

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

This paper is made available online in accordance with publisher policies. Please scroll down to view the document itself. Please refer to the repository record for this item and our policy information available from the repository home page for further information.

To see the final version of this paper please visit the publisher's website. Access to the published version may require a subscription.

Author(s): Ben Rosamond

Article Title: European integration and the social science of EU studies: the disciplinary politics of a subfield

Year of publication: 2007

Link to published version: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2007.00616.x>

Publisher statement: The definitive version is available at [www3.interscience.wiley.com](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com)

European integration and the social science of EU studies: the disciplinary politics of a subfield

BEN ROSAMOND

This article takes the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Rome as an opportunity to reflect upon half a century of academic discourse about the European Union (EU) and its antecedents. In what follows I will resist the rather obvious temptation simply to explain the intellectual evolution of what we now call EU studies in terms of the changing form and character of the EU over time.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the intention is to offer a somewhat more complex picture of the relationship between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ in this field of enquiry. While there are obvious—indeed, undeniable—moments at which the academic study of the EU and European integration has shifted markedly in response to discernible changes or emergent trends in its object, the contention here is that this is a partial and largely unhelpful way of thinking about the disciplinary history of the subfield of EU studies. While breaks with earlier modes of enquiry or the opening of new avenues of investigation in EU studies may reflect the impact of real-world trends upon academic purpose, those trends cannot explain the precise forms that intellectual work has taken.

At the very least, scholarship requires the choice (one hopes, the conscious choice) of approaches to subject-matter. Intellectual interest may be aroused inductively—that is, through an initial observation that persuades a scholar of the value or necessity of research. Yet the conduct of that research requires the selection of approaches and/or theories which enable the resultant knowledge to be ordered meaningfully. There are, of course, a number of determinants of knowledge production. At one level the choice of a theory or an approach may reflect a ‘horses for courses’ attitude to social enquiry. This suggests that the investigator’s job is to select the ‘best’ available conceptual toolkit to

---

<sup>1</sup> The term ‘EU studies’ is used here to describe the totality of academic work from across a range of social scientific fields that has engaged with and theorized about European integration and the institutional, policy-making and governance dimensions of what is now called the European Union.

organize research in the domain under scrutiny. It may be that a single theory cannot account for all aspects of a phenomenon; different theories may offer the ‘best fit’ for different aspects. Similar processes might also emerge from more deductive, discipline-based reasoning. In this case real-world phenomena are seen as useful sites for the examination of theoretical propositions or for the competitive testing of theories against one another. In some instances it may be that a political event appears to challenge or run contrary to received wisdoms in a discipline or subdiscipline. Its investigation accordingly becomes a matter of urgency for disciplinary progress.

In short, social research emerges as a consequence of one or other of these logics (inductive or deductive)—or perhaps, more often than not, through some blend of the two. In any case, what should be clear that the encounter between an object of study (such as the EU/European integration) and the production of knowledge about that object is not a neutral or innocent exercise. Put simply, the conditions of intellectual knowledge production reflect assumptions, biases, trends and debates within the academy. This is why deep ‘internal’ understandings of academic fields are necessary for a full critical appreciation of their current state of play and are, at the same time, vital supplements to standard ‘externalist’ readings.<sup>2</sup> EU studies is a particularly fertile site on which to see these dynamics at play. Without understanding the broader social scientific and disciplinary contexts from which work emerges (‘internalist’ drivers), we have no basis

---

<sup>2</sup> Brian C. Schmidt, *The political discourse of anarchy: a disciplinary history of international relations* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998); Brian C. Schmidt, ‘On the history and historiography of International Relations’, in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons, eds, *Handbook of international relations* (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 3–22; Wolfgang Wessels, ‘Cleavages, controversies and convergence in European Union studies’, in Michelle Cini and Angela K. Bourne, eds, *Palgrave advances in European Union studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Ole Wæver, ‘The sociology of a not so international discipline: American and European developments in International Relations’, *International Organization* 52: 4 (1998), pp. 687–727.

for understanding why events in the world of European integration ('externalist' drivers) elicit *particular* academic responses.

What follows, therefore, is a critical contextual discussion of EU studies over time. There is no attempt here to offer a singular history of the field of EU studies, but there is a move to interrogate the assumptions that lie beneath many representations of the field's evolution. It may seem that raking over a field's past represents something of a distraction from the important business of getting on with current research. However, the central premise of this contribution is that there is a lot at stake in how the past of EU studies is represented. Telling stories about past academic efforts has the effect of legitimizing particular and perhaps partial intellectual moves in the present. Should the historiographic rationale of such moves be contested, then the quality, utility, desirability and plausibility of present work come under closer scrutiny.

The article begins by identifying two factors that govern the evolution of any academic field: *scholarly contingency* (the fact that scholarship does not proceed with free agency, but is bound by various conditions) and *disciplinary politics* (the idea that the course of academic work is governed by power games and that there are likely to be significant disagreements about best practice and progress in a field). In terms of EU studies, the thrust of disciplinary politics tends towards an opposition between 'mainstreaming' and 'pluralist' versions of the political science of EU studies. These observations feed the largely 'internalist' approach of this contribution. The article goes on to show how 'externalist' readings might give a general guide to how EU studies has progressed, but cannot ultimately adjudicate on the particular forms of scholarly enquiry that have driven EU studies over time. The final section explores how, in the face of emerging monistic claims about propriety in the field, an effective pluralist political science of the EU might be enhanced.

### **Scholarly contingency and disciplinary politics**

This approach to intellectual history leads to two broad observations about the evolution of EU studies. The first concerns the *contingent* character of academic work.

‘Contingent’ in this sense is not meant to imply randomness, but rather to acknowledge that scholars approach their object under intellectual circumstances that are not entirely of their own making. The point is to deepen our understanding of the relationship between the development of the EU and the academic study of the EU as more than a matter of scholars playing a game of ‘catch-up’ with an often fast-moving empirical entity. For one thing, what is deemed to be significantly empirical{?} is, of course, dependent upon an a priori intellectual move. This is why, for example, we need to be careful with ideas such as the claim that the period from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s within the Communities was one of ‘Eurosclerosis’ (a combination of nationalist–protectionist political economy impulses at the domestic level and institutional and integrative inertia at the supranational level). It may be entirely correct to say that, at an intergovernmental level, member-state preferences were quite divergent and that the economic crises of the early 1970s elicited autarchic rather than ‘open’ (and thus integrative) policy responses. But to move from there to the idea that integrative momentum had ipso facto broken down is to privilege intergovernmental consensus as the key signifier of integration and in turn to suggest that significant integration occurs *only* at the moment when member states’ preferences are aligned to the point where the treaties are revised. A quite different picture of the 1960s and 1970s emerges if these axioms are relaxed and scholars look elsewhere—principally within the institutional substructure of the Communities and in particular at the emerging jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice—for significant, transformative activity with long-term effects.<sup>3</sup> By the same token, we should be similarly cautious of any rush to judgement on the bigger implications of the failure of the constitutional treaty to secure domestic popular approval in France and the Netherlands in 2005, especially where

---

<sup>3</sup> See J. H. H. Weiler, ‘The transformation of Europe’, *Yale Law Journal* 100: 8, 1991, pp. 2405–503; Daniel Wincott, ‘Institutional interaction and European integration: towards an everyday critique of liberal intergovernmentalism’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 33: 4, 1995, pp. 597–609.

referendum outcomes are taken as definitive evidence of systemic breakdown within the EU or of popular insurgency against the project of integration.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, to simplify, one implication of intellectual ‘contingency’ is this: not only is our explanation of European integration the product of theoretical choice, but also our very conceptualization of the realities of European integration and governance (what we take to be significant facets of the EU and its predecessors) is bound up with our scholarly choices and theoretical preferences. This tendency is remarkably acute in EU studies, and with good reason. Since its inception in the 1950s, what we now know as the EU has consistently thrown large-scale empirical challenges to the observer trained in the classification and explanation of political, legal and economic phenomena.

However, the social scientific mind is perhaps best characterized by the enduring presence of two countervailing predispositions: the predisposition to seek out the new and unfamiliar on the one hand, and the predisposition to render the unfamiliar familiar on the other. The second of these is what James Rosenau and Mary Durfee have in mind when they ask that scholarship be driven by a simple question: ‘of what is this an instance?’<sup>5</sup> This suggests that we as scholars should do our level best to ensure that the phenomena we observe are labelled in terms that social science understands; and, for the most part, we probably do. The European Parliament is thus treated as a legislature akin to national parliaments, the Common Foreign and Security Policy is evaluated in terms that make sense to scholars of foreign policy analysis, and so on. The clear advantage of this strategy is the acquisition of analytical leverage: the ability to make plausible conjectures and generalizations from the EU case that are not just about the EU case. Without analytical leverage, runs the argument, we have little except thick description or journalism. At best, thick description gives the social scientist some pre-theoretical raw

---

<sup>4</sup> See Andrew Moravcsik, ‘What can we learn from the collapse of the European constitutional project?’, *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 42: 7, 2006, pp. 219–41.

<sup>5</sup> James N. Rosenau and Mary Durfee, *Thinking theory thoroughly: coherent approaches to an incoherent world* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), pp. 2–4.

material (some data) from which hypotheses can be generated, at which point the social scientific enterprise begins.<sup>6</sup>

Yet the obvious cautionary note to sound is that this tendency to ‘familiarize’ the EU might seriously downgrade its novelty, its distinctiveness and its potentially transcendent qualities. Rosenau and Durfee’s question could, after all, be answered with a bemused ‘I don’t know!’ The story of EU studies can be (and often is) read in terms of a constant tension between rival ideal-typical macro-interpretations of European integration and the institutional forms it has taken. At one extreme is the claim that the net result of more than half a century of institutional evolution is a polity with neither historical precedent nor contemporary parallel. The production of knowledge about the EU should, it follows, be concerned with fashioning new social scientific approaches that are capable of capturing this novel object. At the other extreme sits the impulse to treat everything the EU generates in terms of the categories of tried and trusted social scientific scholarship. Adopting a position along a continuum between these two poles is, of course, a matter of encountering the real world of the EU and making a judgement upon it. But it is an encounter that cannot be separated from the scholar’s position on matters of epistemology and social scientific propriety.

This line of thought connects to the second broad foundational observation from which this piece commences. Put simply, EU studies, past and present, is a highly fruitful venue for exploring *disciplinary politics* in the social sciences. The term ‘disciplinary politics’ carries two connotations. The first is the suggestion, in line with the foregoing, that the way in which the EU is ‘read’ in academic work follows, in substantial part at least, from factors endogenous to the academy and to the disciplines that comprise it. As such, a proper appreciation of the ebbs and flows of a field like EU studies requires an understanding of the dynamics of its contributing academic disciplines. The second

---

<sup>6</sup> Gary King, Robert O. Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing social inquiry: scientific inference in qualitative research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 35–43.

connotation draws upon the double meaning of ‘discipline’, a term used to describe not only a way of organizing scholarly enquiry in a delimited area of enquiry, but also a means by which rules are enforced and through which power is exercised in the production of knowledge. Research in the sociology of knowledge reminds us that academic communities—disciplines—are social networks possessing (a) complex rules about what is considered admissible work, (b) well-established norms about the proper way to conduct research and present the results of scholarship and (c) often clear senses of where disciplinary boundaries reside.<sup>7</sup> The capacity to define these three facets of disciplinarity—*admissibility*, *conduct* and *borders*—reflects power structures within disciplines, and struggles for ‘the soul’ of disciplines often reflect profound disagreement about these questions.<sup>8</sup>

These questions of disciplinary politics feed into EU studies in several ways. The first issue to consider is the extent to which EU studies is and has been a field that ‘belongs’ predominantly to one recognized academic discipline. Is political science, for example, the appropriate ‘home turf’ of the field? On the face of it, this would seem to be something of a non-issue. As is well known, European integration and the EU are written about extensively across a range of fields other than political science. Most prominent among these are economics, history and legal studies, with a clear trend suggesting increasing interest from sociologists. Indeed, the data provided by the peak organization of the world’s 52 formally constituted European Community Studies Associations (ECSAs) imply that political science is a ‘minority sport’ within EU studies. Less than 10

---

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Julie T. Klein, *Crossing boundaries: knowledge, disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1996); Peter Mancias, *A history and philosophy of the social sciences* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Peter Wagner, Björn Wittrock and Richard Whitley, eds, *Discourses on society: the shaping of the social scientific disciplines* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> For a clear example in (American) political science, see Kerstin Renwick Monroe, ed., *Perestroika! The raucous rebellion in political science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).



per cent of the national associations categorize 50 per cent or more of their membership as ‘political science’. However, the two largest associations—the Universities Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES) in the UK and the European Union Studies Association (EUSA) in the United States—account for a little under 40 per cent of the global EU studies community, and both carry political science majorities.<sup>9</sup> This would seem to suggest that a significant proportion of anglophone academic research on the EU emanates from the broad discipline area of political science.

If we confine our review of EU studies to those interventions that self-consciously deal with EU politics, then the question about ‘home turf’ is better posed in terms of the internal disciplinary politics of political science. As is well known, political science is a far from settled field, and considerable discussion goes on about its scope and boundaries. As such, the study of politics in relation to a given phenomenon intersects with debates about admissibility, conduct and borders within political science. Moreover, the precise nature, cleavage structure and intensity of these debates will vary over time as particular concerns wax and wane. At the risk of oversimplification, table 1 offers a stylized and ideal-typical juxtaposition of two models of the study of EU politics. This identifies the disciplinary politics of EU studies across three dimensions of debate that not only consider whether EU politics is a matter for political science alone or for a wider cluster of cognate communities, but also raise fundamental questions about the nature of the object (the EU/European integration) and how it should be studied.

**Table 1: Two models of the study of EU politics**

<b>The mainstreaming model</b>	<b>The pluralistic model</b>
The EU is a polity ‘like any other’ that lends itself to the intellectual technologies developed over time by mainstream political science	The EU is a new type of polity. The tools of standard political science may not be appropriate
The study of EU politics is best served by the standard tools of political science.	The study of EU politics is an inherently multidisciplinary affair.
Good political science conforms to a set of	The study of EU politics benefits from the input

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.ecsanet.org>, accessed XX XXXX. 2007.{?}

---

standardized epistemological positions and methodological rules of thumb.

of work from diverse epistemological and methodological standpoints.

---

*Source:* The table is a reorganization of table 1.4 in Ben Rosamond, ‘The political sciences of European integration: disciplinary history and EU studies’, in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), p. 15.

This juxtaposition invites us to organize in a similar way thinking on the two foundational observations made here about the contingency of academic enquiry on the one hand and the disciplinary politics of EU studies on the other. The mainstreaming model offers a conception of the study of EU politics confident that established social scientific approaches, theories and techniques will be able to capture European integration and the development of the EU. In other words, this ideal type is rooted in the certainty that the ‘of what is this an instance?’ question is answerable. Moreover, it holds that the object is so familiar that established political science can deliver effective knowledge without taking itself away from well-established tenets; indeed, that the study of the EU should be aligned to that which is deemed to be ‘cutting edge’ in the tightly defined discipline of political science{?}. Pushed to its logical extreme, this position would maintain that analytical leverage is obtained only via rigorous comparison with other political systems and not with other cases of regional integration. As such it pushes International Relations (IR) very much to the margins of the EU studies enterprise.

The pluralistic ideal type is, in contrast, hostile to acts of disciplinary closure. It advocates what Warleigh calls ‘intradisciplinarity’ within political science (a mixture of non-judgemental internal communication to avoid intellectual ‘Balkanization’ and openness to the possibilities offered by ‘non-political science’),<sup>10</sup> together—at its limits—with a refusal to privilege political science as the most virtuous source of

---

<sup>10</sup> Alex Warleigh, ‘In defence of intra-disciplinarity: “European studies”, the “new regionalism” and the issue of democratisation’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17: 2, 2004, pp. 301–18.

knowledge about EU politics. At the core of this position is an ontological restlessness about the assumption that the EU is a polity like any other; a feeling that to use standard political science on the EU is to impose upon it a set of potentially inappropriate categories that might harm effective conceptualization or generalization. One ‘anthropological’ version of this position could, of course, argue that the fact that the EU is *sui generis*—that  $n = 1$ —should not bother us in the slightest. To demand analytical leverage via comparability emerges from a particular conception of social science that insists upon general rather than particular forms of knowledge. So diversity of disciplinary starting points is not the only requirement. A commitment to diverse (often unconventional) approaches, theories and methods is both appropriate and effective.

Needless to say, we are unlikely to discover precise replicas of either of these stances in the history of studies of European integration and the EU. Like all ideal types, the two models are better thought of as ends of a continuum towards which different authors, schools and literatures tend. Posing them as stark, stylized alternatives highlights some salient ‘internalist’ issues that help to form a picture of how matters of scholarly contingency and disciplinary politics have played out in half a century of EU studies.

### **External drivers and the shaping of EU studies**

It is important to recognize, notwithstanding the thrust of the ‘internalist’ argument advanced above, that internal drivers of the character of EU studies intersect with external factors associated with the EU and its evolution. The latter, as Wessels observes, pull analysts of the EU into particular domains of enquiry.<sup>11</sup> That these are recognized as pull factors, let alone that they lead to particular forms of scholarly activity, is the consequence of the mix of scholarly contingency and disciplinary politics suggested above. As a precursor to the analysis that follows, an indicative list of the more obvious external pull factors is laid out in figure 1.

### **Figure 1: External/pull drivers of the study of European integration/the EU**

---

<sup>11</sup> Wessels, ‘Cleavages’, pp. 240–43.

### *Public debate*

- articulation of problems/quest for solutions
- politicization of integration/aspects of the EU
- emergence of ideas and buzzwords in public discourse

### *Treaties and history-making moments*

- foundation of the Communities
- treaty reform
- Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs)

### *Institutional evolution*

- reform of institutions; acquisition of new formal powers/competences
- changing inter-institutional balance of power
- intra-institutional change (e.g. voting rules within institutions)
- informal operation of institutions

### *Constitutionalization*

- cumulative political significance of European-level jurisprudence
- normative implications (democracy, legitimacy, citizenship)

### *Policy change and governance*

- emergence of new areas of EU policy competence
- the mix of policy actors within the EU system
- cumulative impact of policy outputs
- evolution of/emergence of new or additional modes of governance

### *Intersection of the EU and member-state political systems*

- domestic adaptation to EU inputs
- national 'uploads' to the EU
- domestic politics of European integration

### *Enlargement*

- politics of accession in new member states
- implications for institutional and policy balance within the EU system

### *Intersection of the EU and the international/global system*

- ramifications of EU external action
- influence of global/international factors upon the conduct of European integration and EU politics

These external drivers have stimulated scholarship in different sorts of ways. Most obviously, salient events or processes prompt research, publication and other forms of academic consolidation. For example, enlargement—particularly at moments when it

appears to throw up significant challenges to the integrity of the EU system (as with the 1973 and 2005 enlargements)—seems to coincide with intensive phases of publication activity on the topic.<sup>12</sup> The formal evolution of the EU's institutions appears to have provoked an abundance of work. So, to take but one example, the gradual accumulation of powers by the European Parliament, together with the development of party groups, discernible patterns of voting behaviour and the Parliament's status as a co-legislator, would seem to account for the growth of the subfield of EU legislative politics.<sup>13</sup> The EU's visible status as a policy system is reflected in the foundation of the *Journal of European Public Policy* in 1994 and the discernible rise of policy-analytic work on the EU since the 1980s.<sup>14</sup> Its enhanced foreign and security policy competences, together with the now dense web of EU external relations, would seem to provide the rationale of the specialist journal *European Foreign Affairs Review* (founded 1996), together with the (re)appearance of IR and foreign policy scholarship with an EU focus.<sup>15</sup> The emergence of discernible variations from the classic Monnet model of policy-making generates appeals for work that examines the full array of governance modes at work within the EU.<sup>16</sup> In particular, the management of the single market through a regulatory policy

---

<sup>12</sup> John Keeler, 'Mapping EU studies: the evolution from boutique to boom field 1960–2001', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43: 3, 2005, p. 571.

<sup>13</sup> See Gail McElroy, 'Legislative Politics', in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 175–94.

<sup>14</sup> Helen Wallace and William Wallace, 'Overview: the European Union, politics and policy-making', in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 339–58.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Hill and Michael Smith, eds, *International Relations and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Morten Kelstrup and Michael C. Williams, eds, *International Relations theory and the politics of European integration: power, security and community* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> Helen Wallace, 'An institutional anatomy and five policy modes', in Helen Wallace, William Wallace and Mark A. Pollack, eds, *Policy-making in the European Union*, 5th

style has conjoined the study of the EU to broader ideas about the regulatory state.<sup>17</sup> The acquisition by the Communities/the EU of new competences in areas such as environmental policy has the dual effect of attracting scholars of the areas in question (at both national and global levels) to EU studies and forcing existing analysts of European integration to develop explanations of how that policy competence was acquired. The case of environmental policy is especially interesting in this regard because of its de facto appearance prior to its de jure enactment in the treaties.<sup>18</sup>

Political theorists have been keen to emphasize a ‘normative turn’ in EU studies, where debates that have informed moral and political philosophy for centuries—debates about legitimacy, democracy and citizenship—have come to the fore in the day-to-day practices of EU politics or follow logically from the evolution of the treaties or proposed revisions to the treaties.<sup>19</sup> As such, the ‘normative turn’ represents the supply of bespoke concepts and modes of reasoning that enrich the field—and force it to engage in

---

edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 49–90; Manuele Citi and Martin Rhodes, ‘New modes of governance in the European Union: a critical survey and analysis’, in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 483–504.

<sup>17</sup> Giandomenico Majone, *Dilemmas of European integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Alasdair R. Young, ‘The politics of regulation and the internal market’, in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 373–94.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Andrew Jordan, ed., *Environmental policy in the European Union: actors, institutions and processes* (London: Earthscan, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Richard Bellamy and Dario Castiglione, ‘Legitimizing the Euro-“polity” and its regime: the normative turn in EU studies’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 2: 1, 2003, pp. 7–34; Lynn Dobson, *Supranational citizenship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Andreas Føllesdal, ‘Normative political theory and the European Union’, in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 317–35.

return<sup>20</sup>—at a time when ‘real world’ events initiate a demand for such knowledge. The same might be said about attempts to develop coherent projects that apply approaches from the subfield of International Political Economy (IPE) to the EU following the initiation of the single currency.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the discussion of everyday domestic politics in the member and accession states becomes, out of necessity, an element of EU studies. Country-focused research, because of the continuous and intimate interplay between the EU and national levels of authority, becomes in part an adjudication of the impact of EU inputs upon the domestic polity—an idea that has become consolidated in the evolving concept of ‘Europeanization’.<sup>22</sup> More broadly still, the recognition that several levels of authority operate in the EU system might be held responsible for the growing literature on multi-level governance (MLG) on the one hand,<sup>23</sup> and efforts to rethink the EU as an analogue for federal polities on the other.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> See Andrew Moravcsik, ‘In defence of the “democratic deficit”: reassessing legitimacy in the European Union’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40: 4, 2002, pp. 603–24; Andreas Føllesdal and Simon Hix, ‘Why there is a democratic deficit in the EU: a response to Majone and Moravcsik’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44: 3, 2006, pp. 533–62.

<sup>21</sup> Erik Jones and Amy Verdun, eds, *The political economy of European integration: theory and analysis* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli, eds, *The politics of Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Claudio M. Radaelli, ‘Europeanization: solution or problem?’, in Michelle Cini and Angela K. Bourne, eds, *Palgrave advances in European Union Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 56–76.

<sup>23</sup> Ian Bache and Matthew Flinders, eds, *Multi-level governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, *Multi-level governance and European integration* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> David McKay, *Designing Europe: comparative lessons from the federal experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Kalypso Nicolaïdis and Robert Howse, *The federal vision: legitimacy and levels of governance in the United States and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

In short, events in the course of European integration (external drivers) both throw up issues for the pre-existing academy of EU studies to address and act as an invitation for scholarship from outside the conventional boundaries of EU studies to cross the border or perhaps to re-enter after a period of exile. It is also the case that EU topics seem to have become more prominent over time in the broader professional literatures of political science, IR and public administration. Keeler's data for 24 academic journals between 1960 and 2000 show a steady rise in scholarly output on the EU from the 1960s until the 1980s and a veritable explosion through the 1990s.<sup>25</sup>

The picture that emerges{?} might be seen as one of an expanding community of scholarship featuring the evolution of a clear subfield (EU studies),{?} which has been underwritten by the growth of specialist journals, professional associations and their derivative conference circuits.<sup>26</sup> The foregoing also suggests the heightened salience over time of EU topics for other substantive and subdisciplinary areas of political science and IR.

Yet this depiction lacks a sense of how and why some literatures within EU studies rise and fall. Of course, the externalist position explored in this section possesses an answer in that we should expect straightforward symmetry between what happens in the EU or in the course of European integration and the scholarship that follows. The substance of EU studies should reflect the substance of its object. The field's development—and, by implication, our evaluation of this development—becomes a largely utilitarian exercise in selecting the *best* general approach, the *best* theories and the *best* literatures from which to draw appropriate lessons.

---

<sup>25</sup> Keeler 'Mapping EU studies', p. 556.

<sup>26</sup> Ben Rosamond, 'The political sciences of European integration: disciplinary history and EU studies', in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 9–13.



Two obvious examples will help to clarify the thrust of this position. Neo-functional theories offered the dominant account of west European integration and the evolution of the Communities through the 1960s. Closely related to evolutionary theories of economic integration and rooted in a non-state-centric logic of societal pluralism, the neo-functionalists discovered a form of integration driven by self-regarding acts of societal and supranational interests{?} that were in turn impelled by a logic of functional and (thus) political spillover.<sup>27</sup> On the face of it, this appeared to work for the very early phases of the Communities' development, and the logic of spillover seemed to be a genuine inductive discovery of the early drivers of west European integration. But the shift to national-interest-driven Community politics from the mid-1960s and the assertion of the primacy of intergovernmental institutional forums thereafter provided—again on the face of it—a *better* organizing narrative of the dynamics of integration.<sup>28</sup> This was a better story because it conformed to the realities of integration and Community governance in ways which neo-functionalism increasingly could not.

If neo-functionalism is the primary instance of how a theory failed according to externalist logic, then the case of IR provides a good example of how a (sub)disciplinary approach to enquiry came to be discredited. According to Hix's powerful critique, IR simply asked the wrong sort of questions about the EU. To devote overwhelming

---

<sup>27</sup> The key texts are Ernst B. Haas, *The uniting of Europe: political, social and economic forces, 1950–1957*, 3rd edn (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Leon N. Lindberg, *The political dynamics of European economic integration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1963); Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart A. Scheingold, eds, *Regional integration: theory and research* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971). For a summary and analysis, see Ben Rosamond, *Theories of European integration* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), ch. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, 'Obstinate or obsolete? The fate of the nation-state and the case of western Europe', *Daedalus* 95: 3, 1966, pp. 862–915; Roger Hansen, 'European integration: reflections on a decade of theoretical efforts', *World Politics* 21: 2, 1969, pp. 242–71.

scholarly attention—in the manner of the standard neo-functional/intergovernmentalist debate—to questions of the causes of *integration* was to miss the fact that integration (more or less) did not capture the motivations, preferences and institutional interactions of the vast bulk of resource-seeking actors within the European polity. The sights of the field should be reset to accommodate the concepts and categories of comparative political science, in part because they provide a more realistic take on what actually matters in the real world of EU politics.<sup>29</sup>

The issue of which questions guide study and which are appropriate to specific moments in the EU's history is taken up by Diez and Wiener, who argue that the story of theorizing European integration is a tale of three macro-problems or three phases of theory-building—'explaining integration', 'analyzing governance' and 'constructing the EU'—that grow out of particular phases in the history of the Communities and the EU.<sup>30</sup> This is a helpful step, for two reasons. First of all, it helps us to connect the discussion of the general shape of EU studies to the overall evolution of its object. The core argument of the first phase is one between different views of the causes and implications of integration in the light of the remarkable *prima facie* challenge that the early Communities posed to conventional academic and policy understandings of how the international system should be organized, particularly in the late 1950s and early to mid-1960s. The second of Wiener and Diez's phases corresponds to the maturation of the Communities/the EU as a policy system, with debate organized around issues such as whether the EU is a conventional or unconventional polity, whether it deploys

---

<sup>29</sup> Simon Hix, 'The study of the European Community: the challenge to comparative politics', *West European Politics* 17: 1, 1994, pp. 1–30; Simon Hix, 'The study of the European Union II: the "new governance" agenda and its rival', *Journal of European Public Policy* 5: 1, 1998, pp. 38–65; Simon Hix, *The political system of the European Union*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Diez and Antje Wiener, 'Introducing the mosaic of integration theory', in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, eds, *European integration theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 1–21.

conventional modes of governance or novel ones, and the extent to which domestic and supranational polities are meshed. The third phase corresponds to treaty-driven moves to consolidate the political character of European unity and thus brings to the fore of academic enquiry questions of citizenship, democracy and identity.

Second, Diez and Wiener's move is valuable in that it helps to clarify the limits of externalist accounts of the evolution of EU studies. Their identification of big guiding questions follows Wæver's key point about how we tell the story of a field of enquiry: 'external explanations can sometimes . . . be better at accounting for the overall directions of change [in a field], *but they can never explain the form that theory takes*'.<sup>31</sup> The next section deals with this particular question. Why, beyond the broad shadowing of the evolution of its empirical object, has the political science and IR of the EU adopted its particular forms at different times? Why, at different times, has the field been dominated by exchanges among scholars of a particular type? On what grounds and with what justification have particular approaches to or theories of the EU been deployed and/or rejected?

### **Re-telling the story of EU studies**

At this stage it is important to note the insight from studies of critical disciplinary history that the way in which the story of a field is told is often a by-product of positional advantage being secured within the present of that field. Any attempt to lay out a consensual present 'state of the art' is likely to provoke what Collini, Winch and Burrow refer to as 'retrospective teleology'—a narrative of the way the field has evolved that

---

<sup>31</sup> Ole Wæver, 'The structure of the IR discipline: a proto-comparative analysis', paper presented at the annual convention of the International Studies Association, Portland, Oregon, 25 Feb.–1 March 2003, p. 5 (emphasis added). See also Ole Wæver, 'The sociology of a not so international discipline: American and European developments in International Relations', *International Organization* 52: 4, 1998, pp. 687–727.

converges upon and leads via a linear route to that asserted ‘state of the art’.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, there is a good deal at stake in establishing a valid and uncontroversial, particular claim about the past of EU studies. If particular premises—say, the inappropriateness of neo-functionalism or the marginalization of IR as a disciplinary base for EU studies—are accepted unconditionally, then a dual risk emerges: (a) past intellectual efforts may be misconstrued or misunderstood, and thus valuable insights from the past may be lost because it is no longer deemed necessary to read those literatures; and (b) claims to present intellectual status may rest not upon genuine progress from past academic work, but upon the mere assertion of progress.

The internalist approach to discipline history tells us that there is rather more to Diez and Wiener’s phases of integration theory than new macro-questions growing organically out of what is happening in the EU in particular sections of its evolution. We have already noted that the selection of an approach or a theory is in itself a significant driver of the reality that is observed. In other words, the relationship between the object of knowledge and the generation of knowledge is reciprocal rather than one-way. There is thus also much more to the demise of neo-functionalism and the claims about IR’s marginality than a straightforward failure to secure ‘truth’ about European integration and the EU.

Based on the preceding paragraphs, this section seeks to develop an internalist understanding of the evolution of EU studies in two steps. The first uses Diez and Wiener’s phases as a template to uncover the various shifts in the cadence of academic discourses of the EU. The second revisits the ‘mainstreaming’ versus ‘pluralism’ continuum developed above to make a forward-looking argument about how some views about advancement in EU studies and the state of the art in the field rest on potentially problematic readings of the past. In other words, what follows is a kind of double reading, where the first ‘internalist’ take on the evolution of the field seeks to disrupt

---

<sup>32</sup> Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and David Burrow, *That noble science of politics: a study in nineteenth century intellectual history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 4.

complacent and unilinear understandings of EU studies in a way that requires critical interrogation of ‘presentist’ depictions of the field’s past.

*The changing cadence of academic discourses on the EU and European integration*

The first academic work on European integration did not emerge in an intellectual vacuum. Haas’s *The Uniting of Europe*, first published in 1958, offered the first statement of the prolific integration theory (neo-functionalist) research programme that held sway in US political science circles, particularly in the pages of the journal *International Organization*, for the next decade and a half. The assignment to this phase by Diez and Wiener of the macro-issue ‘explaining integration’ is appropriate because the scholarship was driven by an ambition to go beyond the confines of the European case with a view to provoking general insights about regional integration. Neo-functionalist integration theory was underwritten by a Weberian social scientific commitment to theory-building and the robust exposure of theoretical precepts to empirical scrutiny.<sup>33</sup> It drew on at least two additional impulses. First, Haas—in particular—sat at the cutting edge of political science discussions of the technocratic and pluralistic character of advanced industrial societies. Neo-functionalism was thus located in broader concerns about the operation of rationality, albeit in conditions bounded by cognitions and underlying value sets,<sup>34</sup> and about the consequences of and possibilities for complex societal pluralism. Haas foresaw integration as a form of pluralist community construction that would emerge above the nation-state and would develop through the aggregate actions of self-interested agents operating at first within the confines of territory-bound pluralism. Indeed, high levels of

---

<sup>33</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane and Philippe C. Schmitter, ‘Transformations in world politics: the intellectual contributions of Ernst B. Haas’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 8, 2005, pp. 271–96; Ben Rosamond, ‘The uniting of Europe and the foundation of EU studies: revisiting the neo-functionalism of Ernst B. Haas’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 12: 2, 2005, pp. 237–54.

<sup>34</sup> Ernst B. Haas, ‘Does constructivism subsume neo-functionalism?’, in Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen and Antje Wiener, eds, *The social construction of Europe* (London: Sage, 2001), p. 23.

societal pluralism came to be seen as one of the key independent background conditions that explained the capacity of a regional integration scheme to survive beyond its initiation phase.<sup>35</sup> Second, neo-functionalism was developed in contradistinction to two broad narratives of how order was achieved in international politics: realism (the primacy of power politics) and liberal idealism (the construction of international institutions). The neo-functionalists belonged to a third school that sought to show how systemic ordering consequences could flow from the apparently mundane interest-driven acts of social groups.<sup>36</sup>

The key point here is that the dominant school of thinking about European integration—as least in the US context—was located centrally in the mainstream conceptual, empirical and methodological concerns of US political science as they stood in the 1960s. The most common ‘other’ of neo-functionalism identified by its discussants tends to be intergovernmentalism—an alternate set of propositions about which actors matter in the integration process. No doubt the critiques elaborated by (especially) Hoffmann and Hansen were important in that they forced reconsideration of certain core premises and emphases within neo-functionalism,<sup>37</sup> but in terms of broad analytical approach—questions of commitment to theory-building, criteria for theoretical evaluation and core ontological rationalism—less than might be supposed separated early neo-functionalism

---

<sup>35</sup> See Ernst B. Haas and Philippe C. Schmitter, ‘Economics and differential patterns of integration: projections about unity in Latin America’, *International Organization* 18: 4, 1964, pp. 705–37; Joseph S. Nye, ‘Comparing common markets: a revised neo-functional model’, in Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart A. Scheingold, eds, *Regional integration: theory and research* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 192–231.

<sup>36</sup> Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, p. xiv.

<sup>37</sup> Hoffmann, ‘Obstinate or obsolete?’; Hansen, ‘European integration’. See esp. Haas’s preface to the 2nd edn (1968) of *The Uniting of Europe*, pp. xi–xxx.

from the coherent intergovernmentalist rival that was laid out subsequently.<sup>38</sup> In so far as this first phase can be treated in terms of a rivalry between neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism, then, the contest is of the ‘first order’ (competing hypotheses with shared epistemological and ontological commitment) rather than rooted in a deeper ‘second order’ (metatheoretical) disagreement.<sup>39</sup> It is also fair to argue that neo-functionalism versus intergovernmentalism is a debate from within the liberal tradition of IR. To class intergovernmentalists (and especially Moravcsik) as ‘realists’ is to misunderstand the development of liberal institutionalist IR over the past three decades.

Perhaps a more telling contrast might be that drawn between the discipline-driven integration theory project that was being developed in the United States and the emerging inductive, perhaps historicist and certainly self-consciously multidisciplinary approach that was emerging in the pages of the UK-based *Journal of Common Market Studies* (*JCMS*), founded in 1962.<sup>40</sup> The contrast should not be overdrawn, but the emergence of a strong alternative intellectual tradition—where a stylized opposition between alternative first-level narratives of European integration was not necessarily the norm—as exemplified by the early *JCMS* needs to be added to the picture. The related distinctions between inductive and deductive approaches, problem-driven and theory-driven research, and disciplinary knowledge versus areas studies have all been played out in EU studies, most notably in the 1990s amid discussions about the funding of European studies in the United States.<sup>41</sup> If anything, this is a more enduring and more significant cleavage in the

---

<sup>38</sup> Most notably by Andrew Moravcsik, *The choice for Europe: social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> This distinction is borrowed from Alexander Wendt, *Social theory of international politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> For a contemporaneous discussion of the contrast, see Karl Kaiser, ‘L’Europe des savants: European integration and the social sciences’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 4: 1, 1965, pp. 36–47. More recently, see Helen Wallace, ‘Studying contemporary Europe’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 2: 1, 2000, pp. 95–113.

<sup>41</sup> Rosamond ‘Political sciences’, pp. 16–18.

field of EU studies: the contrast between ‘Europeanists’ on the one hand and ‘political scientists with an interest in the EU’ on the other.<sup>42</sup> Not only does it cut to the heart of the ‘mainstreaming’–‘pluralism’ continuum identified above, it also shines a light on the quite different national ‘cultural institutional complexes’ within which academic work on the EU is produced.<sup>43</sup> Academic cultures where norms and expectations are more discipline-driven (mainstream US political science being the obvious case in point) are likely to provoke different types of work from cultures with a greater tolerance of more ideographic{?} and multidisciplinary forms of enquiry (the UK perhaps).

Standard representations of first-phase integration theory perhaps overstate the existence of a great neo-functionalist–intergovernmentalist debate and in so doing neglect the subtle development of neo-functionalist integration theory and the nuanced auto-critiques that its practitioners developed. Serious attempts to recast neo-functionalism as a theory of background conditions, together with attempts to specify the conditions under which dis-integration would take place and a growing concern with the operation of knowledge and cognition in the integration process are all under way in the course of neo-functionalist theorizing.<sup>44</sup> Yet standard representations seem keen to depict first-phase

---

<sup>42</sup> Amy Verdun, ‘An American–European divide in European integration studies: bridging the gap with international political economy’, in Erik Jones and Amy Verdun, eds, *The political economy of European integration: theory and analysis* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 11–24. See also Wæver, ‘The sociology of a not so international discipline’.

<sup>43</sup> Knud Erik Jørgensen, ‘Continental IR theory: the best kept secret’, *European Journal of International Relations* 6: 1, 2000, pp. 9–42.

<sup>44</sup> See inter alia Manuel Barrera and Ernst B. Haas, ‘The operationalization of some variables related to regional integration: a research note’, *International Organization* 23: 1, 1968, pp. 150–60; Nye, ‘Comparing common markets’; Philippe C. Schmitter, ‘A revised theory of European integration’, in Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart A. Scheingold, eds, *Regional integration: theory and research* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 232–64.



integration theory as little more than a series of largely static propositions about ‘spillover’ and a determination to prove that non-state actors and supranational entrepreneurs matter.

Two myths should perhaps be laid to rest about neo-functionalism.<sup>45</sup> First, as already suggested, to describe first-phase integration theory as in some ways detached from the pursuit of scientific rigour is absurd, given the continuing and overt commitment to theory-building and the determination, especially among the neo-functionalists, to work at the cutting edge methodologically. There might be an honest argument to be had about the dominance in certain quarters of EU studies of largely descriptive work, but that is not how some interventions claiming to supply—at last—social scientific rigour to the study of the EU frame themselves.<sup>46</sup> Second, to locate the work of phase one integration theorists as firmly in the IR camp is quite unhelpful. In many ways, integration was an intervention in IR akin to IPE’s later insistence that the divide between the domestic and the international levels of analysis is false and misleading.<sup>47</sup> It was an intervention—like the slightly earlier work of Karl Deutsch on transactions and international community-building<sup>48</sup>—rooted in a political science that saw application well beyond the boundaries of domestic politics. The work of Lindberg, and later Lindberg and Scheingold, is illustrative here in that it began to treat the EU as a political system in line with the

---

<sup>45</sup> See also Rosamond, ‘Political sciences’, pp. 23–4.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald Schneider, Matthew J. Gabel and Simon Hix, ‘European Union Politics: editorial statement’, *European Union Politics* 1: 1, 2000, pp. 5–8.

<sup>47</sup> Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O. Keohane and Stephen D. Krasner, ‘International organization and the study of world politics’, *International Organization* 52: 4, 1998, pp. 645–85.

<sup>48</sup> See Karl W. Deutsch et al. {?}, *Political community in the North Atlantic area: international organization in the light of historical experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

hugely influential work of David Easton.<sup>49</sup> Some of Haas's late empirical work on integration and 'turbulent fields' anticipated later policy analytic work concerned with actors in conditions of imperfect knowledge using cooperation and institution-building as a means to rectify knowledge deficits.

This{?} provides a bridge to the second phase and further important arguments about the drift away from the classical macro-theories of integration. As noted above, the recognition of the EU as a policy system or a polity in its own right long pre-dates the assertion in EU studies that this is the most fruitful ontology.<sup>50</sup> There are perhaps two further big internalist drivers of the shift away from the problematique of integration in EU studies from the late 1980s and into the 1990s. The first is rooted in the logic of the standard theory-building norms of mainstream political science. The move to treat the Communities/EU as a polity or a policy system did not emerge simply from the increased supply of supranational policy outputs and the dramatically enhanced clustering of organized interests in Brussels. It also had much to do with the quest for analytical leverage and the very acutely perceived problem that, if treated as an instance of integration, the EU was looking into the abyss of the great social scientific elephant trap where  $n = 1$ . The argument of comparative politics scholars and policy analysts was that the EU would cease to be *sui generis* if it were recast and redefined accordingly. This would facilitate comparison and thus generate analytical leverage as opposed to thick description/journalism.

---

<sup>49</sup> Lindberg, *Political dynamics*; Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart A. Scheingold, *Europe's would-be polity: patterns of change in the European Community* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970); David Easton, *A systems analysis of political life* (New York: Wiley, 1965).

<sup>50</sup> See also the prescient work of Carole Webb, e.g. 'Theoretical perspectives and problems', in Helen Wallace, William Wallace and Carole Webb, eds, *Policy-making in the European Community*, 2nd edn (Chichester: John Wiley, 1983), pp. 1–41.

The retreat from integration as a guiding problem was also bound up with a heightened discipline-wide suspicion of the prospects for all-encompassing grand theory and an embrace of the middle range. The core idea of middle-range theory is that it is domain-specific; that phenomena such as the EU are broken down into component processes and subparts, each of which is comparable with functionally equivalent processes and subparts in other contexts. So instead of there being theories of the EU (just as there are not conventional theories of British, German or French politics), elements of EU politics are brought into—for example—the analysis of executive, legislative and judicial politics, the analysis of policy networks and agenda-setting, and the discussion of the formation and consolidation of cleavage structures.<sup>51</sup> Middle-range analysis, conventionally at least, imagines a range of theoretical debates at different levels or domains of the EU system, in which rival hypotheses are tested with a view to increasing the social{?} of scientifically valid knowledge.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to standard logics of theory-building, the demise of ‘integration’ as the core issue of academic work on the EU{?}, also reflects trends in the wider political sciences and the emergence of large literatures where parts of the EU are tested or taken on board as a case. Four such (overlapping) literatures have been especially prominent since the 1980s and help to account for the move into the phase two polity discussion as defined by Diez and Wiener. The first consists of applications of rational choice analysis, arguably the dominant stream in American political science in recent decades, to the study of the executive, legislative, judicial, public opinion and domestic politics aspects of the EU,<sup>53</sup> a trend underwritten by the appearance the journal *European Union Politics* in 2000. The

---

<sup>51</sup> See Hix, *Political system*; Jeremy Richardson, ed. *European Union: power and policy-making*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> John Peterson, ‘The choice for EU theorists: establishing a common framework for analysis’, *Journal of Common Market Studies* 39: 3, 2001, pp. 289–318.

<sup>53</sup> Mark A. Pollack, ‘Rational choice and EU politics’, in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 31–55.

second uses the EU as a venue for new institutionalist political science in all of its forms—rational choice, historical and sociological.<sup>54</sup> As an institutionalized arena (in both formal and informal senses), the EU has been used for the discussion of, respectively, (a) the processing and reconciliation of competing preferences, (b) the logics of path dependency, where decisions on institutional design taken at one point in time may lock in and influence/constrain actors' encounters with subsequent imperatives, and (c) the capacity of institutional interactivity to socialize actors, constructing their preferences and identities. Institutional approaches have also been important within liberal IR in the United States, and the influence of liberal institutionalism is evident in a number of key texts.<sup>55</sup> The third literature is the broad sweep of policy analysis, which was deemed to have reached a state of scientific maturity at the foundation of the *Journal of European Public Policy* in 1994.<sup>56</sup> The fourth literature—that of 'new governance'—overlaps significantly with that of policy analysis, but is perhaps distinguished by its

---

<sup>54</sup> Joseph Jupille and James A. Caporaso, 'Institutionalism and the European Union: beyond International Relations and comparative politics, *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, 1999, pp. 429–44; Mark D. Aspinwall and Gerald Schneider, 'Same menu, separate tables: the institutionalist turn in political science and the study of European integration', *European Journal of Political Research* 38: 1, 2000, pp. 1–36; Keith Dowding, 'Institutional research on the European Union: a critical review', *European Union Politics* 1: 1, 2000, pp. 125–44; Joseph Jupille, James A. Caporaso and Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'Integrating institutions: rationalism, constructivism and the study of the European Union', *Comparative Political Studies* 36: 1–2, 2003, pp. 7–40.

<sup>55</sup> Moravcsik, *The choice for Europe*, is perhaps the most obvious example. Mark A. Pollack, *The engines of integration: delegation, agency and agenda-setting in the EU* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), combines liberal institutionalist concerns with principal-agent analysis, a technique most obviously associated with the analysis of domestic politics, particularly in the United States.

<sup>56</sup> Jeremy Richardson and Robert Linley, 'Editorial', *Journal of European Public Policy* 1: 1, 1994, pp. 1–7.

emphasis on the less hierarchical elements of goal-oriented forms of coordinated action and by its tendency to conceptualize the EU as a (possibly novel) governance system.<sup>57</sup>

A combination of standard norms of theory-building and the burgeoning of a clutch of influential literatures continues to influence the span of EU studies. To this we add the internalist drivers of Diez and Wiener's third phase—'constructing Europe'. While the recent turn towards moral and political philosophy in EU studies may have been largely provoked by the 'demand for answers' induced by post-Maastricht treaty-building, the major innovation in this phase appears to be the opening up of a 'second order' discussion between rationalism and constructivism. At first sight, the organization of EU studies into these two camps would seem to mirror precisely the rationalist–constructivist cleavage in (American) IR that has opened up since the early 1990s at least.<sup>58</sup> There are, after all, parallel attempts to build bridges between rationalists and constructivists in both IR and EU studies, on the assumption that despite micro-foundational ontological differences (roughly a contest between, on the one hand, the world as populated by strategic utility maximizers with exogenously determined preferences and, on the other, the world, and thus interests and identities, as socially constructed), there is epistemological compatibility. This, in turn, promises the possibility of competitive hypothesis-testing within a common framework of social scientific purpose.<sup>59</sup> The

---

<sup>57</sup> Markus Jachtenfuchs and Beate Kohler-Koch, 'Governance and institutional development', in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, eds, *European integration theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 97–115.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Risse, 'Social constructivism and European integration', in Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez, eds, *European integration theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 159.

<sup>59</sup> Representative examples of such discussions for IR and EU studies respectively are James Fearon and Alexander Wendt, 'Rationalism v. constructivism: a skeptical view', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons, eds, *Handbook of International Relations* (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 52–72, and Jeffrey T. Checkel, 'International

consequence of this vision is a situation where not only do constructivist-derived theories compete against rationalist opponents, but also first-order theories from the different schools potentially explain different parts of the operation of the EU politics and policy-making. Not all IR scholars sharing a constructivist ontology are happy with this idea, but the tendencies towards more 'reflectivist' forms of constructivism are perhaps more pronounced in EU studies, in part because is not just IR-variant constructivism that acts as the inspiration for scholars interested in the social construction of integration.<sup>60</sup> Work rooted more firmly in discourse analysis than conventional IR constructivism is prone to treat the EU as an arena for the exchange and expression of multiple subjectivities. If power resides in the capacity to generate realities through acts of discursive construction, then the ontological commitment to a social world carries epistemological consequences that make it impossible for this type of analysis to break bread with rationalism on rationalism's terms.<sup>61</sup>

The distinctiveness of the types of constructivism at work within EU studies is not simply metatheoretical; it is also substantive. It is tempting to rely upon an externalist understanding to suggest that there is an obvious relationship between the highly institutionalized and multilevel quality of the EU and the exploration by constructivist projects on Europe of both the role of deliberation, socialization and persuasion within

---

institutions and socialization in Europe: introduction and framework', *International Organization* 59: 4, 2005, pp. 801–26.

<sup>60</sup> See Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen and Antje Wiener, 'Introduction', in Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen and Antje Wiener, eds, *The social construction of Europe* (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 1–19.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Diez, 'Speaking "Europe": the politics of integration discourse', in Thomas Christiansen, Knud Erik Jørgensen and Antje Wiener, eds, *The social construction of Europe* (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 85–100; Ian Manners, 'Another Europe is possible: critical perspectives on European Union politics', in Knud Erik Jørgensen, Mark A. Pollack and Ben Rosamond, eds, *Handbook of European Union politics* (London: Sage, 2007), pp. 77–95.

formal and informal institutional venues and the exchanges between EU-level and domestic norms. The internalist add-on is to stress the particular influence of Habermasian communicative action perspectives upon EU scholarship—itsself related to the significant number of German-trained social scientists now working in EU studies.<sup>62</sup>

*Recovering EU studies past for EU studies future*

In summary, in all three phases the form taken by EU studies is influenced by the complex intersection of the field with its broad intellectual location, namely the social sciences generally and the political sciences in particular. This underlines the point made earlier about scholarly contingency. This section turns more directly to matters of disciplinary politics in EU studies. The utilitarian conception of ‘best fit’ between approach/theory and object cross-cuts with rival and varying conceptions of what constitutes ‘best’ in this context. This in turn suggests that the ebbs and flows of EU studies have not followed the operation of a free market in approaches, theories and techniques. All but the most relativist of scholars would in any case reject the appropriateness of a laissez-faire or ‘anything goes’ approach to the study of social phenomena. There needs to be some adjudication and review of different approaches. The key issue is whether this adjudication takes place in terms that are, to all intents and purposes, fair.

The problem, of course, is that alternative positions on the mainstreaming–pluralism continuum of disciplinary politics bring forth quite different conceptions of how a field like EU studies progresses and rival understandings of the means by which the best work is judged. In the ultimate ‘mainstreaming’ position sits a resolutely Kuhnian aspiration to

---

<sup>62</sup> Christiansen et al., ‘Introduction’, p. 15; Risse, ‘Social constructivism’, pp. 164–5; Antje Wiener, ‘Constructivism and sociological institutionalism’, in Michelle Cini and Angela K. Bourne, eds, *Palgrave advances in European Union studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 35–55.

achieve a ‘normal science’ in EU studies.<sup>63</sup> Such work would be rooted squarely in the bounded mainstream of political science and would proceed from a tight set of agreed axiomatic premises. Knowledge is accumulated in the context of the resultant paradigms, not by challenging their assumptions and engaging in ‘dissenting’ forms of work. This Kuhnian view has found voice within EU studies, particularly from scholars affiliated to the project of rational choice institutionalism,<sup>64</sup> which in turn draws heavily upon the research published in the highest-impact American journals of political science. Recent EU studies work is shot through with interventions that endorse, in one way or another, this Kuhnian stance. There is talk of the recent arrival of ‘professionalism’ in the field,<sup>65</sup> the welcome import of research standards that apply in other subfields of political science,<sup>66</sup> and, in the context of the rise of work on the EU inspired by social choice theory, relief that work is no longer ‘wholly descriptive’.<sup>67</sup> As indicated above, there is compelling evidence to cast doubt on each of these claims. The fact that such claims are made suggests that part of the ‘mainstreaming tendency’ wishes to do more than simply establish a ‘normal scientific’ island amid the archipelago of EU studies. These are more expansive claims that compare present rigour with past *lack of* rigour and, in so doing,

---

<sup>63</sup> This refers to Thomas Kuhn’s seminal text on the philosophy of science, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>64</sup> Dowding, ‘Institutional research’; and, in more detached mode, Mark A. Pollack, ‘Theorizing the European Union: international organization, domestic polity or experiment in new governance?’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 8, 2005, pp. 357–98.

<sup>65</sup> Gerald Schneider and Mark Aspinwall, ‘Moving beyond outworn debates: a new institutionalist research agenda’, in Mark Aspinwall and Gerald Schneider, eds, *The rules of integration: institutionalist approaches to the study of Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 177.

<sup>66</sup> James A. Caporaso, ‘Toward a normal science of regional integration’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 6: 1, 1999, p. 161.

<sup>67</sup> Iain McLean, ‘Two analytic narratives about the history of the EU’, *European Union Politics* 4: 4, 2003, p. 499.



implicitly attack contemporary work that fails to subscribe to the strict norms of best practice being advanced.

In the disciplinary politics of EU studies, the challenge for pluralists would seem to be to counter these tendencies without imposing a form of intellectual isolationism, where each island in the EU studies archipelago is a subdisciplinary autarchy with little motivation to communicate with the others. One approach is to begin with the externalist argument that the EU is different, that it should provoke us—as Ruggie argues—to ‘think otherwise’ about world politics;<sup>68</sup> that because it is governed by context-specific rationalities, even its component parts cannot be captured with the crude universalizing logic of rational choice. This view finds clearest expression in work that commences from the premise that the EU’s institutional environment does more than simply shape the behaviour of its component actors (assumed, under the axioms of rational choice, to be entering those institutional settings with pre-defined utility functions). Rather, the EU is held to be peculiarly transformative of interests and identities.<sup>69</sup> The proposition that these{?} are endogenous to institutional interaction is one way in which mainstreaming ambitions might be tempered, not least because the deductive logic of rational choice-like political science actually tends to rule out this possibility a priori.<sup>70</sup> In other words, effective pluralism in EU studies can be rendered possible through carefully worked out propositions which require the field to be left open and which, in turn, highlight some of the closures that certain approaches might bring.

---

<sup>68</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the world polity: essay{?} in international institutionalization* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> Christiansen et al., ‘Introduction’; Jeffrey Lewis, ‘The Janus face of Brussels: socialization and everyday decision-making in the European Union’, *International Organization* 59: 4, pp. 937–71.

<sup>70</sup> Donald P.Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of rational choice theory: a critique of approaches in political science* (New Haven, CT: Harvard University Press{?}).

The suggestion here, in addition, is that effective openness and pluralism require a more purposeful first step, which at first sight appears to be a step backwards into the realms of disciplinary history.<sup>71</sup> Internalist readings of the course of EU studies have the capacity to reveal the operation of scholarly contingency and disciplinary politics over time. This has two broad implications for any ‘presentist’ reading of the evolution of EU studies. First, it forces any scholar of the EU to ask about their own intellectual coordinates in the present and to force a more reflexive engagement with the conditions under which claims deriving from narratives of the past of the field are made. Second, and paradoxically, it shines a light on the operation of disciplinary politics in the past. For advocates of professionalization and the pursuit of rigour in the present, there is a salutary lesson about the operation of such practices—and their achievements in the past. The net effect should be a more respectful and less stylized depiction of past schools of thought. Within the integration theory project of neo-functionalism, for example, lay rather more than the static image of a few propositions about non-state actors and forms of spillover that tends to feature in most contemporary descriptions. This is not to privilege the neo-functionalist legacy of work on background conditions, bounded rationality, cognitive change and disintegration, but merely to suggest that progress in EU studies may follow from an honest intellectual audit of the many and varied strands of the field’s past.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the past half-century the EU, because of its inherent empirical fascination, has provided a highly attractive venue for the practice of scholarship. But it is also a good place to observe scholarly contingency and the enactment of disciplinary politics within the political sciences. The argument put here is that the case for thinking more thoroughly about disciplinary history is not archaeological, but essential to the present and future health of the field of EU studies. None of the foregoing is designed to head off scholarship or stop it moving in particular directions. Rather, the intention is to raise awareness of two things: (a) the key ‘internalist’ drivers of the field’s evolution, and thus

---

<sup>71</sup> See also Rosamond, ‘The Uniting of Europe’.

(b) the (disciplinary) *political* quality of much of what constitutes itself as departure from the intellectual past.

As such, the practice of critical disciplinary history is designed to achieve three outcomes. First, it seeks to deliver fair and text-based (as opposed to reputation-based) accounts of past scholarly efforts. In so doing it keeps open the possibility that the archive of research on European integration contains insights from the past that might prove prescient in the present. Second, a proper application of critical disciplinary history requires a more nuanced pedagogy in EU studies. As scholars, we need to know who we are, how we got here and where we might be going. But our choice of how we read theoretical ‘progress’ and how we tell stories about disciplinary evolution is not a neutral one. To understand the history of EU studies as a linear matter of increasingly sophisticated theoretical choice that brings us ever closer to the truth may be optimistically ‘whiggish’, but it is only one reading of the field’s history. Moreover, it is a reading that has the effect of justifying a ‘normal science’ of EU Studies in the sense that Kuhn was keen to promote for the natural sciences. Thus, finally, continuous reflection on the historiography of the field is one way to counteract the negative disciplining side of some scholarly work that tends towards the mainstream pole.