Introduction

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Europe's twentieth century was characterised by competing and/or conflicting visions about the organisation of the continent. In fact, in his seminal book published in 1929, Francis Delaisi talked about 'two Europes,' where one was dominated by agriculture and the other by industry (Delaisi, 1929). In a way, the division described by Delaisi was not new. The outbreak of the Great War could be interpreted as a result of unresolved asymmetries between industrial and agricultural powers, and between democracies or liberal states and authoritarian ones.

During the Great War, Friedriech Nauman's *Mitteleuropa* proposed a perspective of the European order that gave a first glimpse of the opposing visions of Europe that developed a few years later in the interwar period (Nauman, 1915). Some of these visions took shape at the end of the First World War, and outlined geographical categories such as 'Central Europe', 'Eastern Europe', 'East-Central' or 'Danubian' Europe. Some other visions focused on specific economic aspects including agriculture, industry, trade or finance (Bussière, 2005). For example, many negotiations took place between the famous speech of the French head of government and foreign minister Aristide Briand in 1929 calling for "a kind of federal link", the tragic failure of the London economic and monetary conference in 1933, and the subsequent French inability to implement a *Bloc-or* around 1933-1935. During these negotiations, the French, Belgian, German and Polish governments tried to push forward their own visions of the organisation of the European continent, but without success (Schirmann, 2000).

The different international organisations that were founded within ten years after 1945 – the Western Union (WU)/Western European Union, the European Organisation for Economic Cooperation (OEEC), the Council of Europe, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the Economic Commission for Europe at the United Nations (UNECE), the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) -- embodied different visions of the continent, rooted either in ideologies or sectorial activities, sometimes both of them. But from 1945 onwards, European asymmetries took a different turn with the beginning of the cold war and the development of processes of cooperation and integration first in Western Europe, and then in the Socialist bloc. Ideological competition between East and West took centre stage. Debates about whether this situation would last, or should be overcome, became central. As Michele Affinito, Guia Migani and Christian Wenkel explored in a collective volume, several asymmetries also ran across the project of European cooperation and integration itself (Affinito, Migani and Wenkel, 2009).

Actual and metaphorical asymmetries

As editors, we understand and use the word asymmetry in a broad sense, that is, both as an actual asymmetry and as a metaphorical asymmetry. An actual asymmetry relates to a real absence of equivalence between two parts; while a metaphorical asymmetry highlights a perceived imbalance between two elements. As the contributions make plain, asymmetries between Western and Eastern Europe were significant in actual terms in the fields of transport,

energy, and economic performance, to name but a few. But asymmetries could also be metaphorical, namely, a figure of speech, and be used to describe differences in ideologies, political systems, institutions, while the two (or more) situations would otherwise not be strictly speaking comparable.

Asymmetry should however also be understood in relation to other concepts, as Angela Romano demonstrates in the concluding article of this special issue: asymmetry should be linked to parallelism and convergence. The Cold War gave the impression of a sort of parallelism between East and West, but this parallelism should not hide that on each side of the iron curtain, societies, politics, economies developed along asymmetrical paths. Conversely, asymmetries should not let us forget convergences: mass consumption, the role of experts, and, sometimes, common organisations (UNECE, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE for instance) to name but a few.

This special issue focuses on asymmetries and resituates them in a wider context of parallelism and convergence. It was born as part of a wider project of the International Association for the Contemporary History of Europe (IACHE), imagined by our colleague Tomasz Schramm (Poznań). The articles in this special issue were first discussed at a workshop held at the University of Luxembourg in December 2019. The project of the IACHE explored European asymmetries in three steps: the Versailles system, the Hitlerian Europe and the Cold War. It is this latest part, its specific themes and problems, that we are exploring in this special issue. The contributions address the following questions: have projects about cooperation and integration in Europe influenced interpretations of European history? Did such projects present Europe as a homogeneous or as a differentiated entity? Which interpretation is most widespread in Western Europe and in Eastern Europe? What were the projects that attempted to overcome the division of Europe, and how did they materialise? In order to explore the several asymmetries that developed in Europe during the cold war, this special issue investigates five case studies, from a variety of fields of enquiry that can be divided into three broad themes: education; energy; and economic and political détente.

From education and energy, to economic and political détente

Asymmetries in culture and education are explored by Justine Faure, who investigates European asymmetries through the prism of US academic research. How was ‘Europe’ researched and financed across the Atlantic? Faure analyses the development of the so-called area studies, as well as the development of some research centres, groups, or publications (European Institute at Columbia University, Council for European Studies, *Journal of Common Market Studies*) to highlight the different treatment that the different parts of Europe had.

Manuel Dorion-Soulié’s article deals with asymmetries in the fields of energy. He looks at the existence of a ‘European oil asymmetry’: while the US came to take responsibility for Western Europe’s oil supply in the Middle East, the Soviets did the same but based on their own supplies. Dorion-Soulié analyses how and why the US took this decision and highlights the importance of the logic of containment.

Finally, the process of détente is at the heart of the research of Simon Godard, Pierre Bouillon and Nicolas Badalassi. Simon Godard analyses the puzzle of the Council for Mutual

Economic Assistance (CMEA)'s self-presentation: while international organisations created after 1945 claimed their European dimension (such as most obviously the *European* Economic Community), the CMEA does not. In fact, Europe is not even a geographical criteria for belonging to the CMEA. The asymmetry explored in Godard's article is between the EEC and the CMEA. Economic and ideological asymmetries are the focus of Pierre Bouillon's article on French détente's policy in Romania. Détente aimed at developing economic, financial, cultural links across East and West, and thereby aimed at reducing the asymmetries between them. Still looking at the détente process, Nicolas Badalassi investigates the overcoming of the cold war order by specifically looking at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). Badalassi explores many asymmetries through the lens of the CSCE: perceptions of both sides, sectoral issues and political problems.

Angela Romano finally puts the individual case studies into a broader perspective that appraises Europe as a space where asymmetries coexisted with parallel development and convergence at many levels and diverse and intertwining fields. In so doing, Romano highlights the contribution of this special issue to historiography as well as to our re-conceptualization and understanding of Europe's recent past.

In investigating European asymmetries during the Cold War through five case studies, this special issue contributes to highlight the richness of the dynamics at play in the political, economic and social evolution of the continent after 1945. As Angela Romano reminds us in her conclusion, the instinctive, stereotypical image of Cold War Europe is that of a symmetrical development, including (but not limited to) two camps, two ideologies, two military alliances, and two economic organisations. Scratching this surface however, asymmetries seem to predominate. Whether in teaching and research on Europe (Justine Faure), in the field of energy (Manual Dorion-Soulié), in terms of economic organisation (Simon Godard), in the development of links across the two camps (Pierre Bouillon), and with the CSCE (Nicolas Badalassi), the contributions to this special issue allow us to reappraise the analytical category of asymmetry that we used as a starting point. Other types of geometry, so to say, were at stake, and in particular 'parallelism' and 'convergence.' As Angela Romano argues in her concluding article, we rather witness "that the Cold War blocs in Europe developed in parallel but asymmetrically." Romano's most important conclusion, however, is to invite us to go beyond the sole concept of 'asymmetry' to understand Cold War Europe. Cooperation, convergence, entanglements all characterised the history of Europe in that period – as well as before and after – and their study provides critical insights into the evolution of the continent. We hope that the seven contributions to that special issue offer a first way in that direction.

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(ENGLISH)

Summary

Europe's twentieth century was characterised by competing and/or conflicting visions about the organisation of the continent. This general introduction explains why the editors decided to focus on the cold war period, briefly sets out the broader historical context and finally clarifies the use of the word 'asymmetry.'

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(FRANÇAIS)

Résumé

Le vingtième siècle européen a été caractérisé par des visions concurrentes et/ou conflictuelles de l'organisation du continent. Cette introduction générale explique pourquoi les éditeurs ont décidé de se concentrer sur la période de la guerre froide, présente brièvement le contexte historique plus large et clarifie enfin l'utilisation du mot "asymétrie".

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