

Michael Gehler, Wilfried Loth (ed.), Reshaping Europe. Towards a Political, Economic and Monetary Union, 1984–1989, Baden-Baden (Nomos) 2020, 524 p., ISBN 978-3-8487-6674-1, EUR 112,00.

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»Reshaping Europe«, edited by Michael Gehler and Wilfried Loth, presents a rich and important anthology on a key episode of the European integration process, which gathered considerable momentum in the period under consideration. In many ways, the years between 1984 and 1989 were the incubator period for the transformation that would only a few years later result in the founding of today's European Union. This undoubtedly important transformation took place before the background of an even more fundamental process: the end of the east-west-conflict. The opening of the archives and the significantly improved availability of sources as a result is reason enough to revisit this episode.

The edited volume is extensive as it contains twenty-four highly specialized contributions on more than five hundred pages by authors from more than ten European countries. It is extensive also in the sense that it brings together some of the most established experts of European integration and international history as well as a number of newcomers to the field.

The contributions are divided into six parts, preceded by an opening section which includes an introduction by Michael Gehler, skillfully tying together the themes and issues of the entire volume, and a chapter by Jasper Trautsch on European symbolism on postage stamps. The latter is particularly valuable as it goes beyond the perspective of high politics prevalent in this volume, but unfortunately stands somewhat disconnected from the rest of the book.

The first part deals with new initiatives in the early 1980s, ranging from the resolution of the British Budgetary Question to the European Parliament's Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union of 1984. The second part focuses on the 1987 Single European Act, the first amendment of the Treaties of Rome and direct precursor to the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht. The articles in the third part concentrate on economic history, dealing with arguably the two most ambitious political projects of the time, the so-called »Single Market Project« and monetary union. Part four is devoted to the issue of Community enlargement with contributions on the accession of Portugal and Spain as well as on Austria's application for membership, thus shedding light on one of the hitherto lesser-studied topics. Part five widens the perspective by situating the integration process in the larger context of the end of the Cold War, including questions of security and defense policy. Finally, in part six, the editors distil how different »Europeanisations«



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reshaped Europe in the years 1984–1987, before summarizing the volume's findings.

The volume substantially contributes to existing scholarship in two ways. Firstly, it breaks new ground into formerly under-studied areas. A case in point is the contribution by Kiran Klaus Patel who argues that the transformative impact of European integration in the 1980s did not only concern the Community structures. By analyzing the German states' (»Länder«) reaction to the Single European Act, he shows that regional political actors across party lines were very sensitive, sometimes even strongly opposed to how European integration was altering established power structures also within the nation state.

Frederike Schotters explores the interconnectedness of three transformative processes that characterized the 1980s but have long been studied as rather separate phenomena: globalization with a focus on technological advances, the end of the Cold War and the reinvigorated European integration process. By analyzing Franco-German initiatives on, and disputes over, European security and defense policies in the 1980s, she argues that the three processes were reciprocal. The United States' Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) triggered intense discussions within the EC about its future defense strategy, while European cooperation in this field made disarmament initiatives even more vital for the Soviet Union. Disarmament, in turn, decisively contributed to the end of the Cold War at the end of the decade.

Secondly, the volume substantially adds to the existing research by shedding new light on issues that formerly had been studied without full access to archival material. Frédéric Bozo's insightful and dense paper on the puzzle of why France prioritized monetary union over every other aspect of European integration in the late 1980s sets a new standard by meticulously analyzing François Mitterrand's government files. In light of these sources, he reaffirms the centrality of the »German question« in France's strategy for European integration. Monetary union, he argues, became the »Holy Grail« of French European politics because it promised to »bring about a European Germany rather than a German Europe« (p. 330). He also shows, however, that Mitterrand and his advisers were convinced that by establishing a European currency they were following through on the successful stability-oriented economic policy France had embarked on after the »tournant de la rigueur« in 1983 (p. 328–329).

Anjo G. Harryvan's contribution offers an important differentiation in our understanding of how non-state actors shaped European integration in the 1980s. In the light of new archival sources, Harryvan demonstrates how a rather narrow group of industrialists successfully lobbied for the liberalization of trade within the European Community by establishing what he calls a »pro-Single Market network of networks« (p. 211). In the center of this network was the Round Table of European Industrialists, founded by the CEOs of Phillips and Volvo. Of »overriding importance« (p. 219)



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for their success, however, was the establishment of a secretive relationship with another non-state actor, the Action Committee for Europe. The pro-integrationist lobby, which included Edward Heath, Helmut Schmidt and other former heads of government, guaranteed powerful support for the Round Table's aims in elite circles in European capitals.

There would be much to say about other excellent contributions in this volume. Piers Ludlow, for instance, delivers a dense, yet nuanced analysis of the British Budgetary Question. Laurent Warlouzet reminds us that even though the Single Market was at the core of European integration in the 1980s, this did not mean initiatives in other areas, such as social policy, were entirely neglected, and Wilfried Loth presents a precise account of the German perspective on European monetary union up to 1989.

As is not unusual for an edited volume emerging from a conference¹, the collection of papers under review here sometimes lacks coherence. The guiding questions put forward in the introduction are rather broad, thereby giving the contributors free range in the pursuit of their own research agendas at the cost of a common thread. This trade-off works in advantage for those contributions that provide an analytical framework for themselves, while others lack such a framework and therefore remain rather descriptive. This is not to diminish the overall value of this immensely rich, always stimulating and at times even ground-breaking volume on one of the key episodes in European integration history that lastingly reshaped Europe and the European Community on its way to European Union.

¹ The conference took place at the University of Hildesheim on 17–19 October 2019.



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