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Veera Mitzner (ed.)

European Union Research Policy

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Emerging from a doctoral dissertation written at the European University Institute in Florence, Veera Mitzner's innovative book explores the contested, but in the end rather successful emergence of European Union research policy, finally giving answers to a number of important questions: how and why did the European Community (EC) move to an area that did not belong to its core competences? Where did the idea of a common research policy come from? What were its driving forces and who were its main advocates?

The book is articulated into three parts. The first part examines the evolution of the postwar concept of «research policy» or «science policy», closely related to the objective of economic growth, and the way in which it was connected to the project of European integration. While the first chapter focuses on the role of OECD in promoting the American model of a peculiar, economic-driven relationship between science and the State in Western Europe, the second chapter explores how this model came to be adopted by the European Commission, through the establishment of the group Politique de la recherche scientifique et technique (PREST), in 1965, and the organization of the Luxembourg Council Meeting, the first dedicated to research, in October 1967. The intersection of the debate on a common research policy and the incumbent crisis of Euratom is discussed in Chapter 3. Somehow paradoxically, the political struggles in the nuclear sector came to promote European integration, pushing for creative solutions within a more comprehensive research policy framework.

Part II (Chapters 5-7) shows how the continuing disagreement on British EC membership affected the plans for a

common research policy which had emerged in the late 1960s. Chapter 6 examines how the political struggle over the British EC membership triggered the birth of the European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST), a loose intergovernmental enterprise outside the EC's structures. The next chapter addresses the EC's involvement in the creation of the European Science Foundation (ESF), an independent and non-governmental European institution devoted to fundamental research. Although both COST and ESF were conceived as opposed to Brussels bureaucracy and European supranationalism, the Commission-centered vision of a common research policy not only did not fade away but gained new momentum in the early 1970s: the final communiqués of the summits of the Hague in December 1969 and Paris in March 1972, and the four resolutions on research adopted by the Council in January 1974 are a clear confirmation of the persisting support to the idea of increasing and diversifying EC's activities in research.

The third section of the book (Chapters 8-9) focuses on the early 1980s, when «research became a full-fledged EC policy with sizeable budgets, truly ambitious programs, and a more strategic approach» (p. 231). Chapter 8 analyzes the re-emerging of the old worries concerning the supposed European «technological gap» vis-à-vis United States and Japan in the new context of the IT revolution. This «return of the gap» reframed the notion of research policy in terms of science/technology-based economic innovation and competitiveness. Chapter 9 shows how the establishment of the first major information technology programs (ESPRIT) and the launch of the first framework program for research in 1983-1984 not only introduced an entirely new concept for planning and managing the EC's activities but also contributed to a substantial budget increase. The *Single European Act*, which officially established Community research policy in 1986, and the Single Market – as the author points out in the conclusion – belonged to the same political package that toward the end of the decade took the European project into a new level.

The first and most important contribution of this book rests on its central argument: the European research policy did not emerge abruptly in the 1980s but stemmed from the gradual consolidation and approval of powerful ideas formulated in the 1960s and 1970s, emphasizing the role of science and technology as fundamental elements of production and productivity as well as essential conditions for a sustained economic growth. Ideational and institutional continuity is at the core of Mitzner's insightful analysis: on the one hand, the establishment of the General Directorate of research in July 1967 provided a venue in which most of the Commission's efforts in this domain could be concentrated; on the other hand, despite increasing environmental concerns and the limitations imposed by economic austerity, the basic agreement on the beneficial role of scientific research in achieving greater growth, innovation and competitiveness endured as a unique thread from the 1960s to the 1980s.

But continuity is not teleology. The second merit of Mitzner's book lies in the in-depth analysis of «setbacks» and «failures» which characterized the road towards a European research policy. Quite often, in fact, the process of European integration diverted from the initially envisioned path and resulted in creative formations that not quite complied with the federalist dreams of the Commission, but nevertheless served the purpose of achieving greater European unity. Two examples – COST and the ESF – are particularly relevant in the economy of the book: in 1971, a total of 19 European countries agreed on the creation of COST, a loose intergovernmental framework devoted to easing technological cooperation; three years later, in 1974, the Commission lost a struggle for the European Science Foundation (ESF), which came into being as a separate, non-governmental organization. Both institutions were outside the EC structures, both were uneasy compromises the EC could not but accept: nevertheless, as an extended Community initiative, COST made the Community appear as an active and unified initiator, increasing the EC's visibility and credibility in the field of research policy; similarly, through the establishment of a special relationship with ESF, the Community gained in terms of fresh ideas, information, public support, visibility and legitimacy.

Connected to this point is the pivotal role of experts – members of the scientific community, representatives of national science funding bodies, industrialists, etc. – in the dynamics of European integration, beyond the national governments and the EC/EU institutions. Over the years, from the 1960s to the 1980s, the Commission surrounded itself with a complex institutional web for consultation in the policy formulation phase as well as for the translation of general ideas into concrete proposals for the Council and the Parliament. As the author effectively demonstrates all along the book, this vast machinery of expert groups, this «epistemic community», not only provided the Commission with a major resource for negotiations with the national governments but also was instrumental in blurring the borders between Brussels and the national capitals.

Based on extensive archival research, Mitzner's book understandably gives priority to the three powerhouses of European science (France, Germany, and the UK), leaving minor room to other national actors (Italy, in particular) or to the analysis of the expert networks involved in the development of EC's science policy. However, this is a negligible limit that only the richness and breadth of Mitzner's research make visible. Elegantly written and clearly structured, Mitzner's book is fundamental reading for all those interested in science diplomacy and in the history of European integration.