical question of what it means to be European in the twenty-first century. Is Europe bound together by geography, culture and norms? Or were the fractures in European society merely papered over by the cooperative structures of the last 70 years and are they now returning to the fore? In 1918, European leaders looked forward to a return to the normality of peace that had been a feature of the long nineteenth century; in 2018 are European leaders sleepwalking into another period of crisis and destruction or can the hard won stability of the last 70 years be preserved for the next 70?

Before outlining the contributions to the special section, this introduction begins by reflecting on the parallels between the current challenges facing Europe and those that beset Europe in the interwar

period. It then discusses the agency of actors in contemporary global politics to avoid history repeating.

REFLECTING ON EUROPE AFTER THE ARMISTICE

In August 1914, Sir Edward Grey, working in his Whitehall office on the day Britain and Germany went to war, remarked "The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime" (as quoted in Hobsbawm 1998: 327) Even then he could not have imagined the destructive forces unleashed on the continent in the 31 years that bookended the two World Wars. Already by 1918, around 16 million had been killed, the Romanov dynasty was over-thrown and both the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires consigned to the ash-heap of history. In their place a patch-work of nation states would emerge under an ambitious but ill-fated global architecture for peace and security in the guise of the League of Nations. One hundred years after the Armistice, can we reflect on the lessons of post-World War One Europe to learn about our present?

In one important way, our present is markedly different. Europe in 2018, rocked though it may be by crises and uncertainty, remains on a long run streak of relative peace and stability unseen since 1914. As often noted, the history of Europe is a history of warfare (Cottey 2007) but the project of European integration post-1945 appears to have inoculated the continent against this virus, at least in relation to major power wars. In that respect despite the attractiveness of an Anniversary as round as 100, Europe in 2018 still more closely resembles 1914 than it does 1918. However, it is worth reflecting on how the period between the wars may hold lessons for the present. Retrospectively, we box off the period from 1918-1939 as the 'inter-war period', however as Steiner (2013) notes "It is crucial to realise…that whatever the damage done, the reconstruction of the 1920's was not inevitably doomed to collapse by the start of the 1930's" (1043). The descent into World War Two was not the automatic working out of historical processes set in motion in 1918 but rather the outcome of a series of choices and (mis)calculations by leaders in that period, from Hitler's ideological drive to war, to the consistent underestimation of the nature of the Nazi threat by other leaders who "like so many of the old élites, belonged to a world where statesmen made sensible choices, where rules and conventions were observed, and where men avoided bluff and reckless behaviour" (Ibid.: 1051). The lessons then are to identify what parallels can be drawn between the challenges of the present from immigration, to a changing world order, to a re-definition of the fault-lines in domestic politics and those of the post-1918 European order.

One important lesson is the fragility of the liberal democratic order. During the interwar period, Europe saw an unprecedented return of authoritarian forms of constitutional order. By the outbreak of the Second World War, elected assemblies had been dissolved in no fewer than 17 European states with German occupation ending a further 5. The only European countries to maintain electoral democracy for the entire period were Britain, Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. (Hobsbawm 1998: 111) That many of these transitions to authoritarianism were achieved in the first instance through electoral means only serves to highlight the contingent nature of a constitutional order which many would have taken for granted in the post-war period. Similarly, the Post-Cold War European order was marked by optimism if not outright complacency regarding the democratic futures of the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Recent events both inside the EU, Hungary and Poland, and outside, Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, have highlighted the problems with such a perspective. Even within established European democracies the rise of populists from UKIP, to the Front National, to AfD, to the Five Star Movement and the Liga in Italy may be warning signs that

the constitutional orders we take for granted are no more secure than they were in the interwar period.

A second parallel with the interwar period, is that in 1918 European leaders found themselves engaging with an unfamiliar geopolitical landscape. The Great War had shaken many of the certainties of European realpolitik but also had announced once and for all the arrival of at least one new great power, the United States of America. Though some parallels might be drawn with the rise of China in the present day a more pressing parallel lies in the USA's view of its own role in the global order in the aftermath of the war. Although the architecture of the League of Nations owed much to the influence of the US President Woodrow Wilson, the same forces that delayed US entry into the war blocked US participation in the new international organisation. As Senator Henry Cabot Lodge put it "I can never be anything else but an American, and I must think of the United States first, and when I think of the United States first in an arrangement like this, I am thinking what is best for the world" (as quoted in Drezner 2018) In the absence of US membership and with the exclusion of the Soviet Union, the League failed to evolve into a functioning architecture for managing global politics in the period that followed. That the US also pursued a crackdown on immigration and protectionist economic policies in the period that follows only serves to underline the parallels with the current administration. What is different in 2018 though is that the US since 1945 has been deeply embedded in Europe's security and economy. A return to America First in the twenty-first century presents a much more structurally difficult and politically significant challenge to Europe than it did in the 1920's.

A final dynamic reflecting Europe's changing status in the world order in 2018 over 1918 is found in migration. In the aftermath of the war, millions of people found themselves on the wrong side of new political boundaries and were pushed out for reasons of ethnic identity or pulled due to economic necessity to move across the continent and onwards to the United States. The Immigration Acts in 1921 and 1924 in the US were largely targeted at limiting what were viewed as undesirable European economic migrants, particularly from South and Eastern Europe. (Ward 1924) Although new US restrictions on migration are not targeted against Europe in 2018, it is worth Europe considering how it wants to respond to migration into the continent in the context of unequal global development and a declining European population. Can we learn the lessons of the interwar period that attempts to restrict migration in either the name of economics or cultural identity can lead to undesirable and in some cases dire consequences? And if we do what are the alternative configurations of citizenship and residency that can be created to manage these flows?

Each of the contributions to this special section grapple with these questions from different perspectives. But what is clear is that political leadership is needed to gain and maintain popular support for the many difficult challenges that face Europe in the years to come.

INTRODUCING THE COMMENTARIES

The first two commentaries in this special section, by Professor Brigid Laffan, European University Institute, and Professor Michael H. Smith, University of Warwick, grapple with the big questions of what Europe's role in the world is and the capacity of Europe's ability to adapt and respond to the various challenges of a resurgent Russia, a rising China, an unreliable United States and a challenging domestic political environment. Both paint equivocal pictures of where they see Europe's future. Professor Smith outlines two possible futures for the EU in this context: a 'reformed EU in a pluralist order' or a 'paralysed EU in a fragmented order.' He believes that while a positive outcome is possible it will take decisive action by European leaders in the present to ward off failure in the

future. Professor Laffan similarly sets out three alternatives for Europe's future – failing forward (Jones, Keleman & Meurier 2016), failing better (Beckett 1983) or the growing pains of a new strategic actor. As with Smith, which of these options proves to be the future of the EU depends very much on the interaction between leadership, institutions and the external environment. The only thing that is certain is that the future is uncertain, perhaps more so now than at any time since the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

Dr Elisa Pascucci and Dr Emma Patchett, University of Helsinki, zoom in on a very specific set of border practices, the use of 'hotspots' to manage incoming asylum seekers, by the EU to examine the implications for the EU's role in the world in the 21st century. This focus on the micro-politics of border management allows them to highlight the 'pensée d'État' [state-thinking] implicit in the manner in which the EU has attempted to inscribe its political subjectivity on the bodies of migrants and in managing migrant flows. Ironically, as Pascucci and Patchett outline, this attempt to police the boundaries of Europe has produced tensions between member-states, friction at borders and acts of solidarity and resistance from refugees and citizens alike. Instead, they challenge the EU to reimagine the concept of political space and subjectivity to respond to the refugee issue and migration more broadly in a way that fulfils the EU's promise as something beyond the nation-state.

Dr Russell Foster's contribution moves us from discussion of the micro-politics of borders to the symbolic politics of identity. Using the conflict between Ukraine and Russia as a site to explore the complexity of identity, politics and emotion through the medium of symbolic exchange. Critically, he focuses on how a contestation over European identity can produce a divisive narrative of self/other, forcing Ukraine to choose between two artificially stabilised senses of self - pro-EU or pro-Russia - and erasing or silencing the complex and fluid identities of its people. Using Goethe's Dr Faustus as a parable for what happens when we unleash powers which we do not fully comprehend, Dr Foster's commentary highlights the dangers of framing political disputes within the symbolic frames of fixed identities and argues for recognising the unfixed, fluid and dynamic aspects of ourselves to allow for dialogue and compromise in the future.

The final two contributions to the Special Section take the form of conversations; the videos are available at the end of the section. The first conversation is with Professor Nathalie Tocci whose professional experience bridges the gap between academic specialists in European Security and practitioners at the highest level, in her role as special adviser to EU HRVP Federica Mogherini. Professor Tocci focuses on the importance of recognising what has changed both within the EU and in the challenges it faces both internally as an institution and externally in terms of the broader geopolitical and security environment. Part of this shift is the recognition that individually European states are small and therefore the EU has become a collective necessity to influence global politics. She discusses the challenge of Brexit to EU security cooperation including PESCO and E2I, and what 'principled pragmatism' means in practice for EU foreign and security policy. A key insight was her insistence on the necessity for the EU to live up to its own democratic principles before it can influence the external environment in a positive way. Critically she argues that Europe needs to wake up to the reality represented by Donald Trump's America, which she describes as a symptom of a broader underlying change in the US role in the world. The post-World War two world is no longer there, and it cannot be retrieved. Europe needs to adapt and manage this transition to a fundamentally different world order.

The second conversation is with Professor Federico Fabbrini, Full Professor of European Law in the School of Law and Government, DCU and founding Director of the D.C.U Brexit Institute. He begins by highlighting the rising challenge of nationalism in the context of both 2018 and 1918, underlining how European integration represented an attempt to diffuse that challenge that is now increasingly under threat. In response to this new challenge, Professor Fabbrini argues for a reaffirmation of the

founding values of the European project and to have the confidence to build more Europe not less in response to those who would seek to pull the continent apart, but in so doing recognising the different sets of visions and interests guiding member states. Rather than a two-speed or multi-speed Europe, he argues for a Europe of concentric circles that recognises the different end-points member states want to reach in their engagement with integration.

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