

The European Condition: Looking Back, Looking Forward

Workshop, 23 June 2023



DPIR
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS &
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This workshop, held to mark Professor Nicolaidis' years at Oxford University (1999-2023), will feature her former and current DPhil students as impulse givers and bring friends and colleagues together candidly to discuss our contemporary European predicament and take stock of the trajectory of the European project and its global ramifications. The hope is that we can engage in scrutinising our concern for human betterment and transformative potential in the European and global context. In doing so, we may wonder whether conversations we had 20 or 10 years ago are still relevant, how do we productively engage in immanent critique to connect positive, normative and prescriptive takes, and what difference can scholarship make?

Our thread for the day will be to ask whether “Europe” (a term we never finish to unpack) can effectively act as a transformative force in today's world of power politics, and whether it should even try. We will rely on a series of ‘provocations’ at the beginning of each of three sessions and see where the question takes us.

11:00 Introductory Remarks

Othon Anastasakis

11:10-12:40 Session 1: *Europe from within and from below*

Impulse givers: **HE Ailish Campbell** (Ambassador of Canada to the European Union, online), **Simone Bunse** (SIPRI), **Lars Hoffmann** (ICANN, online), **Juri Viehoff** (Manchester), **Julia de Clerk-Sachsse** (GMF, online)

Chair: **Harmut Mayer** (Oxford)

- Internally, after the euro-zone crisis, is the EU still a (Kantian) democracy in the making? How has the potential for solidarity, democracy and the rule of law beyond the state that we used to talk about been reconfigured in the “perma-crisis” era?
- Looking back to episodes like the Amsterdam Treaty, the Constitutional Convention, the Lisbon Treaty, the Gonzales Wise Men group, Eurocrisis governance reform. How wise have political and institutional choices been over time and what have we learned through constitutional debate or treaty change that can be relevant to this new constitutional moment? How does integration come undone, how resilient are we to exogenous shocks, and how do we manage integration and disintegration occurring at same time?

- What of the drive for change fuelled by social movements and contestation? Is it not urgent to reflect on a theory of democracy in Europe that can accommodate transnational participatory practices and bolster its legitimacy in the global competition between systems? Can we rediscover the virtues of ambivalence against the forces of polarization and nationalism?
- What does the transformative project look like from the point of view of the most vulnerable in the EU, the “small” states, people at the periphery, refugees, migrants former colonies, those plagued by precarity everywhere?

14:00-15:30 Session 2: Europe from without and from beyond

Impulse givers: **Dimitar Bechev** (Oxford), **Nora Fisher Onar** (San Francisco, online), **Tobias Lenz** (Lüneburg), **Kira Huju** (LSE)

Chair: **Timothy Garton Ash** (Oxford)

- How do we decenter Eurocentricism, jettison talk of a ‘model’, and truly become a post-colonial power, capable of true partnerships with countries in the Global South?
- Should we consider the EU as a laboratory for aspiring members, in its wider neighbourhood and for global governance in the new and unfolding global (dis)order?
- Can the EU pretend to ‘export’ the rule of law and democracy or values in general?
- Can the international society of states learn (positively or negatively) from the EU’s balancing of pluralist deference and liberal intrusiveness, from its politics of mutual recognition and coercion, and from its attempts to redress its own embrace of extractive neoliberal capitalism in the post-cold war?
- Whose hegemony should we fear most?
- What about the UK in all this – can the rendezvous clauses after divorce bolster prospects for renewed cooperation?

16:00-17:30 Session 3: Europe as a laboratory for tomorrow’s planetary politics

Impulse givers: **Gjovalin Macaj** (Leiden), **Matthew Eagleton-Pierce** (SOAS), **Carolyn Deere** (IHEID), **Olivier de France** (Oxford)

Chair: **Richard Caplan** (Oxford)

- Can the EU manage to decline elegantly, without hubris or complacency, given its stated ambition to steer the double climate and digital transition?
- How do we operationalise normative powerhood in the era of planetary politics?
- Can trade be a force for good or is ‘trade ethics’ irrelevant against the harsh reality of geopolitics?
- After the Eurozone crisis, the COVID turn, and the new age of war, has Europe reached the end of its transformative potential? How would we know?
- What European stories do we want to tell today? Can we be saved by Gen Z Europe?

17:30 Song by **John Helferich** (Oxford)

17:40-18:00 Concluding Remarks

Kalypso Nicolaïdis