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Andrew Moravcsik. *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998. x + 514 pp. \$22.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8014-8509-1.



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Accounts of European integration consistently have combined historical narrative with international relations theory. Among the most significant contributions to this issue are the works by Walter Lipgens and Alan Milward, who advanced contradictory theories of European integration while focusing upon the period from 1945 to 1955 and the Treaty of Rome era, respectively. In his numerous works, Lipgens contends that federal structures were the product of a widespread belief that the creation of supranational organizations would prevent further war among Western European states. Furthermore, supranational organizations perpetuated the process of “spillover,” once the integration process had begun, it became a self-sustaining process, from the creation of NATO to the EEC to the creation of the Single Europe Act of 1986. Thus, the creation of numerous supranational “European” institutions with various mandates and members (“variable geometry”) would further cooperation among European states, and lessen the chances for future conflict. In many respects, Milward successfully rebuffed this theoretical explanation in his 1992 work *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*. Milward argues that integration was only implemented when needed (rebutting the argument that there was “spillover” from one institution to another) and that cooperation was a way to increase, not decrease, state power. According to Milward, European states realized

they needed international solutions to economic and security problems in the 1950s—hence the creation of the European Economic Community and Euratom in 1957.[1]

A recent challenge to Milward’s theory comes from Andrew Moravcsik, an Associate Professor of Government at Harvard University. Moravcsik’s 1998 work, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose & State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, is ambitious in scope and content. Moravcsik extends his analysis far beyond the events examined by Lipgens and Milward to embrace the five key moments in “building” Europe from the creation of the EEC in 1957 with the Treaties of Rome to the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 which set the stage for monetary integration and further federalist cooperation. Additionally, Moravcsik has written a work that speaks to both historians and political scientists; it integrates a theoretical discussion with a well-constructed historical narrative. His core thesis is that economic factors (primarily export promotion)—and not supranational bargaining or geopolitics—drove European integration.

In constructing his explanation for European integration, Moravcsik distinguishes between the three levels of analytical decision-making. In his first chapter, Moravcsik examines national preference formation, bargaining between respective actors, and the role of institutions in order to provide the background for his narrative.

In the first case, Moravcsik explores whether economic or political factors determine state policies. Moravcsik concludes that national interests reflect specific consequences; in the case of European integration, governments had to react to economic possibilities when making decisions. Moravcsik points out that while economic factors were of primary importance, they were not the sole determinants of European integration. Moravcsik states that in the second case, the role of bargaining among significant actors, traditional diplomats are more effective in reaching agreements in contrast to the international relations theory that holds that supranational actors are essential. This is one of the strongest arguments in the work. Finally, Moravcsik examines the role of institutions. Moravcsik takes issue here with the Lipgens theory that integration was a continuous, self-sustaining process stimulated by federalist movements, the Commission, or individuals such as Jean Monnet or Jacques Delors. In contrast, Moravcsik provides evidence that the theory of “credibility of commitment,” in which various actors—in this case representatives of the nation-state which could support and institute agreements between each other—played a primary role.

Moravcsik proceeds to examine what he characterizes as the five key stages of European integration: the creation of the Common Market; the consolidation of the Common Market and the creation of the Common Agricultural Policy in the 1960s; the failed attempts at monetary integration during the 1970s, often referred to by others as the period of Eurosclerosis; the negotiation of the Single European Act, signed in 1985; and finally, the Treaty of Maastricht. Moravcsik is most convincing in the discussion of the Single European Act and Maastricht; he is much less successful in his analysis of the other case studies.

The first case study concerns the creation of the Common Market and Euratom. This provides an important test of Moravcsik’s argument that export promotion drove European integration. Although this is a reasonable, and traditionally appropriate, place to begin, it also highlights the shortcomings of Moravcsik’s argument.

This chapter contains four significant weaknesses. First, Moravcsik’s focus upon Great Britain, France, and West Germany is troublesome. It is difficult to fully understand the complexity of the period that witnessed the creation of the European Economic Community and the failure of Britain’s Free Trade Area proposal without some discussion of the United States and other European states, most notably the Netherlands. The im-

pact of these states in determining the course of European integration is missing here. By ignoring the respective roles of the United States and the Netherlands, Moravcsik ignores evidence that contradicts his thesis. For example, as Geir Lundestad’s has pointed out in his 1998 work *‘Empire’ by Integration*, it is impossible to conceive of “Europe” emerging as it did without American support—which was mainly for geopolitical, and not economic, reasons.[2] Furthermore, the cornerstone of the Treaties of Rome was the Common Market, a plan articulated by Dutch Foreign Minister Johan Willem Beyen and the result of intense discussions in the Willem Drees cabinet in 1955. By focusing upon the UK-France-West Germany triangle throughout his work and especially in this chapter, Moravcsik ignores the significant contributions that other states made to the format of European integration.

Second, Moravcsik’s focus on economic, and not geopolitical, factors, not only causes him to ignore the U.S. as a key player, but also leads him to misrepresent the significance of the British Commonwealth. By 1955 elements in Whitehall were well aware of the declining significance of the Commonwealth; however, despite the Cold War and Western attempts to maintain Macmillan’s support of former colonial possessions, the geopolitical significance of Britain’s dependent territories precluded the Macmillan government from sacrificing the interests of the Commonwealth to smooth its relations with Europe and create a Free Trade Area. The third problem with this chapter is also directly related to Moravcsik’s slighting of geopolitics. Moravcsik makes little reference to the creation of the Western European Union, instituted in 1955 to rearm and incorporate West Germany into NATO. Without settling European geopolitical issues first, it is doubtful the Six would have been free to move towards increased economic integration. Furthermore, without American support for the Treaties of Rome, it is likely that elements in the Adenauer government who favored the Free Trade Area may have been able to stifle West German support for the Common Market and Euratom. Finally, Moravcsik claims that France did not gain everything it wanted during this period. This assertion is problematic since as a whole the Treaties of Rome appeared to have favored France more consistently than any other country.[3] Furthermore, France was able to kill the plan to establish an OEEC-wide Free Trade Area.

In Moravcsik’s defense, some features of this chapter are commendable. First, he offers a nuanced and objective discussion of British policy towards the con-

minent. This is a most welcome feature. Secondly, Moravcsik provides a convincing refutation of some of the main features of traditional European integration scholarship, most particularly the “great man” and “spillover/federalist” theories.

The second case study, which examines the consolidation of the Common Market, furthers Moravcsik’s primary argument. In this chapter, the author asserts that economic factors motivated Britain, France, and West Germany to realize commercial advantages for agriculture and industry. This contradicts the established scholarship of this period, which argues that the Common Market was advanced because of high politics; the role of supranational actors (such as the Commission) significantly influenced the course of European integration, and forced states to accept economic arrangements that were unpopular in respective states. Moravcsik believes this is incorrect, as states “pooled sovereignty” to realize commercial advantages rather than geopolitical or “European” objectives. At the core of this chapter, Moravcsik argues that France was motivated primarily by the need to institute the Common Agricultural Policy, and this—and not anger at British cooperation with the United States—is the main reason why Charles de Gaulle opposed British inclusion in the EEC during this period. Although not completely convincing (it is hard to believe de Gaulle was motivated by his electoral popularity with French farmers and not by his policy of increasing French grandeur), Moravcsik effectively counters the established view that supranational actors and vague ideas of “Europeanism” drove European integration.

Moravcsik proceeds by addressing the politics of European integration during the 1970s. According to Moravcsik, the standard literature that paints this decade as a period of “Eurosclerosis” and a setback for European integration is mistaken. He believes this characterization is flawed because of the other scholars’ emphasis on high politics. These individuals saw the era as a setback for federalism; Moravcsik, in contrast, argues that if one accepts that the process of European integration was driven primarily by economic interest it becomes clear the 1970s was not a barren decade for European politics after all. As a whole this chapter is rather unconvincing and possibly the weakest in the book. Moravcsik reconstructs the negotiations that led to an agreement in 1973 to keep fluctuations of exchange rates among European currencies within a narrower range than exchange rate fluctuations in general (the Snake), and an agreement in 1978 to establish a system of fixed European exchange rates (the European Monetary System or EMS), but he offers no sense

of how or why these agreements quickly fell apart. The rapid failure of these agreements suggests that the older literature got it right by characterizing this period as one of little achievement in the process of European integration. Furthermore, Moravcsik never makes clear to his reader why floating currencies were harmful for Europe after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, and why tying them together in some fashion should have been an important goal for economic policymakers. In sum, this chapter suffers from the attempt to compare the dismal failures of the Snake and EMS to agreements such as the European Economic Community, the Common Agricultural Policy, and the Single European Act (among others) which significantly altered the conception of Europe.

In contrast, Moravcsik’s discussion of the Single European Act is excellent. Moravcsik develops a convincing critique of the conventional scholarship. The common view holds that the SEA emerged because of a compromise between the proponents of “Rhenish capitalism,” most notably EC Commissioner Jacques Delors, and proponents of “English pragmatism,” notably Lord Arthur Cockfield, the European Commissioner for Internal Market Affairs. Moravcsik rebuffs this view which is primarily advocated by George Ross.[4] According to the author, the historical record of this period instead stresses the convergence of national preference, intergovernmental bargaining among national leaders, and the design of new international institutions based on the aim of more credible commitments. This convergence, furthermore, stemmed from a combination of economic—and not political—trends. Additionally, one of Moravcsik’s more welcome revisions of conventional wisdom is contained in this chapter: the demystification of Delors and the Commission. Moravcsik points out that while individuals may have significantly influenced the implementation of the Single European Act, it was statesmen such as Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, and François Mitterrand—not Delors—who were most influential. Thus, it was national governments, and not the Commission that called the shots during this period; national, not Commission, preferences emerged from the SEA negotiations. In sum, this is a refreshing analysis of this period, and much more enlightening than Ross’s account, which is little more than a hagiography of Delors.

Moravcsik follows the discussion of the SEA with a solid discussion of the Maastricht Treaty, which called for economic and monetary union, coordination of foreign policy, and cooperation in the fields of justice and domestic policy. Here the author takes issue with traditional scholarship, which invokes German reunification,

agenda-setting by the Commission and supranational officials, and federalist ideology as explanations for Maastricht. In contrast, Moravcsik argues that the Maastricht Treaty constituted a compromise between the economic interests of strong- and weak-currency countries. In contrast with established accounts that paint Maastricht, and the sell-out of the Bundesbank by Kohl as a “quid pro quo” for German reunification, Moravcsik points out that firm commitments existed between France and West Germany to move towards monetary union before the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989. Moravcsik also points out that the intergovernmental negotiating style that had seemingly disappeared from the 1970s until the negotiation of the SEA, re-emerged during the Maastricht negotiations. Furthermore, Moravcsik suggests that the end-results of the negotiations consistently favored Germany. Although Moravcsik’s thesis is largely convincing, it still does not completely disprove the argument that geopolitical factors made it easier to sell monetary union to the German people and stifle the influence of the Bundesbank.

While Moravcsik’s work offers a laudable synthesis of an intriguing topic, it is not without general flaws. First, the first three case studies are weaker than the latter two, in part because the commercial primacy thesis is weakest with respect to the former. In addition, the content and scope of the respective chapters is flawed. Finally, Moravcsik fails to mention the concept of “variable geometry” until page 299 (in the chapter on monetary integration and Eurosclerosis). Any examination of European integration after World War II would lead one to conclude that the creation of a “multi-track” Europe began with the creation of NATO, the ECSC, the EEC, and EFTA—in other words, much earlier than the 1970s. Finally, and this is not a criticism of Moravcsik but of Cornell University Press, the lack of a bibliography is a severe impediment to anyone who has a significant interest in this issue. At times this omission is more annoying than any problems with the author’s thesis.

In spite of particular problems concerning Moravcsik’s reliance upon a simple theory (in this case export promotion) to explain European integration over 35

years, this work is more than the sum of its parts. The attempts to disprove traditional scholarship are in most cases successful, and always refreshing; especially welcome are the refutations of the great man/great Commission and functional approaches to explaining European integration. Although the first three case studies are not especially solid, the last two are very well done, and rather convincing. The reviewer would suggest, however, that one read the chapters on monetary integration in conjunction with Bernard Connolly’s excellent study, *The Rotten Heart of Europe*, which provides a more detailed examination of this subject.[5] Although Moravcsik’s attempts to fit the process of European integration into a simple model fails at times, he nonetheless has produced a very well-written and ambitious work which addresses the flaws in previous scholarship on this issue. Simply stated, it is the best synthetic account of the European integration process currently available, and must be read by anyone with an interest in this intriguing issue.

Notes

[1]. Walter Lipgens, ed., *Sources for the History of European Integration, 1945-1955*, Leiden: Stijhoff, 1980 and *A History of European Integration, vol. I, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982*; Alan Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

[2]. Geir Lundestad, *“Empire” by Integration: the United States and European integration*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

[3]. Moravcsik, p. 148; Milward, p. 220.

[4]. George Ross, *Jacques Delors and European Integration*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

[5]. Bernard Connolly, *The Rotten Heart of Europe: the Dirty War for Europe’s Money*, London: Faber and Faber, 1996.

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