

European Integration after the First World War

Solidarity and exchange between intellectuals in the inter-war European discourse

The First World War and its aftermath, which led to the break-up of empires and the collapse of the international political and economic system, put an immense strain on the diplomatic relationships between the major European powers. The chaos and uncertainty which predominated at the international political level, accompanied by a high level of distrust that arose from the global conflict, was strongly reflected in the intellectual writings produced during the inter-war period. Writers and journalists from several countries expressed a sense of civilizational crisis and some even feared a cultural decline of the continent. These authors were keen spectators of the succession of political events that shaped international and European history in the 1920s and 1930s, voicing the detrimental effects of a continued clash between countries. In particular journals with a positive stance on European cooperation efforts mirrored with their stories and editorial pieces this tense situation at the macro-level.

The conference paper concerns itself with journal discussions about European integration during the inter-war period, with a focus on the editorial attempts of journalists, contributors and magazine owners to transgress the borders of their national and language community and create a pan-national discussion on Europe's future. Through the discourse as well as a social network analysis of the writers involved, the paper highlights the perceptions of Europe's inter-war crisis and the narratives of future European integration. In addition, there is a particular attention to the extent the writers were not simply spectators of the European debate but also shaped the outcome of the talks at a political level. Did we witness a 'European solidarity' in its embryonic stage during the inter-war period? While no long-lasting European institutions were established, the debate about European unity and its impact on the eventual (post-war) European integration process does merit our scholarly attention.

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