Sutton

European Integration since 1945: Geopolitics and the Continuing Significance of the Nation-State

Résumé du cours / objectifs

In its methodological approach, this course lies within the disciplines of both Contemporary History and International Relations. The primary focus is on the four major states that have contributed the most to the process of European integration – la construction européenne – since the Second World War. France and the Federal Republic of Germany have been to the fore. They form the key couple. The part played by Britain has often been secondary or hesitant, but not always so. At times its role has been of crucial importance. It might be considered anomalous that the United States figures as one of the states under consideration, but its inclusion reflects, first, its crucial role in Western Europe in the immediate post-war period and, secondly, its provision of a security umbrella to the western half of the continent during the long Cold War years and, arguably, still to the European Union today though to a much diminished extent.

If, within European Union, Germany, France and Britain are the primary focus of attention, this is not to say, of course, that all other member states are disregarded. The importance of the other larger member states, led by Italy, is underlined. Furthermore, Poland’s special role in the European Union in the second decade of the twenty-first century, by virtue of its being the leading power in east-central Europe, is duly highlighted.

The course is concerned with how national power has been exercised by the larger states in the shaping of present-day Europe – hence the “geopolitics” (in the loose sense of the term) of the course’s subtitle. States remain the essential actors in international relations, even today in the case of la construction européenne. The European Union has been not so much a putative federal state as a “society of states” – albeit a very highly organized one – in which member states share common values, write common laws, co-operate in diverse ways, and yet continue to prioritize their own interests.

An analysis of how the states under consideration have played off their interests against one another lies at the heart of this course. No doubt, in the second half of the twentieth history, France played the greatest individual role – even greater in general than that of the Federal Republic of Germany – in shaping what eventually became the European Union. Through their cooperation in the era of the European Communities, the two states were often able to exercise a collective hegemony, though not always on an equal footing, with France pulling more weight on most (though not all) matters outside the monetary sphere. Following German unification, the end of the Cold War and the enlargement of the European Union in the 2000s, the conditions for the exercise of such collective hegemony have altered.

Whether Germany and France can eventually agree to take the lead in transforming the European Union, or at least that part of it forming the euro area, into a proper
federal state must remain open to serious question. The euro crisis has been serving as a litmus test; and the signs so far are that it is very difficult for these two states to agree with one another on the reshaping of the Union in the face of grave monetary and economic challenges. Indeed, Germany has sometimes given the appearance of acting as a hegemonic power in dictating to France and other member states the decisions and actions that are deemed necessary on the economic and monetary front. Yet, in keeping with its attachment to federal-type arrangements, Germany still wants to channel much of its power and influence through the European Union’s key institutions, particularly the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Whether, in the sphere of foreign policy and security, France, Germany and Britain can learn to cooperate sufficiently so that the European Union becomes a veritable world power, on the same footing as the United States and China, is most uncertain. The modifications made by the Lisbon Treaty to the modus operandi of the European Union still leave member states largely in the driving seat, as was, for instance, demonstrated in 2011 by lack of unity over the Libyan crisis. Recently Britain has half threatened to leave the European Union, to the dismay notably of the United States. How this question of Britain’s future in Europe will be handled will depend very much on the play of interests between the European Union’s three leading member states, namely Germany, France and Britain itself.

Évaluation

The course will be delivered in English; assessment will be by essay, written in English.

Plan / Séances

Course: 18 teaching hours (October 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22; November 27, 2014)

The course, after a general introduction, is organized into four teaching blocks:

I – Western European integration during the Cold War years
The acceptance of the Pax Americana up to the time of the Suez crisis; The creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) and conflicting national interests; The lasting imprint of Charles de Gaulle’s design for France and Europe [4 hours]

II – German unification (1989-90) and the creation of the European Union (1990-92)
The Franco-German partnership under strain and American purposefulness over unification; Monetary union put at the heart of the Maastricht Treaty; The fudge over the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) [4 hours]

III – Post-Yalta and Post-Maastricht Europe
Opening the European Union eastwards, the limits to the EU’s future enlargement, and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), especially in respect of the European ‘borderlands’; Creating the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, and facing up to Russia over Ukraine; The Lisbon
Treaty’s limited changes to the CFSP and the ESDP, and the partly related question of Britain’s future role in the EU
[4 hours]

IV – The origins of the euro crisis and subsequent agreements on remedial action (2010 to the present)
Maastricht blueprint: adding the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) in the mid-1990s, the flawed qualification process for adopting the euro, ignoring the SGP in the early 2000s, and the crises in the euro area’s periphery countries in the present decade; Running a federal monetary union with fiscal policy in national hands; Contrasting German and French approaches to the euro crisis
[4 hours]

Plus an essay workshop
[2 hours]

Bibliographie

Core reading


or / and


Dinan, Desmond, Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to the European Integration, 4th ed., Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 [paperback], all the chapters in Part 1 entitled ‘History’


The student should also be familiar with the architecture of the Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Available either as a single volume in hard copy from the Luxembourg Publications Office of the European Union or online:

in English:
During the semester, for the purpose of class discussions, the student should also follow in the daily or weekly press all that relates to the future of the European Union, especially in the context of the euro crisis and related institutional reform. Among English-language papers, the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* are particularly recommended.

**Other reading (indicative – non-obligatory)**


  Translation: *Mitterrand, the End of the Cold War, and German Unification*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2009

  See also *H-Diplo Roundtable Review*, April 26, 2010 (Introduction: Marc Trachtenberg. Reviews: Will Gray, Robert Hutchings, Jacques Lévesque, Philip Zelikow. Author’s response: Frédéric Bozo)


Garton Ash, Timothy, *In Europe’s Name: Germany and the Divided Continent*, New York: Random House, 1993


Young, Hugo, This Blessed Plot: Britain and Europe from Churchill to Blair, 2nd edn, London: Macmillan, 1999
