Future research, moreover, should move beyond the state-centered focus of the existing scholarship to encompass a wider range of actors. One possible approach would combine international, political and cultural history and investigate the debate over global interdependence in the 1970s. The concept of interdependence became an increasingly popular construct in US political circles and academia during the 1970s. Harvard Professors Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye defined “complex interdependence” as an ideal type. Its main characteristics were numerous channels of communication, a lack of hierarchy between negotiation topics, and the reduced usability of force.  

Keohane and Nye’s argument implied that international interdependence reduced the ability of the superpowers to influence outcomes based on sheer military superiority. How did the discussions evolve on both sides of the Atlantic? Did political, economic and intellectual actors in EC countries view interdependence as a source of weakness or strength for medium-size European powers and a united Europe? A second, related approach would focus on the practical implications of the debate. How did business leaders in EC countries and the United States assess the situation? Which strategies did they apply, notably in the EC-US context? These research topics are important given the prominence of economic networks, notably the European Roundtable of Industrialists, in European integration in the early 1980s.

All in all, future research should situate the history of EC-US relations during the 1970s in the context of an evolving transatlantic relationship and a shifting geopolitical and economic order. Only so will we gain a better understanding of the significance of the US component of the EC’s external dimension during this decade.

Aurélie Élisa Gfeller (Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies)

“Looking Eastward”

The dramatic changes in the international system over the last twenty years call the EU to actively contribute to international security and the shaping of a new political and economic order, starting with Europe itself. In the post-Cold War system, the redefinition of equilibrium in the Continent has been of immediate concern, and EU’s relations with its neighbouring East, i.e. Russia and other former USSR countries, are still one of the key issues in the political and scholarly debate on international relations. With the collapse of the bipolar system, in fact, the newborn European Union proved an irresistible magnet for former allies of the Soviet Union, which all applied for membership. Their becoming part of the EU affects the international role of the latter in two intertwined ways. On the one hand, to agree on a common foreign policy à 27, and on the very mechanism to elaborate it, proves even more difficult.

On the other hand, the interests and sensibilities of these countries make relations with Russia more delicate to handle.

Over the decades, research on this topic has been led by political scientists and jurists with expertise in international and/or EC law. International history scholars, on the contrary, have been slow to devote attention to the EC/EU as an international actor, and particularly reluctant to deal with the specific case of its relations with the Soviet bloc. Still, the necessity and feasibility of a Europe speaking with one voice came to dominate the scholarly and the political debate since the early 1970s, when the EC started to be more active and self-assertive in many areas, and when important institutional changes began to this end. Moreover, a preliminary historical analysis shows that dynamics and issues of current EU-Russia relations, e.g. human rights, co-operation in the fields of energy, security, and environment, all emerged in the 1970s. As well, the pattern of EU’s enlargement eastwards had its origins in the relations between the EC and Central and Eastern European countries in the previous decades. By placing recent developments in a longer perspective historical research would thus significantly contribute to a better understanding of present-day Europe.53

In accomplishing this task, historians of European integration would largely benefit from linking with Cold War history, for the bipolar structure significantly affected the relations between the EC and the communist countries all along the Cold War years. Reversing the link, Cold War historians should take into higher consideration the external dimension of the integration process and EC’s international role.

State of the art

In the last decade, the scholarly debate on the Cold War has moved beyond superpowers’ policy and relationship to focus on the role of small and medium powers in the 1970s and early 1980s, also prompted by the release of primary sources in many archives. Recent studies in the field recognise the 1970s as a period marking a profound discontinuity in the political and economic international system.54 In particular, it is evident that the consolidated geopolitical and ideological bipolar equilibrium began to be eroded, and that small and medium powers enjoyed greater autonomy. In this context, Western European détente involving the East in financial, commercial and cultural links is now acknowledged among the crucial factors in determining the end of the Cold War, and explaining the pace of the fall of communism in Euro-

53. This contribution results from my research work as Jean Monnet Fellow 2009-2010 at RSCAS, EUI.
So is the CSCE process, in which EC member states played a leading role in turning European international politics to a new kind of thinking. The EC too is recognised as a strong pole of attraction vis-à-vis the disastrous socialist experiment. Nonetheless, the emphasis to date has been bilateral and transatlantic rather than multilateral and pan-European, and the active role of the EC as such is still largely overlooked.

On its part, recent European integration historiography devotes more attention to the external dimension of the process and to the international role of the EC, linking European integration dynamics to the broader history of international relations. In this new research field, however, EC’s relations with the Soviet bloc countries remain largely unexplored. To date, there are a few remarkable attempts to fill the gap. The volume edited by Piers Ludlow, European integration and the Cold War: Ostpolitik-Westpolitik, 1965-1973, brings evidence of the way in which the East-West conflict and the emergence of organised co-operation in Europe became entangled with one another in the member states’ foreign policy. Moreover, Ludlow’s own chapter brings the EC as such under scrutiny, debating the general assumption of a Community insulated from Cold War dynamics. Yamamoto successfully linked détente and integration in his article on EC response to the Soviet proposal for EC/Comecon relations in the early 1970s. However, his analysis is focused on French, British and West German governments’ approaches, identifies the EC with the Council of Foreign Ministers, and completely ignores the Commission. Making use of the vast amount of available EC primary sources, one finds that Soviet representatives approached the Commission first, and repeatedly since 1972, and that the supranational institution actively contributed to shaping EC response to Comecon.


57. F. ROMERO, op.cit.


Focusing on the multilateral and pan-European level, my book analyses the attempts of the EC-Nine to shape and promote a co-ordinated “European détente” on the occasion of the Helsinki CSCE. Not only does it demonstrate that EPC came to live and instantly flourished due to East-West dialogue, but also it brings into the argument the role and interests of the EC as such, and points to the question of gaining recognition from the Soviet bloc countries as one of the driving forces behind Western European collective action.61

The action of the Nine at Helsinki is also the one major success story Möckli reports in his thorough analysis on France, Britain, and West Germany and the emergence of EPC within the broader context of early 1970s Cold War intra-European and transatlantic relations.62 Moreover, while arguing that by 1974 this brief moment of concord had vanished and policy successes became rare, Möckli recognises the CSCE as the notable exception. In fact, my works moving beyond the early 1970s bring evidence of Western European collective CSCE action up into the 1980s. Furthermore, I point to a broader EC “Eastern policy”, in which CSCE features along EC’s intensifying bilateral relations with Eastern states. Most Soviet bloc countries informally approached the Commission to conclude bilateral dealings, and negotiations between the EC and Comecon went public.63 These contacts, together with the involvement of the Commission in several EPC working groups, made the EC institutions increasingly acknowledge East-West dynamics, appreciate the national political and economic realities of the Eastern countries, and shape EC policy and actions more accurately.

The above-mentioned scholarship has demonstrated the fruitfulness of historical analysis linking European integration and Cold War. It has convincingly argued that in the first half of the 1970s the flourishing of détente between the superpowers as well as between European states provided the ideal framework for asserting a “Europe speaking with a single voice”. It has also shown that EPC turned out to be particularly successful at the Helsinki CSCE, and that the EC as such became actively involved in East-West relations. From the mid-1970s to the Gorbachev era the return of Cold War-like tensions between the superpowers narrowed EC-Nine’s room for manoeuvre. Yet, recent works show that détente became a permanent task of EPC, and that EC-Soviet bloc relations grew more intense and diversified. Research on the next chapter of this story is badly needed, and moving into the long 1970s perspective seems particularly promising for studies connecting the two historical sub-fields.

Research in this field moving its first steps, methodological issues are to be assessed and the research agenda is open to definition. I hereby suggest some directions, which are largely influenced by my own experience, interests, and agenda.

Problems and methodological issues

The “long 1970s” suggests the opportunity to define the period of analysis according to criteria more sophisticated than the simple time span of a decade. As for EC’s relations with the East, I would propose the long 1970s as beginning in December 1969 – taking the EC Summit of The Hague as starting point – and ending in 1983 with the conclusion of the Madrid CSCE follow-up meeting. If we consider European détente, and the continuity in EPC machinery to deal with it, this choice proves consistent. As Prof. Wilfried Loth argued during workshop discussion, 1983 “is also plausible because the so-called Second Cold War ended just in this year. It was in early 1984, more than one year before Mikhail Gorbachev came into power, that Ronald Reagan started his charming offensive towards Moscow, genuinely aiming to improve relations and reduce the level of armaments”.

In approaching research in this field, historians should free their minds from some narrative habits. First, the “East” or “Soviet bloc” is too often referred to as a single entity, almost coincident with the USSR, while differences among communist states were impressive as for political and economic rationales, interests and actions, especially when it came to relations with the EC. Second, scholars should get rid of the idea of “lost opportunities”. Kissinger-attributed remark “Whom do I call if I want to speak to Europe?” still echoes in the public and academic discourse, especially of political scientists. Historians should refuse presupposition that only a supranational foreign policy might produce results.

This is linked to the problem of defining the EC actor whilst appreciating its complexities. I have heretofore referred to EC’s relations with the East for reasons of convenience. Indeed, relations with the East involved both the EC as such and EPC, the latter being intended as collective action by the nine governments. Research may well focus on either of two, consider the two in parallel, or propose the definition of a hybrid entity comprising the two. The latter is usually the case when scholars refer to “EC-Nine”. The choice is directly linked with the specific object of research. However, it is worth reminding that the borders between EC competence, EPC domains, and national prerogative is everything but rigid. First, the European integration itself is a process, and competence in specific areas may – and did in 1970s – shift from states to the EC. Second, the possible fields of co-operation with the communist countries required a combined EC/member states’ action in case of shared competence. Third, the highly political character of relations with the East necessitated EC member states’ diplomatic action even when the EC had exclusive competence. Finally, although foreign and security policies remained entirely within the scope of
national governments and were dealt with via intergovernmental cooperation, their touching upon the integration process, actual and potential, increasingly required involvement of the EC Commission in discussions and decision making.

The hybrid EC polity gets further complex in the mid-1970s with the creation of the European Council. Its role is still overlooked although it represents one of the most interesting innovations within the integration process. I encourage scholars to take it into full consideration when analysing EC’s relations with the East, for it is hard to imagine that the highest political authorities of the member states completely neglected issues such as East-West conflict and the international role of the EC.

EC Council, EPC, and European Council: no doubt the role of the member states remains crucial within the European polity. However, research should move beyond purely national approaches and examine, in a transnational perspective, the ways in which mutual influences, common European ideas and standards, EC legacy, and path-dependencies deriving from previous decisions played a role in decision making. Ideological commitments, the willingness to avoid isolation, the socialisation among national officials and politicians all feature prominently in explaining the choice of member states to share sovereign decision-making with a supranational institution, or to agree to common foreign policy actions limiting their room for manoeuvre.

Prof. Loth suggests to consider also joint leadership in the Nine’s collective action. We now know that Willy Brandt, Georges Pompidou, and Edward Heath shared the vision of a politically independent Europe and influenced the development of the European project. At least for the Franco-German couple a basic understanding continued beyond the political changes of 1974, and its influence deserves further research and acknowledgment.

Given the complexity of EC polity, research in this field should be multi-national and multi-archival. To start with, foreign ministries’ documents should be complemented with sources from other branches of the administration, policy-makers’ private papers and, when relevant, non-governmental actors’ papers. Furthermore, scholars should move beyond national sources and make full use of European institutions’ documents. Beyond archival sources, academic journals of the time may provide useful insights into the political and economic debate; and journalists’ reports may serve as both eyewitness accounts and critical commentaries on international relations and politics, although their accuracy should always be checked against other available material.

To conclude on methodology, I would favour some degree of openness to other disciplines. As generations of French and Italian scholars of histoire des relations internationales have learned from Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, Pierre Renouvin, and Ennio Di Nolfo, historiography significantly benefits from concepts and theories developed by political scientists, sociologists, economists, jurists.64 I envisage promis-

---

ing outcome from a targeted use of their scholarship on matters such as economic interdependence and warfare, multilateralism, governance, decision-making.

2. Research agenda: possible topics

To start with, historians might look at EC “Eastern policy” as part of a more general effort at asserting an international political role of the EC, and thus analyse European polity’s changing governance in this respect. In particular, and beyond national politics, development of EPC mechanism, the broadening of EC policies, the role of the European Parliament and European Council should all be taken into consideration. I would also encourage studies on the influence of the European civil society on EC/EPC decisions. Being economic issues a most prominent part of EC’s relations with Soviet bloc countries, it would be interesting to analyse the role of the industrial and business community and their attempts at influencing either national governments or EC institutions, the perceptions and responses of the latter, the actual influence on EC/EPC decisions. The same kind of approach might apply to public opinion, and particularly its most vocal parts such as human rights activists and peaceful movements, to which the CSCE process opened a formidable stage. This kind of analysis has led to fascinating results in the case of the US. Given the collective action of the EC-Nine in the CSCE process, it might prove equally fruitful in European studies. Scholars could also analyse attempts at promoting “European détente” further, looking at the political debate within both EPC and the Community framework. In this context, the debate on the role of economic relations, i.e. interdependence vs. economic warfare, is of major importance.

Research might also deal with the transatlantic dimension of EC policy towards the East, and focus not only on détente, but also on the debate on international trade and the possibility to involve centrally planned economies in international regimes. On the one side, the end of the Bretton Woods system, the rising rates of inflation and unemployment, the process of de-industrialisation all involved capitalist countries in attempts at rethinking international economic structures and relations. On the other side, European communist regimes were re-thinking political economy and intra-bloc trade. Both the national and Comecon debates show an increasing openness to trade and co-operation with the West, as well as a growing willingness to participate in (and possibly help refine) international economic organisations. Within this broader context, one of the key issues historians should also address is EC’s attempt at gaining recognition from the communist countries. Moreover, research on this topic might take into consideration the cases of Yugoslavia and China, either in a compar-

---

ative perspective or as influencing negotiations between the EC and Soviet bloc countries.66

Finally, scholars might appraise EC’s policy towards the East and thus highlight the factors, whether supranational, national or international, determining both the characteristics of EC’s action and the extent to which it achieved its goals. Studies on this topic might consider not only bilateral relations, but also multilateral contexts such as the CSCE process and the UN Economic Commission for Europe.

*Angela Romano (Marie Curie Fellow, LSE)*

66. On EC and China see the promising research of Marie-Julie Chenard, PhD candidate at LSE International History Department.