

Europe's Structural Idol: An American Federalist Republic?

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Advocates of the European Union (EU) aspire to a United States of Europe, a political union with its own character and voice, but unified peacefully and democratically along the lines of the United States of America. A long line of elites have invoked the Philadelphia Convention and announced ambitions of matching American strength and unity. Then-President of France Jacques Chirac urged, "The European Union itself [must] become a major pole of international equilibrium, endowing itself with the instruments of a true power." Similar statements from others could be multiplied tediously. These sentiments are not confined to elites; an impressive majority of European citizens want the EU to be a peer competitor of the United States.¹

But what would it take to make a political union, a major pole, out of Europe? The received wisdom is ever-closer union, a gradual process of trial-and-error economic and administrative cooperation, where success is neither continuous nor automatic yet is nevertheless occurring—and at a respectable clip too. Analysts at the Central Intelligence Agency predict that Europe will unite by 2015, and Charles Kupchan makes the case that European integration

¹ Chirac quoted in Charles Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 151. For similar elite sentiments, see "Charlemagne: Crisis, What Crisis?" *Economist*, 8 September 2005, 52; Margaret Thatcher, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 344, 352; Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 390, 472; Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 78–79, 157; Glyn Morgan, *The Idea of a European Superstate: Public Justification and European Integration* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), ix, x. The European opinion data may be found in Craig Kennedy and Marshall Bouton, "The Real Trans-Atlantic Gap," *Foreign Policy* 133 (November–December 2002): 70.

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is faring well, relatively speaking, and Europe faces problems the United States faced at the end of the nineteenth century.²

The empirical puzzle of European unification depends on one's perspective. For some, voluntary unions should never happen. States value their autonomy superlatively and would never give it up to a state that could not conquer them. And yet, the American colonies did just that—why not the EU as well? For others, voluntary unions should happen more commonly. Classic determinants of integration, like trade and communication, are as strong as they have ever been. Nonetheless, voluntary unification is rare, and European integration seems to be hitting a glass ceiling.

What does the American past tell us of the European future? The importance of the answer could hardly be higher. How integrated Europe grows in the coming years will affect the deepest contours of great-power politics for generations. Even skeptics of the EU concede that, unified, the European continent would be a juggernaut. However, scholars and policymakers have a limited understanding of how and why states voluntarily unify.

I argue that the model of ever-closer union is flawed. The United States is a helpful historical idol for Europe, but the case challenges cherished views on all sides. The conventional wisdom on ever-closer union relies on three logics: union may proceed through states binding themselves to prevent internal violence, through converging economic preferences, and through increased contact and communication, which foster common identity. Yet none of these logics were strong in America's founding. Instead, America's voluntary political union happened when states formed an extreme balancing coalition against offshore powers. Ultimately I find that the barriers to union are higher in Europe today than when the United States united, though that may not last.

To develop the argument, I first lay down the groundwork, defining concepts, setting benchmarks for political integration, and determining the scope of the analysis. The second section outlines my argument, and the third presents rival views. Fourth, I frame the empirical puzzle of American union and review a brief chronology of how America unified. Finally, I put forward a ledger to demonstrate why, on balance, America's unification portends trouble for Europe's ever-closer union.

² For the CIA data, see Seth G. Jones, *The Rise of European Security Cooperation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15, 222. For EU–U.S. parallels, see Charles Kupchan, “The Travails of Union: The American Experience and its Implications for Europe,” *Survival* 46 (Winter 2004–2005): 103–120; Gary Marks, “A Third Lens: Comparing European Integration and State Building” in Jytte Klausen and Louise Tilly, eds., *European Integration in Social and Historical Perspective: 1850 to the Present* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 24; Daniel Deudney, “The Philadelphia System: Sovereignty, Arms Control, and Balance of Power in the American States-Union, Circa 1781–1861,” *International Organization* 49 (Spring 1995): 193. The phrase “ever-closer union” is from the preamble of the 1957 Treaty of Rome and is reiterated in the constitutional treaty of 2004.

GROUNDWORK: UNITING WITHOUT FIGHTING

Before examining integrating states, it makes sense to detail what is being examined. Henceforth, when I speak of unions, I intend exclusively voluntary political unions.³ To begin with what is meant by voluntary, there are several types of unification, not all of them germane. Two types in particular appear especially involuntary: unions facilitated by a dominant suitor and those facilitated by a muscular matchmaker.

First, unions may be involuntary because they are coerced by potential members. Examples of this include conquests and annexations such as the accretions of Prussia. It is not easy to draw the line between egalitarian and asymmetric unions, but for the sake of analytical clarity I draw the line at a three-to-one advantage in population and gross domestic product. I do this for the crude but conventional reason that attacking forces need a three-to-one local advantage to overcome the defender's advantages, and where this situation obtains, intimidation is likely to exert a less voluntary influence on negotiations.⁴ Conversely, where none of the principal states have this advantage over other principal states, conquest is not a credible threat, and bargaining is under minimal duress. Doubtless small states (e.g., Luxembourg and Delaware) can play independent roles in unification, but they are usually satellites of the principal unifying states and are consequently kept in the background for parsimony.

Second, unions may be involuntary because they are propelled by powerful outsiders. Examples here include many imperial constructions like Indonesia or Iraq. The key states of American union (i.e., Virginia, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York) could not credibly threaten to conquer each other, and union was not advanced at the bidding of Great Britain. So too Europe's leading states (primarily Germany and France but secondarily the United Kingdom and Italy) cannot conquer each other, and America has given up trying to twist European arms for greater political integration. Both in Europe and America, unification has a good claim to be voluntary.

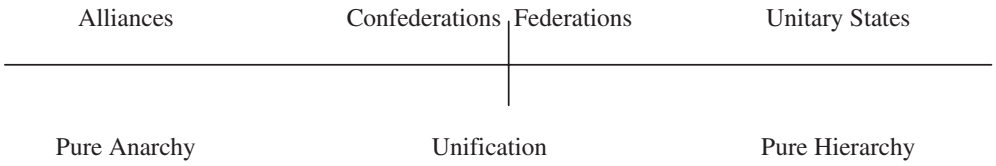
Next, let us address our focus on political unification. If we wish to know how Europe will influence the shape of great-power politics, we are asking a question, above all, about political strength and unity. The core matter is the extent of relative power centralized in one political unit.⁵ Political unions should

³ For literature on voluntary unification, see, for example, David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1966); Ernst Haas, *Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964); Walter Mattli, *The Logic of Regional Integration: Europe and Beyond* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

⁴ The three-to-one ratio is a heroic simplification; the factors of net assessment are my underlying interest, see Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), chaps. 2–3; Sean Lynn-Jones, "Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics," *Security Studies* 4 (Summer 1995): 660–691.

⁵ On power, see David Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 18–24; Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press,

FIGURE 1
The Anarchy-Hierarchy Spectrum



be contrasted with monetary, economic, social, or cultural unions, which are also forms of integration worthy of study, but are analytically distinct.

Finally we turn to what is meant by union. Imagine a spectrum of political integration from anarchy to hierarchy.⁶ The difference between the two conditions turns on how centralized enforcement capability is. Highly integrated areas allow little local authority, e.g., Germany in 1940; areas lacking integration allow little central authority, e.g., Germany in 1648. The extremes of this spectrum are clear enough; the difficulty comes with differentiating points in the middle (Figure 1).

Fortunately, political union is a bold benchmark squarely in the center of the anarchy–hierarchy spectrum. While other movements along the spectrum are notable, movement across the midpoint is the most grueling step. Political unification compels a change in political supremacy; it marks a shift in the legitimate use of force in an area; it institutionalizes a new status quo that severely handicaps autonomy. We know states have crossed this midpoint when they de facto and de jure unify, or when they formally centralize the means to pursue a single foreign policy and they cannot legitimately resort to force to resolve disputes between each other. The best hallmark of a unified state is an army capable of upholding national legal supremacy, but other hallmarks include international recognition and an independent revenue stream larger than that of any of its constituent units.⁷

1996), 26; Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993), 29–35, 113–179.

⁶ On anarchy and hierarchy, see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), 102–128; Helen Milner, “The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique,” *Review of International Studies* 17 (January 1991): 67–85; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 246–312.

⁷ On states, state building, and failed states, see Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 77–83; Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); James Fearon and David Laitin, “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States,” *International Security* 28 (Spring 2004): 5–43.

Why a critical comparison between the United States and Europe? As noted above, European politicians commonly invoke the American example to indicate their desired path and destination. They are wise to do so; few unifications were as voluntary and far fewer wrought such prodigious consequences in world politics. If Europeans are earnest about catching up to the United States and creating a multipolar world, they would most likely have to copy the lead state—as the American Founders did with Britain. Unfortunately, prior work on the parallel between America and Europe has suffered either from poorly relating arguments to literature in international relations or an uneven presentation of American history.⁸

However, one should keep the comparison in perspective. While the two are excellent companions, no parallel is perfect and no guide is inerrant. More than two centuries have passed since the United States united, and today's EU is an entity with regulatory and redistributive powers that the newborn United States hardly possessed. Unquestionably, both have different histories, geographies, linguistic and ethnic compositions, etc.⁹ All of which adds a healthy dose of caution to my findings, but does not remove the imperative for using available materials for purchase on pressing problems.

ARGUMENT: UNIFICATION AS TRADITIONAL BALANCING

I argue that, at base, unification is extreme balancing behavior. When states see themselves as backed into the same corner for the foreseeable future, they will unify to secure themselves. Unions are balancing coalitions to face intense, indefinite threats—threats in the traditional sense of states that jeopardize others' vital security interests.¹⁰ When states face weak, passing, or overwhelming

⁸ On the sameness effect and copying leading states, see Waltz, *Theory*, 127; Akhil Reed Amar, *America's Constitution: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2005), 30–31, 36, 43–51, 472. For work on the EU–U.S. parallel that is historically strong but theoretically underdeveloped, see Jack Rakove, “Europe's Floundering Fathers,” *Foreign Policy* 138 (September–October 2003): 28–38. For work on the parallel that is historically underdeveloped but theoretically strong, see Leslie Goldstein, *Constituting Federal Sovereignty: The European Union in Comparative Context* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 43–66; Renaud Dehousse, “‘We the States’: Why the Anti-Federalists Won” in Nicolas Jabko and Craig Parsons, eds., *With US or Against US? European Trends in American Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 105–122; Kupchan, *End of the American Era*, 132–149.

⁹ On how settlement patterns, ethnicity, and path-dependent institutions influence contestation, see Monica Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Daniel N. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Brendan O'Leary, “What States Can Do with Nations: An Iron Law of Nationalism and Federation?” in T.V. Paul, G. John Ikenberry, and John Hall, eds., *The Nation-State in Question* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), chap. 2.

¹⁰ On what threats states balance against, see Stephen Walt, *Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 22–26; Jack Levy, “What Do Great Powers Balance Against and When?” in T.V. Paul, James Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the*

threats, union is useless and will not happen. While unification's parameters are hard to sharply bookend, any threat that could be met with a temporary alliance is too small, and any threat that could not be met with the most strenuous alliance is too large. Although no realist has made this argument, it is consistent with traditional realist reasoning; and although the argument is applied to two cases here, it is designed as a generalizable explanation for cases that fit the above scope conditions.

Unification so conceived is a perilous enterprise. Centralizing power increases the possibilities for tyranny and tempts nearby states to intervene preventively. States will not run such risks unless they are in the shadow of exigent threats, their "houses are on fire" to use Arnold Wolfers's language.¹¹ Crises enable elites in principal states to catalyze a critical mass of supporters and launch efforts for fundamental change.¹² Because states are not organized to facilitate radical measures, elites resort to extraordinary politics (read the unconstitutional use of force and fraud.)

On this view, bandwagoning for profit is an insufficient reward to unify.¹³ Unification is not a short-term swap; it is surrendering the tools of war and peace for the long term. If two states want to loot a third, they may form an alliance, despoil their victim, and go their separate ways, as Germany and the

Twenty-first Century (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 31–45; William Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 222, 298–299. For vital interests, I use Daryl Press's definition: "Vital interests are those related to a state's survival," specifically, "preserving its sovereignty and protecting its citizens." See Daryl Press, *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 26. For an extended discussion of the logic behind my argument, see Joseph M. Parent "E Pluribus Unum: Political Unification and Political Realism" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2006): chap. 2.

¹¹ Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 13–15. Naturally, the argument that war forges states is not new, see Tilly *Coercion*; Bruce Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern States* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 10; Michael Mann, *States, War, and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), xi, 108–110; Stanislaw Andreski, *Military Organization and Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 131–132, 173.

¹² For punctuated equilibria arguments, see Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 22–25; Wohlforth, *Elusive Balance*, 127, 290; G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). For argument and evidence that perceptions also adjust smoothly, see Aaron Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895–1905* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 284–289. On elite persuasion and tipping models, see Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: Norton, 2000), 45–68; David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 23–29.

¹³ On bandwagoning for power and profit, see William Riker, *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1964), chap. 1; Jones, *Rise*, 5; Randall Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19 (Summer 1994): 72–107.

Soviet Union did to Poland in 1939. Union is superfluous to such a scheme, and downright damaging afterwards.

Can such a union really be called voluntary? While unification invites force and fraud, that does not mean it is force and fraud all the way down. How could it be? It is inordinately difficult for relative equals to coerce each other to stay in a union, especially during the youth of a new state. Dissatisfied partners can choose to exit and summon foreign support as needed. As for deceit, it is at best a temporary expedient. At some point, the moment of extraordinary politics ends. When it does, the new institutions will channel political dissent into less-potent alleys, but regimes—and new regimes especially—are not immune to subsequent protest and revolution. Unions as discussed here may not fit the ideal of voluntary agreements, but they are as voluntary as international politics permits.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS: BINDING, TRADING, PERSUADING

As for alternative hypotheses, three broad arguments have fed expectations of eventual European unification. These logics correspond well to three paradigms: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. While I treat them as separate entities and find them unsatisfactory, one should keep in mind that the alternative explanations cross-pollinate and catch important facets of the story.

Typically, realists do not think voluntary unions exist. They believe that states have friends but never spouses, and this is true of both classical and neorealists.¹⁴ If realism is right, states should supremely value their sovereignty and ally but never unify—yet unifications like the United States fly in the face of these claims. Even if states could unify through balancing, they would not do so against an offshore power like the United States. Neorealists have been consistent that “Europe’s American pacifier” is an offshore balancer, and European states welcome America’s presence on the continent for two reasons: the United States is strong enough to prevent the continent’s descent into internecine strife and distant enough to make balancing against it gratuitous.¹⁵

However, realists have advanced an argument for increasing European integration: binding. I refer to binding as any attempt to unite against non-state

¹⁴ On classical realism and unification, see Joseph M. Parent, “Machiavelli’s Missing Romulus and the Murderous Intent of *The Prince*,” *History of Political Thought* 26 (Winter 2005): 625–645. For neorealism’s view on sovereignty and cooperation, see Waltz, *Theory*, 117, 180; cf. Lars-Erik Cederman, *Emergent Actors in World Politics: How States and Nations Develop and Dissolve* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 214; Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 40.

¹⁵ For realist views on European integration, see Josef Joffe, “Europe’s American Pacifier,” *Foreign Policy* 54 (Spring 1984): 64–82; Robert Art, “Why Western Europe Needs the United States and NATO,” *Political Science Quarterly* 111 (Spring 1996): 1–39; John Mearsheimer, “The Future of the American Pacifier,” *Foreign Affairs* 80 (September–October 2001): 46–61; Joseph Grieco, “State Interests and Institutional Rule Trajectories: A Neorealist Interpretation of the Maastricht Treaty and European Economic and Monetary Union,” *Security Studies* 5 (Spring 1996): 176–185.

threats.¹⁶ Seth Jones, for instance, makes a convincing case that politicians weave a mesh of institutions over Europe because they fear an independent Germany might spark war. Pushed to its logical conclusion, binding could unify Europe.

Surely at lower levels of integration, binding explanations have much merit. Post-Cold War European politics featured marked concern, inside Germany and out, about an untethered Germany generating war. Still, binding appears to be a frail foundation for union. Several horrible European wars and anxious decades have passed without leading to a binding union. States speak with their actions that they continue to put a premium on their autonomy. Because binding negates conventional balance of power politics, it is dubiously realist, but because it is a prominent explanation and many realists have flirted with and espoused similar positions, I include it under the realist rubric.¹⁷

Liberal theories of integration—functionalism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism—are, like all paradigms, a group of explanations that share a familial resemblance. And like all families, liberal theories have their differences, but what they share is the belief that economic considerations pull states together, a process that can build trust, dampen the prospect of war, and lead to union.¹⁸ Unlike realists, liberals see states as apt to integrate more from attraction to common friends than repulsion from common enemies, and their arguments have been indispensable stalwarts for ever-closer union.

Andrew Moravcsik articulates this line of thought most compellingly. He contends that the most important cause of integration is economic interest, though relative power and credible commitments are also significant. Changes in the global economy make the economic preferences of powerful states converge. To enjoy the fruits of this convergence, states hammer out grand bargains, crafting institutions that permit credible commitments to each other to honor their deal.

I contend that glossing over the distinction between high politics (security) and low politics (everything else) is not helpful when explaining unification.

¹⁶ For binding and threat-tethering arguments generally, see Celeste Wallander and Robert Keohane, “Risk, Threat, and Security Institutions” in Celeste Wallander, Helga Haftendorn, and Robert Keohane, eds., *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23–25; Riker, *Federalism*, 12–13; Patricia Weitsman, “Intimate Enemies: The Politics of Peacetime Alliances,” *Security Studies* 7 (Autumn 1997): 156–192.

¹⁷ On realist arguments sympathetic to binding, see Seth Jones, “The European Union and the Security Dilemma,” *Security Studies* 12 (Spring 2003): 114–156; E.H. Carr, *Nationalism and After* (London: Macmillan, 1945), 47, 51–59; George Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954), 105–107.

¹⁸ On functionalism, see Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*. On neofunctionalism, see Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958); Leon Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold, eds., *Regional Integration: Theory and Research* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); Alec Stone Sweet, Wayne Sandholtz, and Neil Fligstein, eds., *The Institutionalization of Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). On liberal intergovernmentalism, see Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, 3–4; cf. Dani Rodrik, “How Far Will International Economic Cooperation Go?” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14 (Winter 2000): 177–186.

Trade may explain why states join a free trade area, but it does not account for why they would sacrifice foreign policy autonomy and unify—and that is the decisive issue. Indeed, Moravcsik admits as much.¹⁹ Generally, whereas liberals think European economic success fuels unification, I think European economic success is a disincentive to unification. Embarrassingly for liberal theories, the present growth of global trade correlates with an increasing number of states in the world.²⁰

For constructivists, ideas are the prime movers in human affairs, and discourse is the primary causal mechanism. Behavior follows belief; if we thought about the world differently, the world would be a different place.²¹ In Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett's state-of-the-art exposition, unification would be the culmination of a three-tiered, path-dependent road. In the first tier, numerous precipitating conditions could start closer alignment, such as changes in technology, demographics, economics, the environment, external threats, new interpretations of social reality, and the list goes on. In tier two, states, peoples, and especially farsighted elites alter their environment by cultivating a "we-feeling" and redefining identities, through "cores of strength" (i.e., dominant states), transactions, organizations, and learning. Finally, in tier three, the once-different peoples now share collective identity, which fosters trust and expectations of peaceful change.

There are a number of problems with this formulation. At bottom, it is non-falsifiable. Constructivists do not effectively specify how and when intimacy leads to political intertwining or how far integration will go; "close ties demand efforts to confederate, but these same ties have brought about the familiarity that breeds mistrust."²² The most damning criticism of constructivism is the evidence. Discourse, learning, farsighted elites, cores of strength, these are all commonplace. Communication has never been easier, education never more widespread, opportunities for mutual gain never greater—so why does the number of states in the world keep going up?

¹⁹ See Moravcsik, *Choice for Europe*, 6, 90, 102. For liberal dismissal of high versus low politics, see *ibid.*, 6; Helen Milner, *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 181; Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1989), 26–27.

²⁰ On trade flows and integration, see Joanne Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries, and International Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Edward Mansfield and Helen Milner, eds., *The Political Economy of Regionalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

²¹ On constructivism and integration, see Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, "A Framework for the Study of Security Communities" in Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 37–48; Alexander Wendt, "Why a World State is Inevitable," *European Journal of International Relations* 9 (December 2003): 491–542; James Caporaso, "The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory, or Post-Modern?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34 (March 1996): 29–52; Craig Parsons, *A Certain Idea of Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

²² Thomas Karnes, *The Failure of Union: Central America, 1824–1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 247.

THE UNITING OF AMERICA: A BRIEF HISTORY

Most people overlook one of the most amazing aspects of the U.S. Constitution. External danger is supposed to drive allies closer together and make cooperation easier. When the threat recedes, necessity no longer presses and cooperation should become harder. The loosely binding Articles of Confederation were drafted and ratified with an invading army occupying the United States, while the much more adhesive Constitution was drafted and ratified in a time of tranquility. It took 16 months to draw up the Articles and three years to ratify them. Contrast that to the Constitution's four months of drafting and less than a year to ratify. How did the United States defy the dictates of power politics?

The conventional wisdom is that the Articles of Confederation were riddled with problems; so the great and good met in Philadelphia and drafted the Constitution, which was, with some deliberation, unanimously adopted. Other states were founded on force and fraud, their laws rammed down the throat of the weak by the fist of the strong. Yet the United States was triumphantly founded on the powers of persuasion. Some participants cast events in the same terms.²³

But the conventional wisdom misleads. By objective measures, the Articles were quite successful. From a security perspective, they beat back a great power, negotiated a favorable peace, and presided over enviable order. Following George Washington's renunciation of command, Congress ordered the discharge of all but 80 soldiers from the Continental Army. From an economic standpoint, the Articles weathered a postwar depression, saw the economy recover, and reigned over a doubling of the population, in spite of years of war, from two million to four million.²⁴

To be sure, the Articles were incomplete in unifying the country, but period sources reveal no popular clamor for greater cohesion. The impression of historians such as Jack Rakove, Merrill Jensen, Charles Beard, and Edmund Morgan suggests that Americans felt little sense of national crisis and cared

²³ See Bernard Bailyn, ed., *The Debate on the Constitution*, 2 vols. (New York: Library of America, 1993), 1:888; 2:521, 589; Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 62. For modern recitations of the conventional wisdom, see Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750* (New York: Norton, 1989), 28; George Kennan, *American Diplomacy: Expanded Edition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 95–96.

²⁴ On the Continental Army, see E. Wayne Carp, "The Problem of Defense in the Early American Republic" in Jack Greene, ed., *The American Revolution: Its Character and Limits* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 3, 31–34; Lois Schwoerer, *No Standing Armies! The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 2, 5, 197–198. On the economic performance of the former colonies, see Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 591; Douglas North, *The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790–1860* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 19.

more about debates in Parliament than Congress. Without polling data, it is impossible to access the preferences of Revolutionary America; nonetheless, most agree that if the Constitution had been put to a referendum in December 1787, it would not have passed.²⁵ There is strong evidence to suppose that, objectively, the Articles were not deleterious and, subjectively, contemporaries thought the Articles not a great burden.

How did the United States unify? For a better grasp of America's misunderstood unification, a short narrative is in order. The American Revolution began in 1776, but by the end of 1778, three states still had not ratified the Articles, preferring instead to bicker about land claims. It would not be until 1781 that the last state, Maryland, would sign, and then only under pressure from France.

From 1781 to 1783, Robert Morris, the virtual financial dictator of the confederation, attempted several ingenious economic measures to force the states to unify, which all amounted to nothing. Others tried economic routes to unity until they too hit a dead end in 1786. Financial affairs had serious security repercussions; states were not repaying their debts diligently, and Washington realized that if war came again, the United States could be beaten by great powers with deeper pockets and better credit. Worse still, foreign debt was a security liability because it could be forcibly collected.²⁶

Around the same time, John Jay presented a prospective treaty with Spain that would close navigation of the Mississippi River. The treaty cast a harsh light on sectional differences and raised the specter of disunion, sending a shudder through elites. Secessionist activity escalated on the confederation's periphery.²⁷ The Founders' correspondence reveals grave concern about for-

²⁵ On public opinion, see, for example, Charles Hyneman and Donald Lutz, eds., *American Political Writings During the Founding Era, 1760-1805*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1983); Robert Dinkin, *Voting in Revolutionary America: A Study of Elections in the Thirteen States, 1776-1789* (London: Greenwood Press, 1982), 129-130; William Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric: Campaigning for the American Constitution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 25, 255. On the lack of national crisis, see Jack Rakove, *Original Meanings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 28-29; Edmund Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-89* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 88, 145; Merrill Jensen, *The New Nation: A History of the United States During the Confederation, 1781-1789* (New York: Knopf, 1962), xiii.

²⁶ On Morris's machinations, see E. James Ferguson, "The Nationalists of 1781-1783 and the Economic Interpretation of the Constitution" in Kermit Hall, ed., *United States Constitutional and Legal History* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 188-194; Forrest McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum: The Formation of the American Republic, 1776-1790* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1979), 49-57. On America's credit problem, see Jack Rakove, "Constitutional Problematics, circa 1787" in John Ferejohn, Jack Rakove, and Jonathan Riley, eds., *Constitutional Culture and Democratic Rule* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61; Frederick Marks III, *Independence on Trial: Foreign Affairs and the Making of the Constitution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 45.

²⁷ On Mississippi River problems, see Samuel Bemis, *Pinckney's Treaty: A Study of America's Advantage from Europe's Distress, 1783-1800* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1926), 52, 93, 101; Charles Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Towards the United*

eigners encouraging domestic unrest, Indian attacks, and backcountry secessionist movements. If European powers could exploit the federation's fissures—and they appeared to be trying—the former colonies' vital interests would be at the mercy of the great powers.²⁸

Still, the public remained unmoved, and union appeared as distant as ever. It is hard for modern Americans to appreciate, but in the 1780s, there was little sense of “America” as a single republic with a common interest. Citizens equated “nation” with their particular state and concerned themselves with state and local issues. Union was thought so remote that a well-intentioned Federalist campaigned for intermarriage between people from different states. The idea of combining all 13 states into a single supreme government was thought about as likely as the creation of a monarchy.²⁹

Finding ordinary paths to change blocked, the Founders departed from standard modes. Virginia and Maryland had disputes over regulating commerce on the Potomac and Chesapeake Rivers. Through a circuitous and extra-legal route, the two states signed the Mount Vernon Compact, settling their disagreements, and the meeting was such a success that the suggestion was put forward for an annual conference. Virginia led the way, calling for a conference in Annapolis in September of 1786. The Annapolis conference met a tepid response—even Maryland did not bother attending—but its participants issued a call for a meeting at Philadelphia in May of 1787. The meeting's mandate was vague and hinted at little of the revolution to follow.

Crises showcase insecurities, and the 1786–1787 Shays's Rebellion clearly demonstrates elite fears. Even calling it a rebellion grotesquely overstates the event, which was quickly quelled, but elites were immediately alarmed. On almost no information, Washington and James Madison blamed the British from start to finish. Washington fretted, “There surely are men of consequence and abilities behind the Curtain, who move the puppets [*sic*].... They may be instigated by British Councils....” Madison felt sure that Shays had “opened com-

States, 1783-1795 (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969), 30, 44; Allan Nevins, *The American States: During and After the Revolution, 1775–1789* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 565–568, 601. On secessionist movements, see Reginald Horsman, *The Diplomacy of the New Republic, 1776–1815* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1985), 32–33; Arthur Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier, 1783-1795* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1927), 90, 108–113, 115–119, 209–213; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., *Britain and the American Frontier, 1783–1815* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), 32–33.

²⁸ For examples of Founders attributing insecurity to Britain, see George Washington in John Rhodehamel, ed., *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1997), 527, 539, 552, 563–564, 597; Alexander Hamilton in Joanne Freeman, ed., *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 124, 817; James Madison, Jr. in Jack Rakove, ed., *Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1999), 38, 48. On what we would now call “covert action links” between foreign powers and Indians, see Bemis, *Pinckney's Treaty*, 48, 52, 64–67, 136, 206; Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution*, 166–170.

²⁹ See Marks, *Independence on Trial*, 48; Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 356, 500.

munication with the Viceroy of Canada.”³⁰ The Massachusetts government and Boston newspapers blamed the insurrection on loyalists and British emissaries. Artemas Ward, a runner-up for Washington’s position during the Revolutionary War, informed the Massachusetts governor that men, perhaps British emissaries, were traveling from town to town calling men to arms. In retrospect, we know the British had no hand in the disturbance, but the crisis highlights the ultimate anxiety of many elites.

Concerning the Philadelphia Convention itself, many now neglect that the delegates were significantly more Federalist (i.e., pro-union) than the country at large and what they did was illegal. Throughout delegate election and drafting, selection effects screened out anti-union participants: 74 delegates were elected to Philadelphia, 55 attended, and 39 signed the finished product. All delegates had instructions to stay within existing institutions and procedures, and three states were constitutionally bound not to change their constitutions before 1791 at the earliest.³¹

The Philadelphia Convention transpired in secrecy—with all the now-famous bargaining and compromises over slavery, bicameralism, and executive powers—and produced the Constitution. Fear of outside intervention lay behind the spirit of compromise. Larger states hinted at partial union to frighten the smaller states, and smaller states responded that they could find foreign allies to “take them by the hand” if larger states proved overweening. Gouverneur Morris asserted: “This Country must be united. If Persuasion does not unite it, the sword will.” Madison put the choice starkly: “Great as the evil [slavery] is, a dismemberment of the Union would be worse. If those states should disunite from the other states for not indulging them in the temporary continuance of this traffic, they might solicit and obtain aid from foreign powers.”³²

The Constitution’s ratification method was contrary to Article XIII of the Articles of Confederation. Instead of unanimity, only nine states had to ratify to put the document into effect, and instead of state legislative approval, only special ratifying conventions were to be held. Records of the debate

³⁰ Washington, *Writings*, 631–632; and Madison quoted in Marks, *Independence on Trial*, 102; cf. Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, 164–165. The Ward information and related material can be found in McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, 244, 246, 251. On Shays’s Rebellion, see Robert Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion and the Constitution: A Study in Causation,” *New England Quarterly* 42 (September 1969): 388–410; Rock Brynner, “Fire Beneath our Feet: Shays’ Rebellion and Its Constitutional Impact” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993); Leonard Richards, *Shays’s Rebellion: The American Revolution’s Final Battle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

³¹ On delegate selection effects, see Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Free Press, 1941), 64, 149; McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, 35. On the legality of actions at Philadelphia, see Bruce Ackerman, *We the People: Transformations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 36–38.

³² See Rakove, *Original Meanings*, 104; Gaspare Saladino, “Delaware: Independence and the Concept of a Commercial Republic” in Michael Gillespie and Michael Lienesch, eds., *Ratifying the Constitution* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989), 39. The Morris quote is from Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 640. The Madison quote is from Amar, *America’s Constitution*, 120.

reveal why: the states were in mortal peril. James Wilson declared, “The house on fire must be extinguished without scrupulous regard to ordinary rights.”³³ Nine was thought about the right number to coerce the rest, which turned out to be accurate. When the Constitution was released to the public, even pro-union partisans were surprised by the document’s sudden leap to unification.³⁴

Many secondary states were outright in favor of the new government and acted early, building momentum. Delaware, New Jersey, Georgia, and South Carolina fit this description. The first two ratified mainly for financial reasons: Delaware and New Jersey had strong creditor interests that were unlikely to be paid without a more powerful federal government. The last two were chiefly driven by security: Georgia had need of federal power to deal with Indians, and South Carolina needed support to put down potential slave revolts.³⁵

Other states were not taken by the merits of the work, but little effort was made to persuade them. Ratification was rushed through in the autumn and winter, the worst months for political action in an agrarian society with poor roads. Although some were disenfranchised, it is still striking that approximately 480,000 of 640,000 adult white males did not participate in ratification. Voter turnout for the Constitution compares unfavorably with voter turnout in pre-Revolutionary elections.³⁶

Wilson set the tone at the first ratifying convention: “The general sentiment in that body [the Philadelphia Convention] ... is expressed in the motto which some of them have chosen, UNITE OR DIE.”³⁷ Pennsylvania sped ratification through, and, for a raft of reasons, left anti-union forces feeling cheated. Connecticut was likely evenly divided, but through brazen misinformation and procedural hardball, the Constitution sailed through. Massachusetts featured dishonest practices, monetary bribes, and a political bribe to John Hancock (later retracted). Maryland witnessed violence at the polls and no debate at the ratifying convention. New Hampshire violated a charitable interpretation

³³ On the ratification number debate, see Philip B. Kurland and Ralph Lerner, eds., *The Founders’ Constitution*, 5 vols. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1987), 4:654; Max Farrand, *Records of the Federal Convention*, 4 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 3:158–159. *Federalist* XLIII makes a like case. For more “house on fire” quotes, see Kurland and Lerner, *Founders’ Constitution*, 4:654; Washington, *Writings*, 635; Farrand, *Framing*, 192.

³⁴ On initial reactions to the Constitution, see Ackerman, *We the People*, 38; Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 53; Bailyn, *Debate*, 1:103, 250, 415, 424, 494, 526, 687; 2:81–82, 243.

³⁵ On ratification, I draw mainly on Patrick Conley and John Kaminski, eds., *The Constitution and the States: The Role of the Original Thirteen in the Framing and Adoption of the Federal Constitution* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1988); McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*; Gillespie and Lienesch, *Ratifying*; Bailyn, *Debate*.

³⁶ See McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, 319; cp. Dinkin, *Voting in Revolutionary America*, 129–130; Robert Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America: A Study of Elections in the Thirteen Colonies, 1689–1776* (London: Greenwood Press, 1977), chap. 7.

³⁷ Wilson in Bailyn, *Debate*, 1:798.

of deliberative democracy; partisans set the ratifying convention's rules, certified all delegates, and tipped the odds towards the Constitution.

Virginia ratified with due procedure, but victory required extraordinary efforts. Washington weighed in early and often, saying, for instance: "There is no alternative—no hope of alteration—no intermediate resting place—between the adoption of this and a recurrence of an unqualified state of Anarchy, with all its deplorable consequences." In addition, the razor-thin ratification margin required the defection of Edmund Randolph, who stated that it was the threat of war, not the document's charms, that persuaded him to accept the Constitution. Randolph's conversion suspiciously coincides with other events: shortly after his change of heart he became the first attorney general of the United States, and he went from tight financial circumstances in 1788 to holding more than \$10,000 of public securities in 1790.³⁸

New York was staunchly and persistently anti-union. Insecurity was the first issue *The Federalist Papers* took up to convince the state, and security essays, numbers I-VI and VIII-IX, were the most reprinted of all the essays. An extensive debate failed to make the Constitution palatable, but ratification by other states left New York isolated. Melancton Smith was the courageous dissenter who broke ranks and brought over enough people to ratify. He made his reasoning plain; Smith switched sides to avert a war that would produce a worse settlement. North Carolina ratified for similar reasons, and Rhode Island was threatened with blockade and invasion before it ratified, though these last three states are more cases of annexation than voluntary union.³⁹ Hence unanimous ratification.

Nevertheless, the Constitution was not safe; opponents sought to call a second convention to get a better sense of what the people desired. Washington worried, "If another Federal Convention is attempted the sentiments of the members will be more discordant or less conciliatory than the last, in fine, that they will agree to no genl. Plan."⁴⁰ Through Madison's assiduous politicking, the Bill of Rights was drafted, passed, and ratified by 1791, leaving anti-union forces divided and conquered, and the Constitution safe for the foreseeable future.

How do we know the Constitution crossed the union threshold? The Constitution has the traits of a unified polity where the Articles did not. Under the Articles, nine states had their own navies; many had their own armies. States like Georgia and Virginia retained powers of war and peace, and states like

³⁸ Washington in Bailyn, *Debate*, 2:180, cf. 421; 1:305, 612. On Randolph's financial reversal, see McDonald, *E Pluribus Unum*, 264–265, 339–340. Washington later cashiered Randolph on suspicion of taking bribes.

³⁹ On *The Federalist Papers*, see Amar, *America's Constitution*, 43–45.

⁴⁰ Washington quoted in Michael Allen Gillespie, "Massachusetts: Creating Consensus" in Gillespie and Lienesch, *Ratifying*, 153. See also *Federalist* XLIX. On the Bill of Rights, see Patrick Conley and John Kaminski, eds., *The Bill of Rights and the States: The Colonial and Revolutionary Origins of American Liberties* (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1992).

Virginia and Maryland had their own extensive diplomatic activity. England and France asked for 13 ambassadors.⁴¹

Under the Constitution, state governments were not allowed to keep their own armies or navies, and legal supremacy rested at the federal level. This is how participants viewed matters. As Akhil Amar notes: “No leading Federalist ever publicly sought to win over states’ rights by conceding that a state could unilaterally nullify or secede in the event it later became dissatisfied. The Federalists’ silence here was deafening.... No state convention, in its ratification instrument, purported to reserve the right of its state populace to unilateral secession.” And Alexander Hamilton and Jay underscored: “A reservation of a right to withdraw ... was inconsistent with the Constitution and was *no ratification*.” Madison stressed, “The Constitution requires an adoption *in toto* and *for ever*.”⁴² In short, the Constitution’s supremacy clause (Article VI, paragraph 2) marked a fundamental transition from state to federal dominance; the Articles of Confederation had talked about unifying the country, the Constitution did it.

Some could argue that the true founding of the United States was the Civil War. On the contrary, the Civil War is sound evidence that the United States remained on the unified side of the spectrum. A state does not fragment every time a group declares itself independent; states fragment when a group that can uphold legal supremacy declares independence. Theodore Kaczynski, David Koresh’s Branch Davidians, and the Confederate States of America did not take the United States from hierarchy into anarchy, and while the historical consensus espouses this view, it is not hindsight bias.⁴³ Impartial spectators at the time did not bet that any of the above had the wherewithal to uphold legal supremacy, and evidence of this is that none were internationally recognized as states.

Not only was the South on shaky military ground, it was also on shaky legal ground. Madison, “the father of the Constitution ... denounced in unmistakable terms the smooth and well-articulated word pattern of Calhoun, condemning secession as utterly without support in the understandings of the men who made, ratified, and launched the Constitution.” The accepted view during Reconstruction, advanced by Samuel Shellabarger, was that secession was void, and no state ever left the jurisdiction of the U.S. government. In *Texas v. White*, the United States Supreme Court concurred.⁴⁴

⁴¹ On the fundamental shift between the Articles and the Constitution, see Nevins, *American States*, 658–660; Marks, *Independence on Trial*, 123; Amar, *America’s Constitution*, 22–26, 37, 106, 114–118, 242, 299–300.

⁴² Amar, *America’s Constitution*, 37; Hamilton, and Jay quoted in *ibid.*, 38; Madison, *Writings*, 408.

⁴³ Of course, Union victory was not inevitable, but that does not vitiate the line drawn. On the South’s odds of victory, see James McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 114; Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Library of America, 1990), 110–112, 144–158.

⁴⁴ For the Madison statement, see Charles Beard and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization*, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 2:50. On Shellabarger and the Supreme Court, see Eric McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 93–116.

Many people believe that the Civil War changed America profoundly and expanded state power and principles; I am among them. But our focus here is a narrower one, and asks solely when states cross the midpoint of the anarchy–hierarchy continuum. Since 1791, the United States never has. Therefore, it should be plain that while American history and the European present can be compared, *pace* Kupchan, the American history in question cannot be after 1791.⁴⁵

PARALLEL UNIONS? THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE COMPARED

If modern day Europe looks far more like life under the Articles than life under the Constitution, what does that mean for the future of Europe? Insofar as the past is an aid to preparing for the future, European unification is up against formidable obstacles. This section presents the factors promoting and retarding European union, and concludes with a summary of how I believe they will net out over time.

The Good News

On the positive side of the ledger, many of the perceived barriers to European unity were surmountable in the American case. Early Americans balanced against offshore powers and overcame inchoate nationalism, a democratic deficit, and thorny bargaining issues to build their state. In some respects, Europe is in a better position to unify than was postcolonial America.

Contrary to realists, voluntary unification can happen, and the United States is living proof. Realists' conjectures about Europe are doubly incorrect with respect to America. For one, offshore powers were not too distant to spur a tight alliance. Jack Levy is correct; while it is less likely that balancing will occur against maritime powers, the threshold is only raised, not eliminated.⁴⁶ For another, binding did not cause union. As a proximate cause, binding appears right; the former colonies did not want war with each other. But that should not be confused with a profound cause. Recurrent statements show that the real enemy was outside powers, not war; unification was an attempt to cement a countervailing coalition.

Americans may believe their presence spares Europe from itself, but that may be an irony of history. In the 1770s, the British justified their domi-

⁴⁵ Contra Kupchan, the early United States had impressive force projection capability; see Ira Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American Statebuilding" in Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, eds., *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 89–91.

⁴⁶ Levy, "What Do Great Powers Balance Against," 45. For a more benign view of offshore powers, see Josef Joffe, "Defying History and Theory: The United States as the 'Last Remaining Superpower'" in G. John Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 391.

nance of North America by contending that the British pacifier spared Americans from falling victim to internecine warfare or prey to the French menace. The period following American independence gave the lie to that claim, though just barely.⁴⁷ What American elites worried about most were threats external to the confederation, and to shield themselves, they championed the most intimate of alliances. Conceivably, modern Europe could do the same.

Contrary to constructivists, high cross-border communication is unnecessary for unification. Transnational activities have never been cheaper or easier than today, yet eighteenth-century Americans did not need telephones, televisions, the Internet, or interstate highways to make their state. They constructed a nation on a weak foundation of common identity, intermingling, and contact. Propaganda certainly helped ratify the Constitution, but the power of ideas was limited. Many ratifications required force and fraud. The best-informed states (e.g., New York, Rhode Island) were the most opposed to ratification, and the decisive defections (e.g., Randolph, Smith) for ratification made a point of saying that they were not convinced by the other side's arguments.⁴⁸

This raises the matter of Europe's "democratic deficit." If Europe follows American-style integration, constitutional ratification will not be a triumph of pristine democracy. Without doubt, many features of the Constitution and its ratification were highly democratic, especially in historical context, and voters eventually gave their consent. Nonetheless, a majority of the American electorate probably did not approve of the document. Europe is already practicing this page of the American playbook. As Eric Hobsbawm notes, "The EU was explicitly constructed on a nondemocratic (i.e. nonelectoral) basis, and few would seriously argue that it would have got where it is otherwise."⁴⁹ I would add that it is unlikely to get where it is ostensibly going otherwise.

Recent rejections of the European constitution have cast future unification into increasing doubt, and union proponents have ascribed failure to a host of factors: concerns about transparency, accountability, and relative gains. In historical perspective, these excuses are weak. Founding-era Americans faced these problems too—plus the monstrosity of slavery—and still managed to craft a country. Hostile factions, as Niccolò Machiavelli and Edward Gibbon observed, cause union as well as disunion. Furthermore, there are other propitious signs: Americans too despaired of eventual union until a sudden, surprising pro-

⁴⁷ On America's British pacifier, see Jensen, *The New Nation*, 337–343.

⁴⁸ For Randolph and Smith's exact words, see Randolph quoted in Lance Banning, "Virginia: Sectionalism and the General Good" in Gillespie and Lienesch, *Ratifying*, 285–286; Smith in Bailyn, *Debate*, 2:717, 852.

⁴⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, "An Afterword: European Integration at the End of the Century" in Klausen and Tilly, eds., *European Integration*, 268; cf. "Charlemagne: For Your Eyes Only," *Economist*, 11 August 2007, 44.

posal appeared, and Congress under the Articles did not need to show minimal functional competence before the country united.⁵⁰

The Bad News

On the negative side of the ledger, the argument of this work and the historical record suggest that Europeans confront a tougher path to union than America's Founding Fathers did. European unifiers have long pinned their hopes on three logics that are not sturdy enough to support unification. And the most promising logic—traditional balancing—faces forbidding hurdles.

Contrary to liberals, economic causes of union were little help in America. Robert Morris and other elites tried in vain to use economic tools to bring about union. It was in fact the explicit failure of these efforts that made elites change tack and chart new courses to union (eternal optimists, Americans would later resurrect economic strategies to annex Canada.) To be fair, the Philadelphia Convention was initiated under economic pretext, yet the delegates swiftly exceeded their instructions because their problems went beyond low politics. Liberal explanations of Europe echo Charles Beard's economic interpretation of the Constitution, and produce a similar result: an important perspective, but one better at capturing readers' imaginations than causal variance.⁵¹

Realists may agree that the United States was not a case of binding, but claim that times have changed—Europe has learned the peril of an unattached Germany. But the data suggest that war avoidance is not strong enough to vault states into unions. All states know that if they unified they would be much less likely to fight each other. Yet few states can be prodded, kicking and screaming, to unify; even fewer states take the plunge to unify voluntarily. If we rephrase the matter as states wishing to avoid highly destructive wars, then the obvious test cases are nuclear-armed adversaries.⁵² Plans for joint nuclear management, like the Baruch Plan, have been enduringly unacceptable, and the warmth of U.S.–USSR and India–Pakistan relations has not been heartening.

⁵⁰ See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, Harvey Mansfield, and Nathan Tarcov, trans. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 23 [I 6]; Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols. (New York: Everyman, 1994), 4:121 [chap. 38]. On the issues blamed for bedeviling the EU, see “Charlemagne: A Monster Lives Again,” *Economist*, 6 January 2007, 46; “Charlemagne: Existential Dreaming,” *Economist*, 24 March 2007, 62.

⁵¹ On American plans to annex Canada, see Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 32–34, 112–114; Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 56–58, 82–83, 180. On the United States and economic causes of unification, see Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4; Richard Hofstadter, “Beard and the Constitution: The History of an Idea,” *American Quarterly* 2 (Fall 1950): 195–213.

⁵² On integration in the face of nuclear threats, see Daniel Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 246, 260–261.

Binding advocates could fall back on terrorism as a unifying threat. Terrorism may be increasing in frequency but remains uncommon, and it certainly is not as lethal as interstate war. It is not clear that union would help counter the threat that terrorism poses.⁵³ Over decades, states like the United Kingdom, Israel, and the United States have not, in their aggregate wisdom, found in unification a viable solution to their problems with terrorism.

What about environmental, economic, or cultural threats? No modern states have unified in reaction to environmental pressures, and indeed areas with the most onerous environmental pressures are politically fractured.⁵⁴ If cultural and economic threats cause states to unify, we should expect to see unification in places like Africa and South America. Despite ample time and intelligent, charismatic leaders in charge of armies like Simón Bolívar, Kwame Nkrumah, and Julius Nyerere, such unification drives have all foundered. The upshot is that there is little evidence that states unify in the face of non-state threats.

I argue that the biggest barrier to European unity is that Europe does not confront the security deficiencies that founding-era Americans did.⁵⁵ Thorny issues are a problem of every unification; what causes some states and not others to clear these hurdles are security pressures. As we saw with Shays's Rebellion, what seriously concerned America's Founding Fathers were outside threats to their vital interests. The situation was perceived as dire, and to institutionalize their remedy involved fraud, bribery, mail tampering, explicit threats of secession, and implicit threats of invasion. Today, neither the United States nor any other state comparably menaces the EU's vital interests, and one can see this in European defense debates and public opinion data.⁵⁶

In addition, Europe may struggle to copy the United States because unification may be most likely on the geopolitical periphery. Few countries prefer strong states to be stronger and many are willing, if not to strangle, then to

⁵³ For related arguments, see Christopher Layne, "The War on Terrorism and the Balance of Power: The Paradoxes of American Hegemony" in Paul, Wirtz, and Fortmann, eds., *Balance of Power*, 106–108; John Mueller, *Overblown* (New York: Free Press, 2006); Heather Timmons and Eric Pfanner, "Europe Says It Will Unify Effort in Fight on Terrorism," *The New York Times*, 17 August 2006.

⁵⁴ On the political responses to environmental pressures, see Colin Kahl, *States, Scarcity, and Civil Strife in the Developing World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), chap. 5; Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 497.

⁵⁵ Others make similar points, see Rakove, "Europe's Floundering Fathers," 39; Barry Posen, "European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?" *Security Studies* 15 (April–June 2006): 149, 184; cf. Stephen Walt, "The Ties that Fray: Why Europe and America are Drifting Apart," *National Interest* 54 (Winter 1998): 3–11.

⁵⁶ On European disunity on force deployment, see Carsten Tams, "The Functions of a European Security and Defence Identity and its Institutional Form" in Wallander, Haftendorn, and Keohane, eds., *Imperfect Unions*, 81. On America's role in European defense, see Geir Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 238, 264–266, 281, 285–286. For survey data on threats to Europe, see Kennedy and Bouton, "The Real Trans-Atlantic Gap," 70, 72; Leonard Ray and Gregory Johnston, "European Anti-Americanism and Choices for a European Defense Policy," *Political Science and Politics* 40 (January 2007): 86.

keep Hercules in the cradle. In this sense, one person's successful union is another's failure to divide and conquer. There are good geopolitical incentives to keep other states apart, but peripheral states may not be worth the bother. Europe, however, is not a peripheral region. Consistent with this reasoning, the United States has a long track record of keeping European unity from frustrating American foreign policy.⁵⁷ The situation is a complex one though; the more actively the United States intervenes to hinder European union, the more likely unification becomes. So long as American interference stops shy of threats to vital interests, European unification will stall.

This raises the question of whether the United States is likely to threaten Europe's vital interests. In the short run, with a conventional definition of vital interests used above (see note ten), the outlook is favorable that neither Europe nor the United States has much incentive to directly menace the other. It seems probable that the prolonged period of great-power peace will continue; land is harder and less valuable to take and hold; overall security is not scarce.⁵⁸ This may be good for the world but not for European unification. In the longer run, hegemonic states are particularly prone to lapses of judgment and increasingly overbearing behavior. If unipolarity endures, America's growing footprints in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have the potential to snowball into the kind of anxiety and acrimony that galvanize unification efforts. There are no guarantees that the United States will respect Europe's vital interests.

The Bottom Line

Individually or collectively, the three planks that bolster hopes for Europe's ever-closer union—binding, trading, and persuading—were insufficient to unify the United States. That does not mean they are a flimsy basis for other forms of integration or that efforts to unify Western Europe are futile. But it does mean that for those whom unification is more than a velleity, plans for ever-closer union should be amended to focus on external threat.

The U.S. commitment to Europe, made partly as a desire to facilitate integration, has impeded union. Europe's American pacifier, while annoying, does not threaten vital interests, and that dampens the forces of unification. John Foster Dulles suspected the United States had made this error: "It is pos-

⁵⁷ On America's long-standing subordination of European unity to American foreign policy goals, see Lundestad, *United States*, 38, 63, 78, 86–88, 176, 182, 232, 243, 259, 261, 278. On America and divide-and-rule in Europe, see Christopher Layne, "America as European Hegemon," *National Interest* 72 (Summer 2003): 17–29.

⁵⁸ On the obsolescence of great-power war and the decreasing relevance of territory, see John Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 1–5; Hendrik Spruyt, *Ending Empire: Contested Sovereignty and Territorial Partition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 4; Carl Kaysen, "Is War Obsolete: A Review Essay," *International Security* 14 (Spring 1990): 42–64.

sible that the historian may judge that the Economic Recovery Act and the Atlantic Pact were the two things which prevented a unity in Europe which in the long run may be more valuable than either of them.”⁵⁹ The same security that makes it easier for places like Scotland and Catalonia to move away from the British and Spanish governments also makes it harder for France and Germany to move toward each other.

So much for the near term. In the longer term, the outlook changes. A leitmotif in politics is that cupidity correlates with capacity, or, alternately, that power corrupts. If American primacy persists, there are good reasons to suspect that American foreign policy will increasingly chafe other countries and provoke balancing coalitions. When Europe intensely menaced U.S. security, the United States united. Should the United States return the favor in kind, Europe, too, could unite. But with the rise of China diverting America’s attention eastward, this prospect seems increasingly remote.

CONCLUSION

My central finding is that ever-closer union is a false idol. The abiding arguments behind eventual European unification—realist, liberal, and constructivist—are not supported by American history. However, an overlooked but traditional realist explanation is more promising: states unify to balance against threats to their vital interests. This could be good news for the EU’s present malaise, but likely it is not. The blessing of the Atlantic security community has been a curse for European unification, sapping the need for unification. Only when America’s continental commitment grows intrusive or inadequate can Europe unify.

Secondarily, unification between equals is hard, dicey work. The United States is a terrific template for would-be European unifiers, but they should be aware of what a daunting, dangerous task unification is. When it comes to union, all good things do not go together, and grave trade-offs must be made with respect to democracy and threats of force. EU proponents should be aware that the prospects are inauspicious for uniting non-peripheral states in response to non-state, non-security threats.

Discussing attitudes after the First World War, A.J.P. Taylor observed that Europeans dreamed “of a painless revolution, in which men would surrender their independence and sovereignty without noticing that they had done so.”⁶⁰ No nation has come closer to living that dream than the United

⁵⁹ Dulles quoted in Geir Lundestad, *Empire by Integration: The United States and European Integration, 1945–1997* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 152; cf. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department* (New York: Norton, 1969), 708.

⁶⁰ A.J.P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (New York: Oxford University Press), xxi; cf. E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 22–40; Cooper, *Breaking of Nations*, 171–172; Jeremy Rifkin, *The European Dream: How Europe’s Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 7–8.

States, and the politicians who effected it were guided by an extensive knowledge of history, especially Roman history.

In *The Federalist*, No. 18, Madison pondered the example of the Achaean League, a confederation of Greek city-states that squabbled amongst themselves rather than truly unite.⁶¹ Rome befriended the Achaeans and defeated their nearest enemy, becoming the sole superpower in the Mediterranean basin. With a foothold established, Rome kept the peninsula divided, relegating it to a political afterthought. America avoided repeating the Achaeans' pitiable experience, and in so doing, left a powerful example for succeeding generations. Those who desire similar ends may have need of similar means.*

⁶¹ See James Madison in Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 163–164; cf. Polybius, *The Histories*, W.R. Paton trans., 6 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 6:77 [XXIX 20].

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