

China, we read in the news, is studying the situation as it discovered its people were planning to take to the streets and, interestingly, it is followed by Africa, where some leaders do what they can to stay in power, yet now they seem jittery.

Much of the criticism of the Arab rulers have also been extended to Western countries, with America always taking the largest share of blame for dilly-dallying with the need for genuine democracy. Bowker is clear on this as he states that United States has no “coherent policy approaches and concrete steps” (p. 184). It is not, therefore, hard to find the reason. Mubarak, for example, was a darling and an ally until he was kicked from power by the people. The politics in the Middle East should be well studied as the region is the hot spot for now and indeed many years to come. This is the valuable insight the book should have addressed and tabled to the global policy makers and powerful nations so that the world should be cautious and do the right thing in supporting genuine change from Egypt. It is understandable, to some extent, as Bowker is a diplomat but this is the reality and there is no middle way.

Neil Rollings, *British Business in the Formative Years of European Integration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

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Neil Rollings’ book targets the historical dynamics of Great Britain’s entry into the European community (EC) from the early steps of the European economic integration process at the turn of the 1940s through to the country’s final access to the EC in 1973. It provides us with a reconstruction of this history from the vantage point of the British business community’s economic initiatives and attitudes, dealt with in part one and part two of the book respectively, toward the country’s move towards entry into the common market during these decades. Both the subject and the time period covered, as widely known, have been much discussed and reconstructed in the literature. The author ventures towards adding a new kind of reconstruction on this topic in two ways. On the one side he attempts to draw up a truly interdisciplinary history cross-cutting economic and political history of European integration; on the other, he investigates the role of British business in this history through the initiatives and policies of the micro and meta-level business organizations and of single groups of companies and enterprises, rather than the peak-level business associations’ role, mostly researched by historians so far.

Accordingly, Rollings founds his reconstruction on a mixture of macroeconomic quantitative sources and data, used in part one to offer a snapshot of British foreign trade and foreign direct investments (FDI) trends and dynamics throughout these

decades, and an archive-based narrative history of whether, how and to what extent the business community followed up the political history of Great Britain's move to step in the EC during this period, with particular attention to their approach to the issue during the country's three applications to access the EC in 1963, 1967 and 1973. He draws upon this research approach in part two, dedicated to a detailed reconstruction of British business changing perceptions and policies over time, and in part three. Here, the author chooses three subjects(competition policies, taxation and company law) to account for how the British business community featured an early and wide perception of European economic integration as a process of Europeanization going way beyond the mere adoption of tariff removals or the undertaking of common external tariffs.

The book makes the case for two main theses and, on the whole, it is coherently structured and quite convincing in that. Notwithstanding, as we will note at the end, there are some missing points whose consideration might help the author further these thesis.

The first and most important objective is to discuss and bring into question the so called 'missed opportunity' argument. According to this interpretation, the country's self-exclusion from joining the six founding countries of the EC from its early rejection of the Schuman Plan and the European Coal and Steel Community, through to the decision to keep trading with the Commonwealth countries as its main post-war trade pattern accounts for a British manufacturing system lagging behind the other West European economies in terms of industrial modernization and price competitiveness on foreign markets. According to this interpretation, Britain's post WWII decision not to dismantle the system of Imperial Preference set up with the 1932 Ottawa Agreement "whereby imports from the Empire were given preference in Britain in return for preferential treatment of British export in empire markets" (pp. 8-9), kept the British exporters tied to low-income markets. This trade pattern prevented them from a demand induced and trade liberalization based capital intensive modernization and race for competition as it would be the case for the fast growing American and European consumer markets. In this framework -so the 'missed opportunity' argument maintains - the 1973 move into the EC came to be a cold shower of competition for the British export sectors.

Rollings convincingly disproves this argument both in part one and in part two. In chapter one first he demonstrates that the shift in the trade relationships of British exports from the Commonwealth countries to the EC economies did not occur suddenly upon the country's entry into the EC but was the long term result of a changing trade pattern stretching throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with a significant acceleration in this trend at the turn of the 1950s. Secondly, he brings into focus the commodity composition of British foreign trade during these decades to maintain that, contrary to the 'missed opportunity' argument, the high added

value sectors, led by the mechanical engineering firms, grew their share of British foreign trade, whereas the backward sectors, such as the textile firms, declined. A further third argument is that this rise in the high capital intensive industries' share of British export did not only follow the changing trade relationships of Great Britain from the Commonwealth to the EC market, but it also led the British engineering firms to experience the most significant upward movements in the most competitive European market of France, Germany and Sweden. Similarly, the British FDI followed the same pattern. Although in the postwar years the Commonwealth economies were the main recipients, since the late 1950s the EC capital markets had grown their share of British total FDI, and those most dynamic West European economies became the main recipients.

Rollings continues with this interpretation in part three through a detailed reconstruction of British business attitudes and initiatives toward the EC. Through an analysis of how the business organizations and the British government interacted with each other to prepare for British application and accession to the EC, he stresses how the business community's early skepticism toward the EC made way, since the late 1950s, for increasing approval of the same. In this respect, he maintains that what accounts for this move were both, as it was the case for other national business communities of the EC⁵, the opportunity of enlarging British export markets, and the popular attraction of removing tariff barriers, as well as the achievement of economies of scale, as so forth production rationalization and competition to cope with the inflow of American consumer goods (pp. 144-158). In turn, mechanical engineering and chemical mid- and large-sized industries took the lead in this move, whereas the smaller firms and the least capital intensive sectors, opposed entry into the EC.

The second thesis is that the attitude of British business to the EC was at variance with the changing policy of British politics, that the latter repeatedly impeded the business community's eagerness to join the EC, and that there were clashing views within the government between the political sections interested in achieving economic integration as a way to speed up political integration, and the economic units worrying about the economic consequences of integration. The author provides evidence of this thesis in most chapters.

The book is well structured around these two theses and timely, too, both because the role of business communities and organizations in the making of the EC has risen

⁵ One of the most remarkable example is that of Italy's business community. See Francesca Fauri, *What Italian Business disliked about a European Common Market*, "Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte", 2 (2008), pp. 39-52.

as one of the most vibrant research subjects⁶, and because the historiography on the EC has increasingly kept its eyes on the 1970s, by far considered a decade in the history of the European integration marked by acceleration through the UK entry, and stalemate thereafter.

Notwithstanding, some attention to either the broader place of Great Britain in the international economic system after WWII, or an account of any of the macroeconomic conditions featuring the British economy during the time period considered might help Rollings push forward his arguments. In particular, he describes and then provides evidence on the reshaping of the British economy's trade and financial patterns from the Commonwealth to the EC. In this narrative framework some reference to London's attempt to oppose the decline of Sterling as the leading currency for international trade and payments until the 1950s, or a sense that the early 1950s British business opposition to the removal of trade barriers found its ground in the internal inflation threatening a national manufacturing system exposed to foreign firms, could strengthen this reconstruction and interpretation further.

⁶ The most recent example, although stressing business opposition to the EC, is Niklas Jensen-Eriksen, *Industrial Diplomacy and Economic Integration: the Origins of All-European Paper Cartels 1959-1972*, "Journal of Contemporary History", Vol. 46, 1, 2011, 179-201.