

Edwin Griffis
September 30, 2022

Decolonization and the European Integration Project

Introduction/Research Question

The European Union—the third-largest economy in the world—is perhaps the defining institution of contemporary European life. I use “institution” rather than “state,” because while the European Union subsumes 27 individual countries, bound together in myriad of ways such as a common market, it is not exactly a state. In fact, to define what the European Union “is” would be a near-inscrutable prospect for most of its own denizens. They would refer to the metonymy ‘Brussels’ or point to clear aspects of the European program like the Schengen Area, the European Court of Justice, or the European Parliament, but your average European (Unioner?) at the end of the day would be unlikely to be able to describe how its many parts fit together into the whole that affects their daily lives.

Emerging out of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the European Union is built upon four decades of cooperation between various European countries, and I believe that understanding this period is key to understanding how and why it works the way it does now. The European Union has its own official story of its inception during this period. This institution evolved in its several iterations following World War II, from the European Coal and Steel Community to the current complex relationship of actors that mediates the lives of the 450 something million people under its flag. It presents itself as a historical progression, a learned lesson from the ravages of the calamitous world wars fought between nation-states that, according to historian Mark Gilbert, was “a victory for the ‘sons of the light’ over the reticence, grouching and obtuse opposition put up by those who clung to

the idea of supremacy of the nation-state and its traditional political prerogatives.”¹ The European Union represents a victory of an idealist dream of peace, democracy, and human rights over nationalist resentments and totalitarian dictatorships.

This historical narrative is, ultimately, a narrative; thus, it must compete with the other stories told about European integration. There are several historical schools of thought beyond this ‘liberal’ school about the origins of the European integration project unrelated to the federalist vision of many of its founders based on the Franco-German partnership. The Cold War, the economic benefits of nation-states voluntarily associating with each other, the attempts to unite Europeans preceding the Second World War: all of these point to processes beyond federalist idealism that had a role in determining the route that European integration ended up taking.

One such narrative is the intersection of decolonization and European integration. The key European nation-state in the early process of integration—France—experienced the transformation of its colonial empire during the same period (the two decades after 1945) as the international negotiations that eventually established the European Community, culminating in the Treaty of Rome in 1957. The major concern of France (and Britain) after World War II was how to maintain geopolitical power after such a disastrous conflict as that war in between the two superpower poles of the United States and the Soviet Union. The French and British Empires looked to their colonies and their European neighbors as tools to create a new center of global power.

The link is evidently there however, and I see it prudent to investigate further to develop a viewpoint that has been touched on in aspects by several authors (Garavini, Brown, Hansen, Jonsson, Odijie, Hopkins) Put simply, my general research question is thus: how did the process

¹ Mark Gilbert, “Historicizing European Integration History,” *European Review of International Studies* 8, no. 2 (2021): 223.

of decolonization affect the process of European integration? More specifically, **how did discourse around decolonization affect the route European integration took during the heyday of these two processes from 1945 to the early 1970s?** This thesis seeks to situate the perspective of decolonization within European integration in general, then to examine the French and British Empires as particular case studies within the creation and evolution of various pan-European organizations.

Literature Review

The first main interpretation of the history of European integration since 1945, dominant in early scholarship but fallen out of favor in academia (if not official EU rhetoric), is that a peaceful federalist ideal was advanced by a peaceful convergence of European nations economies, societies, and cultures following the horrors of World War II.² European integration proceeded, step-by-step, from a common shared ideal by the leaders of Western Europe that increased social as well as economic ties and a supranational European institution would be able to prevent future war between Europeans. They were particularly concerned with the relationship between France and West Germany, and out of this concern the European Coal and Steel Community was born, subsequently to be built upon by further arrangements following the Treaty of Rome, culminating in the European Union after 1992.

A second interpretation about European integration comes from historian Alan Milward. He argues that European integration from the beginning has been pursued as a selfish means for nation-states to reinforce their own individual economic power.³ The original six member states of the European Community (France, West Germany, Italy, Benelux) all saw it as within their economic self-interest to pursue integration and develop close arrangements of trade and exchange

² Perry Anderson, "Under the Sign of the Interim," in *London Review of Books*. 4 January 1996.

³ Alan Milward. *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (London: Routledge, 2000)

in order to develop their post-war welfare states. For Milward, considerations of international diplomacy like the Cold War or end of European empires are of secondary importance, and the federalist vision of men like Jean Monnet is simply irrelevant.

A third interpretation, proposed by Perry Anderson, explains the beginning of European integration as the result of differing yet converging political interests in the wake of World War II that saw the federalist solution of Jean Monnet as useful for their interests.⁴ The proponents of this solution made an alliance with the leaders of the United States, France, and Germany to secure Western Europe's prosperity following World War II. In a fourth interpretation, Kiran Patel places the European Community as one among several projects of supranational integration such as the OECD and NATO that emerged out of World War II, growing in importance thanks to its ability to weather economic and political crisis in the 1970s.⁵

However, the interpretation that I want to explore in my thesis is the connection between decolonization and European integration focused on by Peo Hansen. For Hansen, the formative years of European integration should be placed in the broader context of rapidly declining European power across the globe: the United States and the Soviet Union have become superpowers while European colonies in Asia have acquired their independence.⁶ Efforts to cooperate in exploiting and maintaining the domination of Europe over Africa provided a key draw for many Europeans towards the idea of broader political integration. The Schuman Declaration itself notes as one of the key tasks of European integration to be the “development of the African

⁴ Anderson, “Under the Sign of the Interim.”

⁵ Mark Gilbert, “Historicizing European Integration History,” *European Review of International Studies* 8, no. 2 (2021): 228.

⁶ Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, “Eurafrica Incognita: The Colonial History of the European Union,” *History of the Present* 7, no. 1 (2017): 3.

continent,” a project of ‘Eurafrica’ supported by the French providing a strong impetus for inter-European cooperation.

I plan to examine Hansen’s interpretation as part of my thesis project. The comparison of the French and British experiences in how their links to their former colonies affected their experience in European integration is an evident way to accomplish this. Like France, Britain experienced decolonization despite attempts to exert influence over their former colonies, but the British position towards European integration was (and remains) deeply ambivalent. British elites pushed intensely for closer economic and military cooperation among Europeans (through institutions such as the Western European Union) while remaining relentlessly hostile towards any federalist vision of political integration.

Methodology

The analysis will focus on the three decades between the end of World War II in 1945 and the accession of Britain to the European Economic Community in 1973. These three decades are key to both processes of European integration and decolonization. This thesis consists of historical analysis. Specifically, I will analyze primary sources— official documents (especially the Yaoundé and Lomé Convention treaties), letters, newspaper articles, etc.— drawn from digitized archives to look at how discourses linked decolonization to the process of European integration. I want to look at the similarities and differences in how the French and British balanced the links to their former empires to their participation in European integration within their own discourse. I will look at the problems these links posed for the European Common Market and its common external trade tariff.

Chapter Outline

In my introduction, I will examine the larger academic conversation around European integration to situate my choice of decolonization as a useful lens to view European integration within the broader historical discourse. I will briefly explain theories on European integration such as the ‘liberal’, ‘neorealist’ / Milwardian, and ‘globalization-integrationist’ / Patelian perspectives. I will also provide background for decolonization during the period under study.

In the first chapter, I will examine the official conversations around European integration from the end of the Second World War to the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. My goal is to answer how the immediate responses to the question of empire following the Second World War connected to integration. This section is focused on the simultaneous birth of the French Union and the British Commonwealth with the many European post-war treaties establishing organizations such as the European Coal and Steel Community, the Western European Union, NATO, and the OECD, culminating in the birth of the European Economic Community in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome.

In my second chapter, I will focus on France and the French Union from 1950 to 1963. My goal is to examine the impact of the French Union project on the course that European integration. The heart of the chapter will be examining the ‘Eurafrica’ political project, the problem that the remaining French colonies presented for the Common Market, and Algeria’s status as a ‘seventh member state.’⁷ An analysis of the Yaoundé Convention of 1963, contained within its own subchapter, will cap off the chapter, alongside a brief examination of the effects of African political independence on discourse on European integration.

⁷ Megan Brown, *The Seventh Member State: Algeria, France, and the European Community* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022)

In my third chapter, I will focus on the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth from 1961 to 1975. My goal is to examine the impact that the Commonwealth had on the British attempt to enter the European Economic Community. The main thrust of the chapter is examining the problems that British links to the Commonwealth presented to the UK's desire to participate in the European integration project. Like the previous chapter, this will end with a subchapter analyzing the Lomé Convention of 1975.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Various undetermined newspaper articles from *Le Monde*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and *The Observer* among other newspapers.

Other primary sources- statements and reports from legislative bodies, official letters, press releases, other newspaper articles- will be drawn from archival databases such as the ones below.

<https://www.cvce.eu/> - the University of Luxembourg's Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe / Virtual Centre for Knowledge on Europe

<https://aei.pitt.edu/> - the University of Pittsburgh's Archive of European Integration

The following is a list of some major official sources to be analyzed within my chapters:

Chapter 1

The Schuman Declaration - https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu/1945-59/schuman-declaration-may-1950_en

Articles 131-136 of the Treaty of Rome -

https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/treaty_establishing_the_eec_annex_iv_overseas_countries_and_territories_to_which_the_provisions_of_part_iv_of_the_treaty_apply_rome_25_march_1957-en-3cfe5473-84e3-44e0-9b1b-d4899b699830.html

Chapter 2- The Yaoundé Convention -

https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/the_yaounde_convention_20_july_1963-en-52d35693-845a-49ae-b6f9-ddbc48276546.html

Chapter 3- The Lomé I Convention -

https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/acp_eec_convention_signed_in_lome_28_february_1975-en-ae73ccff-36ce-4b15-b65c-0f32e0338e77.html

Secondary Sources

Anderson, Perry. "Under the Sign of the Interim," *London Review of Books*. 4 January 1996.

Berend, Ivan. *The History of European Integration: A New Perspective*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Brown, Megan. *The Seventh Member State: Algeria, France, and the European Community*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022.

- Chafer, Tony and Alexander Keese. *Francophone Africa at Fifty*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.
- Coupland, Philip. "Western Union, "Spiritual Union," and European Integration, 1948-1951," 43, no. 3 (July 2004): 366, 394. JSTOR.
- Dinan, Desmond. *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Duchêne, François. *Jean Monnet: The First Statesman of Interdependence*. New York: Norton, 1994.
- Garavini, Giuliano. *After Empires: European Integration, Decolonization, and the Challenge from the Global South, 1957-1986*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.
- Gilbert, Mark. "Historicizing European Integration History," *European Review of International Studies* 8, no. 2 (2021): 221-240. JSTOR.
- Hall, Stuart. "In But Not of Europe: Europe and Its Myths," Paper presented at the Myths of Europe Conference), European University Institute, Florence, 2002.
- Hansen, Peo and Stefan Jonsson. "A Statue to Nasser? Eurafrica, the Colonial Roots of European Integration, and the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2013): 5-18. JSTOR.
- Hansen, Peo and Stefan Jonsson. "Eurafrica Incognita: The Colonial History of the European Union," *History of the Present* 7, no. 1 (2017): 1-32. JSTOR.
- Hansen, Peo. "European Integration, European Identity, and the Colonial Question," *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 4 (2002): 483-498. JSTOR.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Extremes, 1914-1991*. London: Abacus, 1994.
- Hopkins, A.G. "Globalization and Decolonization," *Third World Quarterly* 45, no. 5 (2017): 729-745. JSTOR.
- Maris, Georgios. "National Sovereignty, European Integration and Domination in the Eurozone," *European Review* 28, no. 2 (2019): 225-237. JSTOR.
- Milward, Alan. *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Odijie, Michael. "Unintentional neo-colonialism? Three generations of trade and development relationship between EU and West Africa," *Journal of European Integration* 44, no. 3 (2022): 347-363. JSTOR.

- Paulo, Jorge. "The European Defense Sector and EU Integration," *Connections* 8, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 11-57. JSTOR.
- Sutton, Michael. *France and the Construction of Europe, 1944-2017*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2011.
- Taylor, Ian. "France à fric: the CFA zone in Africa and neocolonialism," *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 6 (2019): 1064-1088. JSTOR.
- Urwin, Derek. *The Community of Europe: A History of European Integration Since 1945*. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Vallin, Victor-Manuel. "France as the Gendarme of Africa: 1960-2014," *Political Science Quarterly* 130, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 79-101. JSTOR.
- Warlouzet, Laurent. "De Gaulle as a Father of Europe : The Unpredictability of the FTA's Failure and the EEC's Success (1956-58)," *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 4 (2011): 419-434.