On 9 May 1950, in an elegant salon of the Quai d’Orsay in Paris, France’s Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed that France and Germany, plus any other democratic nation in Western Europe that wanted to join, establish a “community” to regulate and govern the coal and steel industries across national borders. France and Germany had been at, or preparing for, war for most of the nineteenth and twentieth century, at huge costs to millions of citizens. Moreover, in 1950 iron and steel remained central to national economic success and war-making power. The Schuman Plan therefore clearly spoke to deeper issues. In Schuman’s own words:

World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts. ... The contribution that an organized and vital Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations. ... Europe will not be made all at once, nor ... in a single holistic construction: it will be built by concrete achievements that will create solidarity in facts. To assemble European nations first demands that opposition between France and Germany be eliminated... .

The Schuman Plan, drafted by Jean Monnet, quickly attracted support from the Benelux countries and Italy which, with France and Germany, soon constituted the “original six” of European integration. The context was important. France was under powerful American pressure to legalize and arm a new German Federal Republic. But to consent unconditionally to such pressures a few short years after World War II was almost inconceivable to the French. Finding a different way forward that could bind the new Germany to its neighbors in peaceful ways was the challenge. Years of debate, however, about building something like a United States of Europe had not produced results. Schuman,
Monnet, and the other founders thus proposed that integration begin by step-by-step sectoral integration pushed forward by purpose-built institutions that might begin creating what Schuman called “solidarity in facts.” At the heart of the European Coal and Steal Community (ECSC) there would be a common market in coal and steel regulated by a powerful appointed High Authority, a Council of Ministers, a Court of Justice to adjudicate what was legal under the ECSC Treaty, and an Assembly. This institutional model, in modified form, remains in today’s European Union.

More than anything the architects of the ECSC, the EU’s real founders, sought new European peace by undercutting the chronic Franco-German rivalry that had so often led to bloody conflict. They also sought new ways to rebuild Europe’s global influence. They thought that promoting rapid economic development that would raise the living standards of European citizens would bring together European peoples and their leaders. Finally, many of them believed that a European federalism might ultimately be built incrementally step by step, sector by sector. Ernst Haas, the most insightful and provocative of the early analysts of European integration, saw such a “neo-functionalist” approach as based in beliefs that success in one area was likely to build support for movement into other areas. In fact, the approach had its risks. “Spillover” from sector to sector might occur as national political and other actors, helped by European institutions and European successes, learned over time to perceive their particular problems as surmountable through ever-greater European cooperation. Economic and market incrementalism might even spill over into political cooperation in time. On the other hand, things could easily get stuck, go awry, be rejected by European citizens, or even be reversed.

Today’s world of European integration is far from the one that the founders faced. Yet amidst anxiety about globalization, European competitiveness, the Euro, climate change, EU institutions, the Great Recession, multiculturalism, terrorism, and a host of other burning issues, today’s EU is the clear result of what the founders initiated. It is thus eminently worthwhile, and not only for commemorative purposes, to reflect on how their insights and innovations have stood the test of sixty turbulent years. That is what our articles do, each in its own way. Michael Burgess begins by reflecting on the “federal legacy” of the Schuman Declaration. Isabelle Petit then argues that this legacy is still alive and well today by showing that institutional reforms increasing the federal dimension of the European Union have been regularly introduced since the 1950s. Two essays on the Franco-German “couple” follow. The first is by the French analyst and practitioner Robert Toulemon and the second by German historian Sabine von Oppeln, and both reconsider the intimate relationship that was at the heart of the Schuman Plan and remains central to European integration today. The study by Grégoire Mallard and Martial Foucault as well as the text by George Ross focus mainly on policy and political processes broadly defined. Mallard and Foucault, through the lens of European security, explore the founders’ unique approaches to multilateral
negotiation. Ross then reflects on an area, social policy, that the founders decided to neglect, for sound political reasons, in their incremental approach to integration, and he analyzes the implications of this neglect in the EU’s history. Finally, Thierry Chopin assesses the state of play between the EU and the US sixty years after the Cold War 1950s, when the new Europe was launched.

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**Notes**