

## **Michelle Egan**

In her keynote address on May 10th, Michelle Egan explored the striking parallels—and important differences—between the struggle to unite the American states in the 19th century and the current process of European integration. Drawing on the field of American Political Development, Professor Egan described the process by which the plural identities of the American states came together in the aftermath of war to establish a single market and a set federal competencies despite resistance and contestation.

The analogy, she noted, is not a direct one: the US and Europe faced different stages of economic development at the time of integration. Nevertheless, a comparative approach might allow scholars to better understand what drives (or hinders) integration. Globalization and business pressures, integration through legal precedent, the shifting role of the state and distributive politics all played a role in both jurisdictions. The parallels also extend to Europe's current challenges: Professor Egan spoke about how the young American federation confronted immigration, backlash and tensions of democratic legitimacy. While we take the cohesiveness of the USA for granted today, it remains a disaggregated, asymmetrical federation, suggesting that European integration too will remain incomplete and will bear the marks of the political processes that shaped it.

In response to audience questions, Professor Egan also touched on parallels with the current debt crisis and the pressures that drove states to integrate in the 19th century; argued that path of dependency and disaggregation will have a strong impact on the ability of the US to pursue ambitious trade agreements; and spoke about how the US grappled with the trade-off between democracy and efficiency on the way to economic integration.