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### *Two sides to every story(teller): competition, continuity and change in narratives of European integration*

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**Two sides to every story(teller): Competition, continuity and change in narratives of European integration**

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## Two sides to every story(teller): Competition, continuity and change in narratives of European integration

The word narrative has gained prevalence in the vocabulary of European politics and EU studies in recent years. Enduring questions about the history, purpose and finality of the European integration process now fall within the scope of the narrative turn: narratives underpinning political discourses and intellectual writings about European integration are increasingly being scrutinised. Yet few of these types of narrations have been put into a longitudinal perspective, in order to address elements of change and continuity in the construction and diffusion of narratives. This article presents a historical survey of the twentieth century, looking at political and intellectual types of narration. This highlights the value of a competitive model for narratives of European integration. Whereas hegemonic narratives are rare, new and competing narratives appear as the norm in the majority of political debates about Europe during the twentieth century, from the inter-war antecedents until present-day discussions about the EU. This article questions the singular replacement of an 'old' by a 'new' narrative and provides evidence for a degree of continuity in how narratives present themselves in diverse forms, as constructions and reproductions of political realities, intellectual thought, and the European past.

Keywords: European integration; narratives, European Union; narration; history

### Introduction

Few things in life are more paramount than a good story, and it is unsurprising that the European Union's quest for a narrative has burgeoned into political discourse and intellectual thought over the past years. The European Commission's call for a 'New Narrative of Europe' to create a new impetus for rapprochement between the European peoples (Barroso 2013) has seen reverberations in the European press (Hale 2012; Privot 2014) as well as research in the field of European Studies (Kaiser 2015; Mayer 2015). There is even talk about a 'narrative turn' within the discipline, with new contributions dedicated to the prospects of existing and future narratives of European integration. Mark Gilbert raised the possibility of revising the existing progressive

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2  
3 narrative for a post-national European future, ‘built upon a belief that integration  
4 represents a trend from which there will be no receding’, with alternative ways to  
5 characterise the nature and process of European integration (2008, 642-643).  
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10 More recently, Ian Manners and Philomena Murray called for more narrative  
11 scholarship on the EU, and took a first step with the suggestion of an analytical  
12 framework of EU narratives. Their contribution offered a critical examination of six  
13 distinct narratives of European integration, ranging from the Nobel narrative to Green  
14 Europe, each of those accounts seeking ‘to provide a simple story about the EU’ and  
15 contesting other narratives (2016, 197). In their concluding thoughts, Manners and  
16 Mayer expressed a wish to see future research agendas addressing the role of narratives  
17 to explain as well as understand their importance for the European project (2016, 199).  
18 The European Commission’s call and this recent scholarship demonstrate that the quest  
19 for narrative has come to thrive in both politics and academia, with clear signs of  
20 interaction between the two fields.  
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34 The ‘narrative turn’ is relatively new to the field of European studies. Reflection  
35 about narratives has mostly centred on the recent history of the European Union, even  
36 though narration has consistently appeared in both the political discourse and  
37 intellectual writing on European integration during the twentieth century. This is  
38 especially the case for the years immediately following the Second World War, when  
39 the *pères fondateurs* played a vital role in the emergence of a perceived consensus about  
40 the process and finality of European integration (Muscatelli 2016). At the political level,  
41 the *personas* of Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, with their vision of political union  
42 through economic means, have come to pervade the Union’s progressive narrative of  
43 peace, its symbols and policy programmes (Kaiser 2011).  
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3 Similarly, a strong sense of narration can be detected in the early academic work  
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5 on federalism and the *finalité politique* of economic cooperation by Henri Brugmans as  
6  
7 well as in the functionalist perspective defined by Ernst Haas (Brugmans 1962; Haas  
8  
9 1964). It is precisely these types of political and intellectual visions on European  
10  
11 integration, projected as the holy grail of ever-closer union, which have become  
12  
13 enmeshed with the post-war institutional construction (Gilbert 2008, 644; Kølvråa  
14  
15 2012). These visions have come to constitute the progressive narrative, which has also  
16  
17 received the most Eurosceptic criticism in the last two and a half decades, as the  
18  
19 European Union has taken a more prominent role in the daily lives of Europeans  
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21 (Booker and North 2003; Gallagher 2015).  
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25 The purpose of this article is to take a longitudinal approach to the meaning of  
26  
27 the ‘narrative turn’ for European integration history. It aims to explore a longer  
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29 historical timeframe in which different types of narration of European integration have  
30  
31 been constructed, diffused, and reproduced. This article also contributes to the growing  
32  
33 literature that questions the assumption of a perceived consensus on the (progressive)  
34  
35 trajectory of European integration after the Second World War, which Mark Gilbert has  
36  
37 aptly summarised as a ‘Whig’ narrative (2014).<sup>1</sup> It questions the singular nature of such  
38  
39 a type of narration, by demonstrating how underlying political and ideational rivalry  
40  
41 expressed itself in a plurality of narratives during most of the twentieth century. The  
42  
43 article comprises a longitudinal approach, i.e. a historical survey of a longer period, and  
44  
45 examines competing narratives (hegemonic and peripheral) and their change over time.  
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47 Therefore, I will explore the pre-war origins as well as the re-emergence of newer and  
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49 older narratives, contextualising their role and meaning in recent times. As Luis Bouza  
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55 <sup>1</sup> In this article I use both ‘Whig’ narrative and progressive narrative to identify the post-war  
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57 consensus which has developed into an official narrative of peace and closer integration.  
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3 suggests, the singular replacement of the ‘old’ progressive narrative (or ‘Whig’  
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5 narrative) by a ‘new’ hegemonic narrative is questionable, and this survey strengthens  
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7 the view plurality and competition are prevalent in the history of European integration  
8  
9 (Bouza 2017, xx).

11 This article considers the suggestion that plurality is a way out of the narrative  
12  
13 conundrum facing the European project. Manners and Murray have argued that ‘a  
14  
15 plurality of narratives is required’ to understand European integration (2016, 197).  
16  
17 Similarly, Gilbert has labelled narrative in terms of a ‘clash of wills’, retracing these  
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19 clashes to the early years of post-war European integration (2008, 647). The  
20  
21 suggestions are steps in the right direction but necessitate a paradigm that explains the  
22  
23 hierarchical nature of these contested narratives. Plurality as an approach does not  
24  
25 automatically distinguish between dominant and peripheral narratives. Moreover, the  
26  
27 analysis of ‘narratives over time’ is generally confined to the recent history of European  
28  
29 integration, not considering competing narratives in the more distant past (Manners &  
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31 Murray, 2016, 197). This article suggests narrative scholarship should give pause to the  
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33 larger historical context in which multiple narratives of European integration have  
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35 emerged, and the degree to which narratives have evolved over time.  
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41 The recent scholarly interest in the ‘narrative turn’ in European studies has  
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43 chiefly addressed political and intellectual narratives. While politicians and scholars  
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45 constitute important actors in the production of narratives in the subject of European  
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47 integration, journalists are also to be considered as a relevant group. While this article  
48  
49 acknowledges the importance of professional journalists and the importance of news  
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51 reporting in the production and diffusion of narratives, the chosen longitudinal approach  
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53 necessitates a limitation on the selection of relevant actors. Hence, this historical survey  
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55 of narratives of European integration will limit itself to those individuals who have  
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3 made a noticeable political or intellectual contribution to the subject, as explained  
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5 below. Moreover, the survey constitutes a practical contribution to the ‘narrative turn’  
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7 and does not address the theoretical debate concerning narrative analysis.  
8

9  
10 What would a longitudinal approach to the narration of European integration  
11  
12 look like in practice? Before surveying the twentieth century history and identifying  
13  
14 competing narratives of European integration, this article will clarify its position on  
15  
16 what constitutes a narrative. The next section will address the conceptual dimension  
17  
18 behind narration in history, which breaks down in two major elements: a report of past  
19  
20 events and a normative vision for the future. I will argue that these two elements are  
21  
22 inseparable and should be considered when examining narratives, since ideational  
23  
24 thinking about European integration runs in parallel to the construction of a political  
25  
26 entity. In the same section, the article will identify several obstacles in the scholarship  
27  
28 of European integration history, respectively the choice for 1945 as a zero year, the  
29  
30 separation of the intellectual and political dimensions of European integration, and the  
31  
32 entanglement of the European idea with a distinct political construction which has  
33  
34 created a tendency towards teleological singularity. This will reinforce the message that  
35  
36 a longitudinal and comprehensive approach, considering political, intellectual, as well  
37  
38 as hegemonic and peripheral narratives, offers a promising avenue for narrative  
39  
40 scholarship.  
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45 The subsequent sections will draw on case material from the twentieth century,  
46  
47 primarily from the inter-war years, the post-war years, and the decades since 1989. Each  
48  
49 of these periods saw moments of rupture (World War I, World War II, the end of  
50  
51 communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe) which had a tremendous effect on the  
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53 ideational sphere and institutional organisation of Europe. The article uses political  
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55 speeches and intellectual production to exemplify the types of narration which took hold  
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3 throughout these periods. The end of World War I and the dissolution of the continental  
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5 European empires brought about a reflection about the meaning of European unity and  
6  
7 the creation of a new political order to avoid a repetition of the horrors of war. For the  
8  
9 inter-war years, I will look at a narrative of decline and rebirth of the continent against  
10  
11 the backdrop of globalisation (Coudenhove-Kalergi, Demangeon), European civilisation  
12  
13 and the cultural ties between nations (Dawson, Heerfordt), to comprehend how the  
14  
15 recent European past was narrated to provide a visionary blueprint for European  
16  
17 integration. In this period, a political narrative of a progressive international order took  
18  
19 hold, which was expressed in the creation of the League of Nations but had a distinct  
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21 European taste. This progressive narrative found expression in Briand's memorandum  
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23 for a federal Europe but would continue to thrive in the next decades.  
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27         The Second World War meant both a rupture and progression in terms of  
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29 narratives of European integration. The gruesome extent of destruction in Europe and  
30  
31 the threat of the Cold War reinforced the message of peace and unity after the war. The  
32  
33 European nations built a new political order which clearly separated the issue of  
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35 security (NATO) from the organisation of peace (Council of Europe). Although  
36  
37 European integration after the Second World War followed a similar 'institutional'  
38  
39 pathway as during the inter-war years, the European Coal and Steel Community and the  
40  
41 European (Economic) Community had a distinctly functionalist logic behind – which  
42  
43 both reincorporated an older message of peace (Schuman) with a technical programme  
44  
45 to reduce economic barriers (Monnet). What came to be seen as the eventual hegemonic  
46  
47 narrative of post-war European integration was not left unchallenged: in this section,  
48  
49 several examples will be given of political actors who challenged this singular type of  
50  
51 narration – and underlying vision for the future Union. This will include for example the  
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53 myriad of views from *pères fondateurs*, as well as 'obstructionist' narratives (De  
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Gaulle, Thatcher). These were not examples of ‘setbacks’ but distinctly different interpretations and narrations of European integration.

In recent decades, the hegemonic ‘Whig’ narrative witnessed its peak with the steps taken towards a political and monetary union in the Maastricht Treaty – presented as the idea of an ever-closer European Union. In practice, this narrative was adapting to the changes after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the setbacks of the European monetary system. Under the umbrella of the ‘Whig’ narrative, a panoply of adaptations emerged in response to political events, such as the widening and deepening of integration (including the Eastern bloc’s ‘Return to Europe’), the differentiation of European integration (multi-speed Europe), and the global narrative. While the umbrella of the progressive ‘Whig’ narrative still serves as a container for new and reappearing narratives, the ongoing clash of wills suggests that the hierarchy and distinction between narratives will increasingly become blurred. The exceptionally hegemonic nature of the ‘old’ progressive narrative is set to dwindle in light of peripheral narratives. The article seeks to demonstrate, first, that a longitudinal view breaks the temporal divisions of the twentieth century and, second, a competitive model helps to move beyond a singular interpretation of European integration history.

#### **Abstruse entity, intricate scholarship**

Narratives are ubiquitous and history writing is perhaps one of the oldest forms of narration. The earliest examples did not only contribute to development of a historical methodology, they also influenced literature and how information was passed on in written form (Luraghi 2007). From the earliest accounts of historical writing, we are struck with the importance of narrative. Yet, as the introduction to this special issue has raised, ‘the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the narrative approach are

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2  
3 seldom made explicit' (Bouza 2017, xx). In this article, a narrative is first of all  
4  
5 regarded as an account of events that has occurred in the past. Following Labov, a  
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7 narrative means 'a choice of a specific linguistic technique to report past events' (Labov  
8  
9 1997, 395). Facts and broader developments find a comprehensible meaning when  
10  
11 structured in a story. Hence, a narrative inherently relies on generalisation: facts of  
12  
13 lesser importance are left out, to highlight the remaining events. In this process, the  
14  
15 narrative-producer controls the changes and the outcome, in such a way that every story  
16  
17 reflects the perception, vision, and even interests of the producer (which Bouza has  
18  
19 defined as 'the political usages and potential of these notions'; 2017, xx). This second  
20  
21 element of perception and vision is equally constitutive for the definition of narrative  
22  
23 used in this article. Narratives are more than reconstructions of the past; they also  
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25 contain political and normative traces.  
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30 What makes a narrative different from a vision? As previously mentioned,  
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32 narratives pertaining to European integration often comprise an account of the past (a  
33  
34 driving force or process behind integration) but also fuel a view on the present and  
35  
36 future (a political project). It is this combination of a historical account and a normative  
37  
38 layer which makes a narrative distinct from its counterpart. The fact that narratives  
39  
40 represent a choice and selection of facts implies they are not just a powerful technique  
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42 for history writing but can also be used to serve political aims. There is a palpable  
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44 potential for politicisation in the field of European studies, where the object of study  
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46 (the EU in its current form) is an issue of political salience and aspirations for deeper  
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48 integration. The institutional changes that have led to the establishment of the EU have  
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50 developed hand in hand with historical and theoretical reflections on the nature and  
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52 purpose of European integration.  
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3 The European studies discipline has two characteristics which sets it apart from  
4 other disciplines. It is geared towards a political project rather than an entire branch of  
5 knowledge or sphere of society. The discipline is also far from unitary; rather, it is an  
6 amalgam of different academic fields – comprising a variety of methods and  
7 approaches. Although this has resulted in a uniquely comprehensive understanding of  
8 its subject, several problems have emerged from its innate characteristics. First, there is  
9 a tendency to still consider 1945 as a ‘zero year’ for the history of European integration,  
10 foregoing an extension to its pre-war historical roots (Kaiser and Schot 2014).  
11 Consequently, two types of scholarship have developed, one oriented towards the  
12 *longue durée* ‘ideational’ history of thinking about European unity, another focused on  
13 the creation of a ‘physical’ European community out of the ashes of the Second World  
14 War. In French, this distinction is sometimes presented as the difference between  
15 *l’intégration européenne* and *la construction européenne*, to separate the intellectual  
16 from the institutional history, with the ‘zero year’ 1945 as a turning point. In English,  
17 there is a palpable difference between the works on the European idea (Buszello and  
18 Misztal 1999; Pasture 2015) and those addressing the history of the European Union  
19 (Dinan 2014; Middelaar 2009). The absence of connections between these strands of  
20 scholarship, leads me in the direction of a second problem.

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22  
23 The intellectual and political dimensions of European integration are considered  
24 as two separate things, hence there is no space to tie intellectual and institutional  
25 narratives together. The ‘ideational’ history of European unity often stops at the Second  
26 World War or takes a more institutional flavour for the post-war period (Barjot et al.  
27 2007; Du Réau 2008). Authors tend to stick to one time-period (pre- or post-1945) and  
28 one approach (intellectual or institutional). For instance, historians writing about  
29 European unity until the Second World War, chiefly focus on the visions of prominent  
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3 thinkers and build towards an intellectual history of the European question (Chabert  
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5 2007, Lützel 2007). An exhaustive volume edited by Mark Hewitson and Matthew  
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7 D’Auria (2012) on thinkers of European integration between 1917 and 1957  
8  
9 transgresses the 1945 turning point but deals exclusively with a narrative of crisis and  
10  
11 neglects questions pertaining to the institutional order. Historical surveys by Bossuat  
12  
13 (2008) and Bruneteau (2006) end at the emergence of *l’Europe concrète* after 1945. But  
14  
15 was there no ‘solidified’ Europe before? The institutional aspect is absent, as well as  
16  
17 any reference to narratives. Jean-Michael Guieu has rightly argued that the European  
18  
19 institutional order during the inter-war years has received considerably less attention  
20  
21 from scholars (2012).  
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24  
25 The situation after 1945 is equally problematic, when a different discussion  
26  
27 exclusively related to the institutional architecture of Europe takes off (Glencross 2014).  
28  
29 Here, the debate about Europe’s post-war institutional architecture is been taken up by  
30  
31 historians and political scientists who limit themselves to the institutional development  
32  
33 of a supra-national and intergovernmental Europe (Leonard and Taylor 2016). Hitherto,  
34  
35 there has been scant interest in the variety of narratives of European integration which  
36  
37 have taken hold in the years since 1945 (apart from the ‘Whig’ narrative and the role of  
38  
39 the *pères fondateurs*), and shaped the discourse of political actors. The prominence  
40  
41 given to the institutional order becomes more palpable closer to the present-day  
42  
43 scholarship, as a mechanical understanding of the European Union takes up more  
44  
45 bookshelf-space and leaves less room for engagement with developments in the  
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47 ideational sphere (Cini and Borragán 2016). The preservation of a turning point and a  
48  
49 separation of dimensions oppose a longitudinal and comprehensive exploration of  
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51 narratives. Connections and overlaps are especially important for the mid-twentieth  
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3 century, to understand which ideational and political traces of the pre-war European  
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5 order merged into the new political reality.  
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8 The third problem refers to the fact that an entire discipline is built around one  
9  
10 political project – European integration effectively being EU integration. The  
11  
12 entanglement of the European idea with the construction of a supranational entity has  
13  
14 spurred a tendency towards teleological singularity i.e. the threat of a perceived linear  
15  
16 and continuous process of integration (Gehler 2014). A want for great temporal linkages  
17  
18 and the identification of linkages should not flatly result into an invention of Europe  
19  
20 unity, as a social construction from past to present (Delanty 1995). In older scholarship  
21  
22 it is common to trace the European idea back to antiquity or the medieval ages, scathing  
23  
24 over periods of disruption, nationalism and alternative visions of Europe (Heater 1992;  
25  
26 Pagden 2002). Studies on federalist ideas of Europe reveal the implicit normative  
27  
28 assumption that a federal union is the outcome of the process (Burgess 2000). This  
29  
30 means that a longitudinal perspective should be handled with care, as there is a risk of  
31  
32 being trapped in a singular and progressive logic of integration (Farrell et al. 2002, pp.  
33  
34 15-18). However, Since the financial and economic crisis, scholars have also shed light  
35  
36 on European disintegration, to counterbalance the dominance of integration theory and a  
37  
38 belief in the irreversibility of the post-war supranational order (Parker, 2016).  
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40 Considering the characteristics of the scholarship on the history of European  
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42 integration, the article now turns towards a historical survey of the twentieth century, as  
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44 outlined in the introduction.  
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### 49 50 51 52 **Unity in divergence?**

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54 The First World War was a calamitous event in every sense of the word: it  
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56 brought the breakdown of continental empires, the creation of nation-states with a  
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3 myriad of new national borders in Europe, successful and aborted revolutions, and an  
4 intense reflection about the nature of war and peace. Why had European civilisation  
5 failed to prevent death and destruction on an immense scale, and what type of order  
6 could withstand a repeat of war? These two questions would occupy the minds of  
7 European intellectuals and politicians, as they sought to reconstruct the past and distil a  
8 vision for the future. Here, I look at the importance of a narrative of a declining Europe  
9 which thinkers inspired by a sense of European heritage developed into visions of  
10 geopolitical, civilizational, or cultural rebirth. Nevertheless, the inter-war years saw the  
11 emergence of another narrative, built upon the idea of a progressive, international order  
12 to organise peace between the European nations.  
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25 The fear of the Europe in decline was perhaps best evocated through a book  
26 written by Oswald Spengler, entitled *Untergang des Abendlandes*, which led to popular  
27 success in Germany and found translation in many other languages (Spengler 1991).  
28 Spengler's idea of a natural cycle of growth and decline of civilisations contained a  
29 clear warning: the European civilization risked a retreat from former glory.  
30 Contemporary thinkers used Spengler's warning of decline to construct a larger  
31 narrative around the crisis of European civilisation, including a vision for the future. In  
32 this context, the name of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi clearly reverberates, as the 'most  
33 dynamic theoretician and propagandist during the interwar period' (Bugge 1992, pp. 96-  
34 97). In *Panuropa*, his major publication from 1923, and in his ensuing works, Count  
35 Coudenhove-Kalergi presented a Europe as a continent at risk of global and economic  
36 irrelevance vis-à-vis emerging powers: 'no other world region has such a great past as  
37 Europe – but no other has such an uncertain future as Europe' (1982 p. 23). Although  
38 *Panuropa* thrived on enthusiasm and idealism, a political project seen from a global  
39 perspective underscored this narrative. Coudenhove-Kalergi referred both to a United  
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3 States of Europe and a European Federation as models for a future organisation of the  
4  
5 European states.  
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7 The evocation of past glory combined with a political finality led to relative  
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9 success, and found interest among the German-speaking nobility in Europe. The  
10  
11 disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian and German empires, the abolition of nobility  
12  
13 and the creation of new republics, necessitated for many noblemen a new concept for  
14  
15 the notion of 'being of noble descent'. While Coudenhove-Kalergi found inspiration in  
16  
17 geopolitics for his narrative of decline, others sought for visions in the cultural and even  
18  
19 religious sphere. Count Harry Kessler and Count Hermann Keyserling saw European  
20  
21 integration as a source of renewal of imperial culture. In his *Das Spektrum Europas*,  
22  
23 written in 1928, Count Keyserling underlined the crisis of the European spirit, or also a  
24  
25 crisis of values; this would be overcome through a new European order in which the  
26  
27 aristocracy could take a leading role again (Keyserling 1928; Gusejnova 2012).  
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31 Noble circles were not the only ones providing narratives built upon a notion of  
32  
33 European decline. Similarly, Paul Valéry and Albert Demangeon wrote about cultural  
34  
35 decline and the crisis of European civilization. Christian Heerfordt, a Danish physician,  
36  
37 narrated European integration as a form of civilizational ties between European states  
38  
39 (including colonies) in his monograph *Une Europe nouvelle, premier essai* (1924). The  
40  
41 historian Christopher Dawson formulated a narrative of European unity based on  
42  
43 Christian traditions. Dawson saw religion as a major force of community in Europe's  
44  
45 past and present. He espoused Christianity as the cultural roots of the continent, from  
46  
47 the Roman era until the twentieth century, and the source for future spiritual unification  
48  
49 of humanity in his book *The Making of Europe* (1932).  
50  
51  
52

53 The idea of organising peace at the international level was not new, but the First  
54  
55 World War paved the grounds for experimentation with a new type of political order. A  
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1  
2  
3 narrative of a progressive international order found was expressed in the creation of the  
4  
5 League of Nations, a peace organisation proposed by US President Woodrow Wilson in  
6  
7 1918. While the League was to be a universalist organisation, in practice it became a  
8  
9 platform dominated by the European states. The League provided the means to develop  
10  
11 an entirely different narrative of European integration: one which wasn't built on the  
12  
13 ashes of the old continental empires, but rooted in a more rationalist approach to  
14  
15 international politics. The practical means of cooperation – driven by a functionalist  
16  
17 logic – would stop the European states from going to war again. A desire for peace  
18  
19 through supranational governance incentivised French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand  
20  
21 to call, in his speech to the League of Nations Assembly on 5 September 1929, for  
22  
23 'some sort of federal link' between the 'peoples who are geographically grouped as the  
24  
25 peoples of Europe' (Briand 1929).  
26  
27  
28

29  
30 Briand's original idea was to pursue economic means, such as a common  
31  
32 market, to achieve closer cooperation between the European nations. However, his  
33  
34 written *Memorandum* (1930) favoured political rapprochement as a first step towards  
35  
36 any technical cross-border cooperation. This retreat from a functionalist logic towards a  
37  
38 political project meant that other European governments and even the League raised  
39  
40 concerns over the idea. Briand's federation, embedded in a narrative of progressive  
41  
42 political order, sat uneasily with the League – which was both a universalist  
43  
44 organisation and the institutionalisation of Europe's political order. A federation risked  
45  
46 competing with the League and, for the European states, touched upon the issue of  
47  
48 national sovereignty. As with the narrative of a declining Europe, the idea of a  
49  
50 progressive European order did not materialise into a strong consensus. While the  
51  
52 narrative of a progressive order was a powerful one – Briand's speech was backed by a  
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1  
2  
3 number of European intellectuals – the politicisation of the League’s functionalist  
4  
5 approach to international cooperation muddled the message (Fleury and Jilek 1998).  
6

7 The inter-war years served as a successful laboratory of ideas, with two  
8  
9 overarching, but opposing narratives of European integration taking hold. One was  
10  
11 reminiscent of past greatness; another professed rationalism and progress as the future.  
12  
13 A clash of wills between thinkers and among politicians prevailed and no hegemonic  
14  
15 narrative of European integration emerged. Elements of the two opposing narratives  
16  
17 from this period would resurface during the twentieth century – in particular the  
18  
19 functionalist logic behind cooperation, the tension between a supranational federation  
20  
21 and national sovereignty, as well as the global perspective on European integration. The  
22  
23 Second World War did not put a halt to the adaption and reinvention of narratives, as  
24  
25 older ideas took hold in a new political context of the post-war order.  
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### 32 **Europe’s clash of wills**

33  
34 Rarely does the passing of armed conflict provide a complete rupture with the  
35  
36 past, and the Second World War is no different. Allied cooperation guaranteed a degree  
37  
38 of continuity between the European countries in terms of cooperation and planning,  
39  
40 while the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union after the war created a  
41  
42 political context in which narratives of European integration could thrive again.  
43  
44 However, the involvement of the two major Cold War powers in the reformatting of post-  
45  
46 war Europe did not fundamentally alter the unaddressed questions from the past. As  
47  
48 Stirk and Weigall argue, ‘many of the problems which the victors of the First World  
49  
50 War had signally failed to solve were still there’ (Stirk and Weigall 1999, 31). Political  
51  
52 leaders and thinkers were confronted with questions of security and cooperation in  
53  
54 Europe, similar to those asked several decades earlier. One was the question over the  
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1  
2  
3 place of Germany, another about type of economic cooperation that could spur recovery  
4  
5 and provide the functional means for closer integration.  
6

7           What followed in the years after 1945 was a myriad of institutional layers,  
8  
9 constructed to achieve a degree of intra-European cooperation through different means.  
10  
11 The Western-European states worked on concrete plans (Western Union, NATO) and  
12  
13 treaties (Brussels, Dunkirk) that would lock in diplomatic relations and military  
14  
15 cooperation. On the economic front, the Marshall Plan necessitated the creation of the  
16  
17 Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, to distribute American financial  
18  
19 aid. In Central and Eastern Europe, rival institutions were set up to spur economic  
20  
21 recovery across the communist satellite states. The Hague Congress in 1948 led to the  
22  
23 creation of a Council of Europe. The new inter-governmental body adopted a  
24  
25 Convention for Human Rights, which underlined the ‘achievement of greater unity  
26  
27 between its members’ through the application of human rights and fundamental  
28  
29 freedoms (Council of Europe, 1950). The Schuman Declaration in 1950 paved the way  
30  
31 for the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) – based on  
32  
33 functionalist and supranational principles.  
34  
35  
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37

38           These plans, treaties and organisations brought an institutional layer to European  
39  
40 integration that was unparalleled at the time. In contrast to the League of Nations, post-  
41  
42 war European cooperation was disentangled into separate spheres – with no threat of  
43  
44 institutional overreach. Many of the organisations created after 1945 still function  
45  
46 today, either merged with the EU or exist as a distinct legal and political framework.  
47  
48 Although established for different purposes, they are often taken together as the ‘start’  
49  
50 of post-war European integration. However, the EU’s progressive narrative glosses over  
51  
52 this multitude of institutional layers, as well as the competing narratives that underscore  
53  
54 their creation. For the period 1945-1949 the EU webpages make reference to a  
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1  
2  
3 determination of Europeans ‘to prevent such killing and destruction from ever  
4  
5 happening again’, but apart from a reference to peace and the creation of the ESCSC  
6  
7 there is no mention of the wider context of post-war integration (European Union,  
8  
9 2016).

10  
11 The perceived progressive development of the EU, with origins extending back  
12  
13 to the creation of the ECSC and the endeavours of the *pères fondateurs*, has merged into  
14  
15 a hegemonic narrative of peace and prosperity which overlooks historical origins,  
16  
17 institutional rivalries and competing visions for European integration. The political  
18  
19 leaders of post-war Europe are described as men who shared the ‘same ideals’ and  
20  
21 ‘worked tirelessly towards, and inspired, the European project.’ (European Union,  
22  
23 2016). A closer reading of the speeches of the *pères fondateurs* reveals that such a  
24  
25 shared, normative objective for a singular European project is the work of fiction. Some  
26  
27 ideas for European integration were a long way off from Jean Monnet’s functionalist  
28  
29 logic (and the idea of integration through economic means), as Altiero Spinelli  
30  
31 revolutionary European project of his 1944 *Manifesto* (Gilbert 2014) and Konrad  
32  
33 Adenauer’s notion of *Europe as a Third Power* demonstrate (Adenauer 1980). These  
34  
35 reveal a clash of wills, rather than a unity of narrative.

36  
37 In addition, elements of older narratives resurfaced in new narratives. Winston  
38  
39 Churchill’s speech (1946) on a United States of Europe was rooted in the past, with  
40  
41 references to the work of Coudenhove-Kalergi and the vision of Briand, as well as the  
42  
43 institutional order of the League of Nations as ‘knowledge and material with which to  
44  
45 build’. A speech given in in 1949 by Robert Schuman entitled ‘The Century of  
46  
47 Supranational Communities’ harked back to past thinkers such as Erasmus and Kant  
48  
49 and the dream to create an organisation for the achievement of perpetual piece  
50  
51 (Schuman 1949). Ideas of political federation and the organisation of peace had already  
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1  
2  
3 surfaced during the inter-war period and were taken up by politicians and thinkers who  
4  
5 had their intellectual roots in the years between the two world wars. Schuman's 1950  
6  
7 speech put Franco-German reconciliation at the heart of his economic plan, in many  
8  
9 ways similar to the language Briand had used in the 1920s: 'For Germany and for  
10  
11 France peace means an end to a series of painful and bloody encounters, of which every  
12  
13 page in history is stained' (Briand 1926). The Schuman Plan was an accumulation of  
14  
15 ideas, rather than a ground-breaking new pathway, as it was partly modelled on both  
16  
17 inter-allied cooperation (Ruhr Authority) and the League of Nations' technical  
18  
19 organisation.  
20  
21

22  
23 The years and decades following 1945 show that the progressive 'Whig'  
24  
25 narrative of European integration only developed in relation to other ideas and  
26  
27 narratives. Rival ideas of *pères fondateurs* were omitted, while the more recent  
28  
29 discrepancies of views were labelled as obstructions to the European project. Charles  
30  
31 De Gaulle's defiance of the Community-approach and his own narrative of *l'Europe des*  
32  
33 *patries* have been perceived as a hindrance, rather than an alternative approach to  
34  
35 European integration. Margaret Thatcher's relationship with the European Community  
36  
37 has often been described in terms of enmity, despite her important contribution to the  
38  
39 creation of the Single Market. 'Obstructionists' such as De Gaulle and Thatcher, with  
40  
41 their narratives for Europe have arguably been as important for the course of  
42  
43 institutional integration, than those who professed the consensus of the progressive  
44  
45 'Whig' narrative (De Gaulle 1962; Gilbert 2008, 647; Thatcher 1988). Henceforth, it is  
46  
47 essential to see these visions as a clash of wills and perhaps an expression of competing  
48  
49 narratives, in order to problematize the singular and teleological approach taken to  
50  
51 European integration.  
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### Europe as umbrella

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist states in Central and Eastern Europe forced a number of daunting questions upon European political leaders in the early 1990s. How would the Community respond to the reunification of Germany and the turbulence following the break-up of the Soviet Union? Economic questions were also on the agenda: the Single European Act had come into force, with the objective of creating a single market, and plans were drawn up to create an economic and monetary union. The progressive ‘Whig’ narrative arguably reached its peak as hegemonic metanarrative in this period, when there was optimism about the expansion of peace and prosperity to the post-communist states, as well as the finality of an ever-closer union. Back in 1990, a Dutch memorandum in 1990 had expressed firm commitment to the achievement a federal structure for Europe (Laffan 2005, 189). The change from the European Community to the European Union, accompanied with expansion of EU power in several fields and the creation of new shared and supporting competences, was a symbolical marker for major political economic changes to come in the next years.

A single narrative offered a great deal of normative continuity. Yet, in practice the ‘Whig’ narrative formed an umbrella, harbouring a myriad of new and old narratives that appeared following the contingencies of the late 1980s and early 1990s. While Manners and Murray see these as distinct narratives, ‘a shift away’ from the old type of narration, I contend that many of these are effectively subservient narratives (such as ‘economic Europe’ and ‘social Europe’) because they remain embedded in the progressive logic of the ‘Whig’ narrative: they are peripheral narratives representing variations of a belief in progress and closer integration (Manners and Murray 2016). Nevertheless, changes in discourse in the last decades suggest there is an ongoing clash

1  
2  
3 of wills between politicians and thinkers who foster these competing narratives of  
4  
5 European integration. Although the hierarchy of narratives has become blurred, three  
6  
7 examples three examples highlight how the ‘Whig’ narrative has served as a normative  
8  
9 umbrella to most of the new developments.  
10

11  
12 First, the Maastricht Treaty represented a move towards the deepening of  
13  
14 European integration, with the creation of a political and economic union. The increase  
15  
16 in membership over the last decades, and the prospect of new members, made the  
17  
18 notion of differentiation increasingly important. Negotiations for admission of the  
19  
20 EFTA states (Austria, Finland, Sweden and Norway) to the EU were fraught with  
21  
22 disagreements over possible opt-outs, concessions and the changes new members would  
23  
24 bring to the functioning of the institutions. The idea of a multi-speed mentioned in a  
25  
26 paper written by Wolfgang Schäuble and Karl Lamers (1994), raised the prospect of a  
27  
28 core-Europe consisting of five or six countries pursuing deep economic and political  
29  
30 integration, while the other members would remain in a looser formation. This allowed  
31  
32 the preservation of the progressive narrative, while satisfying the needs of individual  
33  
34 member states. *Europe à la carte* was introduced and would regularly reappear in the  
35  
36 next years, in the context of the eurozone and its distinct institutional governance  
37  
38 (Robert, 2015). Differentiated integration as a sub-narrative has also found its  
39  
40 expression in academic thought, with Jan Zielonka suggesting has created a neo-  
41  
42 medieval empire, or some form of *polyphony* of integration (Zielonka 2014).  
43  
44  
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46

47  
48 Second, the opening towards Central and Eastern Europe was another  
49  
50 development which led to an adaptation of the progressive ‘Whig’ narrative of  
51  
52 European integration. The 2004 enlargement of a large group of states which previously  
53  
54 fell under communist rule was narrated in a way which was consistent with the aim of  
55  
56 bringing peace to the continent and working towards European unity. The prospect of  
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1  
2  
3 enlargement was presented as the 'return to Europe' for the Central and Eastern  
4  
5 European countries. Briefly after 1989 observers had already coined the phrase, when  
6  
7 the former communist satellite states displayed a 'will to return to Europe' and  
8  
9 normality, that went 'hand in hand with the struggle for national and individual  
10  
11 freedom' (Garton Ash 2012). Similar images appeared in public statements. For  
12  
13 example, a German Minister of State marked the 2004 enlargement as the end of a  
14  
15 divide in Europe: 'As new EU members, the ten states returned from the periphery to  
16  
17 the heart of Europe' (Roth 2014). Underlying the idea of a return was the myth that 'the  
18  
19 East' was taken away from (Western) Europe. As part of one progressive narrative of  
20  
21 European integration, the 'return to Europe' failed to include any differentiated  
22  
23 experiences of twentieth century history. Nevertheless, it the return-narrative continues  
24  
25 to thrive for remaining 'outsiders' such as Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia (Zhurzenko  
26  
27 2014; Heinisch and Landsberger 2016).  
28  
29  
30

31  
32 Third, 'global Europe' has proven to be a powerful vehicle for public discourse.  
33  
34 Globalization became a catch-all term in intellectual writing and political discourse to  
35  
36 define a new era of trade liberalisation, financial flows and interconnectedness – and  
37  
38 reminiscent of the narration of the global during the inter-war period (Hay and  
39  
40 Rosemond 2002). With the memory of the Second World War more distant and the rise  
41  
42 of global threats, the global has transformed the perception and outlook of the EU. The  
43  
44 global rose to the prominence in the 1990s, in large part to thinkers such as Jürgen  
45  
46 Habermas, who made a famous plea for a European constitution that would help to stop  
47  
48 the Union from decaying 'into a mere market, sodden by globalization' (Habermas  
49  
50 2001, 9). Global threats, ranging from negative economic externalities to the impact of  
51  
52 climate change, now form part of the working agenda of the institutions, and EU aspires  
53  
54 to become a global actor. The global-narrative has also found its way in political  
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1  
2  
3 statements by national leaders and EU functionaries (Merkel 2016, Juncker 2015).  
4  
5 Instead of peace, economic preponderances play a more prevalent role in a narrative of  
6  
7 global Europe. But the global was never an entirely new entirely phenomenon and the  
8  
9 discourse is reminiscent of the early twentieth century.  
10

11  
12 So far, these new narratives have formed part of the progressive narrative's large  
13  
14 umbrella, but the distinction between the overarching 'Whig' narrative and the new  
15  
16 narratives is increasingly opaque. Manners and Murray have contended that 'global  
17  
18 Europe' represents a distinct narrative, however, this and many of the new narratives  
19  
20 don't (yet) question the progressive, functional core of the 'Whig' narrative. This  
21  
22 represents at least some form of hegemony of the latter, although this might be a  
23  
24 temporary phenomenon in return of a more prevalent mode of competing narratives.  
25  
26 The Commission's search for a 'new' narrative fits within a shift away from the old  
27  
28 'Whig' narrative, but overlooks the fact that hegemony has been the exception in the  
29  
30 past. Competing narratives are a perpetual phenomenon, even within the belly of the  
31  
32 'Whig' narrative, ready to question the overarching drive of European integration.  
33  
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### 38 **Conclusion**

39  
40 The 'narrative turn' in the field of European studies has helped to untangle the  
41  
42 normative dimension of narration about European integration. In turn, this has  
43  
44 problematised the EU's replacement of an 'old' hegemonic narrative with a 'new'  
45  
46 narrative. This article's contribution to the debate on narratives of European integration  
47  
48 is structured as a questioning of the singular passage of narratives – through a  
49  
50 longitudinal approach which puts competitive narratives at the centre of the analysis.  
51  
52 Following Manners and Murray's suggestion for more study of the plurality of  
53  
54 narratives, this article has pursued an analysis of 'narratives over time', i.e. the  
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1  
2  
3 introduction of the larger historical context in which multiple narratives of European  
4 integration have emerged and evolved over time. Singular stories gloss over ideational  
5 and institutional rivalries and ignore the affluence of historical events that make up  
6  
7 European history. First, this article has identified narratives which have emerged  
8  
9 following key events of the twentieth century, such as the two World Wars and the  
10  
11 collapse of the Soviet Union. These historical events incentivised politicians and  
12  
13 intellectuals to reframe their understanding of Europe's past and envision a blueprint of  
14  
15 the future.  
16  
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20  
21 Second, the article has sought to link the emergence of the progressive 'Whig'  
22  
23 narrative after 1945 with its historical origins, both the technical organisation of the  
24  
25 League of Nations and inter-allied cooperation, as well as the multi-layered institutional  
26  
27 context of the post-war period. The 'Whig' narrative omits the clash of views of the so-  
28  
29 called *pères fondateurs* (such as Altiero Spinelli, Robert Schuman and Winston  
30  
31 Churchill) in favour of a singular and linear understanding of the purpose and finality of  
32  
33 the European project. Moreover, rival views are depicted as obstructionist rather than  
34  
35 competing narratives. Finally, this article has traced the continued development of  
36  
37 'Whig' narrative and its fostering of new narratives in light of a changed historical  
38  
39 context. I have used the examples of widening and deepening of European integration,  
40  
41 to demonstrate how the hegemonic umbrella adapted itself to the turmoil after 1989. In  
42  
43 addition, the example of global Europe was introduced to demonstrate how past  
44  
45 narratives can re-emerge in a changed context and might in the future question the  
46  
47 perception of a hegemonic narrative. The history of European integration should be  
48  
49 written in plural and understood as a changing hierarchy of narratives. This suggests  
50  
51 that a historical survey and a competitive model of narratives are useful tools for the  
52  
53 future exploration of narration about the EU.  
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