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# **THE COMMISSION PRESIDENCY OF JACQUES DELORS: A STUDY IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper illustrates how Jacques Delors' presidency of the European Commission (1985-1995) can be analysed using terms and concepts taken from the study of political leadership in democratic societies. In particular, it applies Max Weber's categorisation of the legitimisation of authority into 'traditional', 'charismatic' and 'legal-rational' ideal-types to two 'moments' in Delors' ten-year leadership: the writing of the White Papers of 1985 (Completing the Internal Market) and of 1993 (on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment). This approach enables us to analyse the changes that occurred over time in Delors' presidency, and to draw more general conclusions about authority, leadership and legitimacy in the EU.*

**(Not yet for quotation or citation)**

## **Introduction**

My aim in this paper is to study Delors' presidency of the European Commission with the objective of conceptualising the role, and his interpretation of it, in terms which may allow us to draw more general conclusions about the nature of Delors, about the Commission as an institution, and about the institutional system of the European Union (EU) more generally, with particular regard to questions of authority and legitimacy. This is a way of rearranging the material which is probably well-known to everyone; of casting a slightly different light on it; of developing an approach which might complement others in the study of the EU.

I have chosen to use for my methodology the concept of *political leadership*. Clearly, there are many objections that could be raised at this early stage, and I think I am aware of them: the Commission presidency is not a case of *political* leadership; there is no single coherent body of research on political leadership and so on. These reservations are valid to a point; nevertheless it is possible to make out a case for using the concept: Delors' presidency was political in the sense of inflecting the political process of integration; of involving the Commission in the shaping of intensely political decisions; in the relationships between Delors and the college of Commissioners, his cabinet, the Commission services; the other EU institutions; in his discourse; in media and popular perceptions and portrayals of him; in his stated belief that in the absence of a real 'Mr Europe' (such as an elected President of Europe) he incarnated the EU to the external world, and so on. Under Delors' presidency, the Commission, in many respects, was a major site for effective political activity which created or at the very least enhanced a

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sense of direction for the Community's development. In becoming a public figure, and in adopting the leadership style that he did, Delors was able to shape the course of European integration. It is in this sense of leading and of directing the Community's progress that we understand the Commission's political leadership role. He was, in other words, political leader of both the Commission, through the ideas, working methods and vision that he applied to the institution and its task, and of the Community more generally, by virtue of personifying - by default - the European entity. Furthermore, while the definition of *political leadership* has been left vague by the social sciences, underlying much political science, history, sociology (and other disciplines) research is a firm assumption that leadership in politics exists and is a valid topic for enquiry. The study of leadership, however defined, and however diffuse, is a vast and rich field, and makes room for enquiries such as ours - into a new source of leadership, in relatively new circumstances and conditions. Our focus on Delors is justified by the fact that Delors offered a new departure for the exercise of political leadership in the European integration process, and the study of his case will ensure that it will have been a productive experience from the point of view of political science research.

A review of the study of political leadership suggests a multitude of approaches and methodologies, since the literature itself does not suggest one best method of addressing the subject. Much of the research is informed by powerful trends in politics and political science: Marxism; reactions to Marxism; rational choice theories; structuralism; behaviouralism and so on. However, a review of this literature does suggest, as a minimum common denominator, that in studying a leader in a democracy there are three main categories of factors which have to be accounted for: the individual leader; the institution, post or position in

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which leadership is exercised; and the broader climate: circumstances, traditions, histories, political and social culture.

These categories are suggested by the fact that they occur throughout the literature, with different weightings. They are also central to Max Weber's seminal writings on the legitimation of authority. Weber's work has been much analysed and discussed, particularly his concept of charisma. I will limit myself here to noting that my understanding of Weber's ideal-types of the 'legitimation of domination' - **traditional, charismatic, legal-rational** - is that the definition of these categories were a way for Weber to illustrate how authority can occur and operate, drawn from Weber's empirical research and observation of various types of society. I do not take them to be mutually exclusively (either temporally or spatially) stages in the development of patterns of authority, mirroring, for example, the development of society from pre-industrialisation to industrialisation and the rationalisation and bureaucratisation that entails, although this is how they are often depicted in discussions of Weber.<sup>1</sup> I take the discussion of the types of legitimation as a review of the possibilities for authentic, committed, acceptable and accepted leadership in democratic society. Its advantage here is its focus on the various possible sources and forms of legitimacy, since this approach allows us to address Delors' presidency of the Commission as an exercise in exploiting the resources available to him at any one time in order to achieve his goals, and so to examine these resources; and generalise from this case.

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<sup>1</sup>I see Weber's discussion of these categories as stemming from his personal convictions, at the turn of the 19th/20th century, that mass democratisation and industrialisation threatened to eclipse the authentic, *engagé* politician, out of touch with the traditions and myths of his people, motivated by personal greed and gain and the demands of economic efficiency.

On the basis of this interpretation, I suggest that each of Weber's categories point to a dimension of the exercise of leadership which may (or may not) be significant in a given case. *Traditional* type legitimation refers to *l'air du temps* (Delors himself uses the term): it is a leader's relation with his/her times, history, past, traditions, myths, taboos, circumstances, constraints, *conjoncture*. *Charismatic* type legitimation is closely related to the above; it concerns primarily, and more immediately and specifically, the relationship between an individual leader and his/her followers, or, generally speaking, constituencies affected by his/her leadership. It includes both personal qualities and characteristics - a leader's experience, knowledge, character, and reputation - and his/her relations with others - his/her discourse, image, style, self-perception and portrayal etc. Finally, *legal-rational* type legitimation refers to the ways in which political authority is constrained, enabled, sustained, challenged by formal rules: by constitutional provisions, jurisprudence. An additional point concerns what Weber called the *routinization of charismatic authority*. I understand the expression to refer to the aftermath of a departed 'charismatic' leader; the effect on his/her post and institution, on the followers; how his/her succession is arranged. I see therefore this term as another aspect of the three ideal types and of the relationship between them.

On the basis of this approach I have chosen what I have called two 'moments' in Delors' presidency for analysis: the writing of the White Papers of 1985 (Completing the internal Market) and 1993 (on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment). I was interested to find out how these 'outputs' came into being; whether they were significantly different from each other, how and why; to what extent they reflected shifts and changes in the types of factors outlined above. I chose them because they are relatively well-known (particularly the 1985 one) and so would not

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require elaborate explanation; because what is known about them, however, tends to focus on their content and consequences rather than on the process by which they came into being. I wanted to know, simply put, where they came from, and what Delors' input into them was. By comparing the two cases, I hoped to be able to draw conclusions about the relative role of a variety of factors in determining the leadership that a Commission president can provide. In other words, the White Papers have been chosen as illustrations of Delors' leadership; for what they can reveal about *his* leadership, and leadership in the EU more generally.

### *The 1985 White Paper On Completing The Internal Market*

The first of our 'moments' is the writing of the White Paper on the Completion of the Internal Market. This document had a considerable impact on the European integration process, and is identifiable and measurable as a Commission output: it is a published document, it was launched on a certain date, attracted specific commentary and reaction; it was acted upon; and it was attributable to specific individuals and to an identifiable process which took place within the Commission; Delors as President of the Commission was closely associated with the White Paper initiative. Furthermore, the unusual speed with which the White Paper was produced - it was presented to the Heads of State and Government within six months of Delors' taking office - attracts our attention to it as a Commission initiative.

The White Paper was a document in which the measures required to complete the internal market were described and listed in detail, with, appended to the main body of text, a timetable outlining in which year each measure was to be proposed by the Commission (or, in the case of existing proposals, when it had first been proposed, with the relevant

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document reference number); and when it should be adopted by the Council of Ministers. It set the list in its context - the progress achieved by previous Commissions; the commitments made by the Heads of State and Government of the member states to the goal of an internal market - and organised the measures to be taken into three categories: physical barriers; technical barriers; fiscal barriers. It represented a break from the previous emphasis, in constructing the Common Market, on the distinction between 'tariff' and 'non-tariff' barriers, and capitalised on the growing interest within the Commission for the 'mutual recognition' rather than 'harmonisation' of standards.<sup>2</sup>

Our chosen period includes the six months from July-December 1994 when Delors was president-designate of the Commission, when he began preparations for the presidency, and the first six months of his presidency, between January and July 1985. By the end of that twelve months the Commission had published the White Paper on Completing the Internal Market and had had this paper accepted by the Heads of State and Government at the Milan European Council of June 1985, which also launched the process of treaty revision (the IGC) which would lead to the Single European Act (SEA), which enshrined many of the provisions of the White Paper.

There is now a vast literature on the first year of Delors' presidency in which the build-up to the Single European Act (SEA), including the White Paper, was so decisive in terms of future European integration (the so-called *relance* of the 1980s). Relatively little of this literature focuses on the process of writing the White paper itself or its status as an illustration of Delors' presidency; what exists concentrates on the results and consequences of the White Paper, and essentially reproduces the

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<sup>2</sup>See Lord Cockfield (1994) *The European Union. Creating the Single Market*, (Chancery Law: London) pp.17-59.

same narrative account. A closer examination of the process itself, using our categories as outlined above, is instructive in understanding the nature of Delors' presidency at that time, which we can then contrast with a similar case of almost 10 years later. What can we learn from applying our categories to this first case of Delors' leadership?

***'Traditional' Type Legitimation***

Much has been written on the improving conditions under which Delors' Commission took office; here we will provide the briefest summary of events. Our aim, we recall, is to establish the climate; the *air du temps* at this time and the relation of Delors and the White Paper to it: was there, for example, prevailing consensus over the goals and processes of European integration? Was there support for 'more' or 'less' Europe? Delors was in fact appointed President of the Commission by the then ten Heads of State and Government at a relatively propitious time, in terms of opportunities for change and innovation. Compared with earlier years, there was a wave of opinion (albeit amongst elites rather than public opinions) in favour of moving towards more ambitious goals of European unity. Initiatives had emanated from the Council of Ministers (the Genscher-Colombo 'Draft European Act' concerning EC decision making, and external relations); the Heads of State and Government (the 1983 Stuttgart Solemn Declaration on European Union); and the European Parliament (the Draft Treaty establishing the European Union). Individual Heads of State and Government had also demonstrated fresh enthusiasm, or at least support for 'more' Europe (François Mitterrand; Chancellor Kohl; Prime Minister Thatcher), particularly following the European Council of June 1984 at Fontainebleau at which a number of the Community's longstanding problems had been addressed and, to an extent, resolved. The Fontainebleau summit had also established two



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working committees to investigate institutional reform (the Dooge Committee) and a people's Europe (the Adonnino Committee).

In terms of Weber's definition of traditional-type legitimation ('the authority of the 'eternal yesterday', i.e. of the mores sanctified through the unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform (...); 'traditional' domination exercised by the partriarch and the patrimonial prince of yore.'<sup>3</sup>) the background to the White Paper as just described suggests that in comparison with the years immediately preceding Delors' presidency, 1984-5 offered a climate in which there was greater positive awareness and recognition of the goals and spirit of European Union as enshrined in the Treaty of Rome; of the benefits, material and otherwise, of moving ahead towards such a Union. The White Paper itself cites in its conclusions the Treaty of Rome's abstract goals ('Determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'; 'Resolved to ensure the economic and social progress of their countries by common action to eliminate the barriers which divide Europe), and we shall see below how, in 'legal-rational' terms too, the White Paper drew heavily on the provisions of the EC's founding treaty, on the *acquis communautaire* and on an existing corpus of proposals for its authority and attraction. It would appear that the concept of the Community's '**general interest**', as named in the Treaty of Rome (Article 157), and as entrusted for safeguarding and enacted to the Commission, had by 1984-5, resurfaced with a respectability which had been lacking for several years previously.

Delors himself said (in 1989) of this period: 'l'idéalisme européen revivait. (...) Il manquait un ciment. Ce ciment, ce fut celui de la nécessité. En effet, notre prospérité et notre autonomie étaient menacées

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<sup>3</sup> 'Politics as a Vocation', pp.78-9, in *Max Weber*, (1948) eds. H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills, (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London).

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(..).<sup>4</sup> We consider below his personal impact and influence on the marrying of the ideal of, and necessity for, Europe in the production of the 1985 White Paper.

### ***'Charismatic' Legitimation***

Weber's coinage of the concept of charisma applied to leadership has been broadly and variously defined and, in general, its use inflated and distorted, particularly in popular usage. Weber's definitions clearly emphasise at least one critical characteristic of the charismatic leader: it is the *relationship* existing between the leader and his/her followers which constitutes the charismatic quality of the leader and his/her leadership. The followers follow the leader because of what they believe and perceive the leader to offer, symbolise and provide, rather than simply because of what they see as the leader's personality and personal qualities.<sup>5</sup> The leader's charismatic quality, therefore, would appear to reside primarily in the leader's ability to convey to his/her 'disciples, followers' the grounds for belief and faith in that leader; even though Weber also seems to suggest that a leader's objective qualities and personality are factors contributing to his/her charismatic nature. It is over the precise source of a leader's charisma that most scholars have disagreed.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with *Libération*, 14 June 1989. 'European idealism had come alive again. But the cement was missing. This cement was that of necessity: our prosperity and autonomy were threatened.'

<sup>5</sup>'Devotion to the charisma of the prophet, or the leader in war, or to the great demagogue in the *ecclesia* or in parliament, means that the leader is personally recognized as the innerly 'called' leader of men. Men do not obey him by virtue of tradition or statute, but because they believe in him. If he is more than a narrow and vain upstart of the moment, the leader lives for the cause and 'strives for his work'. The devotion of his disciples, his followers, his personal party friends is oriented to his person and to its qualities.' Gerth and Mills, op. cit., p.79.

<sup>6</sup>See for example: D. Beetham (1991) *The Legitimation of Power*, (Macmillan: Basingstoke); John Gaffney (1989) *The French Left and the Fifth Republic. The Discourses of Communism and Socialism in Contemporary France* (Macmillan:

If we acknowledge Weber's intended emphasis on the relational aspect of charismatic leadership, and bearing in mind that we are also employing Weber's ideal-type in a general sense as a tool for focusing on the individual leader, we can make a first general remark about Delors' leadership: it was characterised by the fact that he had no specific constituency of 'followers' or 'disciples' beyond, formally, the College of Commissioners of which he was part, or the Commission services at his disposal. Unlike an elected national leader, or political party leaders in the member states, Delors' post did not provide him with a ready-made audience to whom he could address 'European' messages, or with whom he could enter into a recognised and accepted relation.

Delors in many respects turned this situation to his advantage. He sought out and focused on audiences potentially receptive to a 'European message where they did exist (the European Parliament; the Heads of State and Government of the EU; the national media and interest groups; the European Movement); and created them where they did not (his address to the British TUC in 1988), or reached out to them (for example national public opinions) via the audiences he was entitled to address (such as the EP). He created and employed a discourse of European progress, unity, competitiveness, cooperation and solidarity, and relayed this on countless occasions during his presidency through all possible mediums. He was a visible and vocal Commission President who increasingly considered himself as personifying Europe, to the extent that no other formal institutional arrangement existed (such as an elected European president) to fulfil this role. He insisted on several occasions that the correct relay of the European ideal was the national government, not the supranational Commission; the absence of a reliable relay would

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Basingstoke), p.18; Richard J. Ellis (1991) 'Explaining the Occurrence of Charismatic Leadership in Organizations', *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 3 (3): 305-319.

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not however prevent him from articulating that ideal frequently and forcefully.

In terms of the relational dimension of the charismatic leader, Delors' intention to forge such relations where possible can be seen in the case of the 1985 White Paper. For example, Delors devoted the months immediately following his nomination and before taking up office (July-December 1984) to making contact with the political leaders of the member states, with a view to establishing what initiatives the Commission could realistically expect to take, and get accepted. He demonstrated a confidence and willingness to make personal contact with national leaders and their administrations in order to set a framework for his subsequent action. Such an initiative suggested an understanding of the confines of his role - the absolute necessity of securing the support of national leaders for subsequent proposals, by gauging the reality of their political circumstances, and so the nature of the political compromises to which they would be likely to agree. It also pointed to Delors' desire to push these confining structures outwards by confronting national leaders on equal terms: credible, powerful politician to credible, powerful politician. Delors also met the commissioners-designate before the Commission officially met for the first time and, on the basis of a number of rules which he himself drew up (for example: no post to be the bastion of one nationality; the portfolios themselves to reflect the Commission's forthcoming programmatic priorities; key portfolios to be retained by himself), and within the limitations of the commissioner-designates' preferences and the pressures from national governments, allocated portfolios amongst the new team.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>We should note that Delors was not the first Commission president to benefit from, and exploit, the six months between nomination as Commission president and taking up the post. Roy Jenkins (1977-1981) was the first president to be granted the six-month transitional period. His nomination was agreed upon in June 1976; between

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A more striking example of how Delors, in direct relation to the White Paper, created and addressed audiences for his message, is his inaugural address to the European Parliament in January 1985. It was during this speech that he launched the idea of '1992' as a deadline for the completion of the Single Market, which was to become such a successful slogan, although the 1992 message as such was not at the heart of his address. Delors used the speech more generally as an occasion to deliver his analysis of Europe's problems and to propose a method for addressing them, setting the tone for a Commission ready to reclaim its rights and duties as guardian of the founding treaties and so as initiator of European-level policy.

Delors' notion of method, of the right way of going about things, was a key feature of his Commission presidency, and is articulated in this first speech and suggests another dimension of Delors' 'charismatic' quality: he conveyed a certainty not only of purpose but of the means with which to achieve it; this would be a 'charismatic' quality in so far as he was successful in convincing his audiences that his way was appropriate. In his January 1985 address to the EP, for example, he stressed: 'I believe that the engineers of European integration are fumbling not over 'what has to be done' but rather 'how to get about it.' (...) I know only too well that it is easier to raise applause by talking about exciting objectives

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then and January 1977, he too toured the national capitals, meeting national leaders; he also met informally with his future commissioners. He too was a politician with a respected political past and a promising future, and considerable hopes were pinned on the positive effect he might have on the Commission and the Community. Both Jenkins' and Delors' presidencies were in addition characterised by a very productive first year: the White Paper and the Single European Act in the case of Delors; the European Monetary System initiative in that of Jenkins. Delors therefore was not the first president to make a significant impact on the Commission and the Community in his first months of office. The fact that Jenkins too made a promising start in the presidency does not invalidate our identification of Delors' first months as a significant variable contributing to his unique leadership; rather, it confirms the importance of ambitious ideas, and the activism to implement them, as a crucial ingredient of that leadership.

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rather than about ways of achieving them. But there's the rub! Empty talk is not enough. (...) What approach do I have in mind since my theme is, and will continue to be, 'how to go about it?' It is an approach to achieving consensus and convergence of will, to acting and succeeding.' Furthermore, Delors' self-perception as an engineer or craftsman (*artisan*) of European integration is vividly and consistently portrayed in this first speech, and throughout his discourse over the ten years of his presidency.<sup>8</sup>

Delors' emphasis on a methodological and rational approach to European integration was sustained, and this is demonstrated in this same speech, by an analysis of Europe's problems based on careful observation, reflection, and first-hand experience (as France's Finance minister from 1981 to 1984; as MEP between 1979-1981; as researcher for the French Socialist Party, for the French Catholic trade union (the CFTC) in the 1960s and 1970s). But his method is part of a whole; of a vision of Europe's past, present and future. The 1985 White Paper, for example, although not Delors' preferred option for a relaunch of the integration process, but the one on which he could gain consensus from the member states, also belonged to Delors' personal blueprint for a 'European model of society', on which he had been working since the

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<sup>8</sup>See Helen Drake (1995, forthcoming), 'Jacques Delors and the Discourse of Political Legitimacy' in Helen Drake and John Gaffney (eds.), *The Language of Leadership in Contemporary France* (Dartmouth: Aldershot) for a full analysis of this speech; also for a study of the 'inaugural' speeches of all the Commission and High Authority Presidents to the European Parliament since 1952: Jean-Claude Deroubaix, Corinne Gobin (1994) *Quand la Commission se présente devant le Parlement. Étude du vocabulaire des discours de présentation de la Haute Autorité de la CECA et de la Commission de la Communauté européenne devant le Parlement européen (1952-1993)*, vols. I and II, Recherche européenne en Sciences Humaines. The study was commissioned by the Commission (DG5, Information, Public Opinion) and is based on quantitative methods of measuring lexical terms and their frequency, although the authors categorise their approach as 'political sociology', not linguistics.

1950s (although Delors' vision of a single European market comprised more social provisions than have yet been proposed or implemented).<sup>9</sup>

What we are suggesting here is that Delors' vision of European integration, his proposed method for converting that vision into reality, and his transmission of these messages, as illustrated by his first address to the European Parliament, are indicators of the extent to which Delors as an individual leader constructed, from the confines and constraints of his office, a degree of 'charisma', sufficient for him to be increasingly portrayed throughout his presidency in charismatic terms, as popularly defined. Delors appeared, therefore, in respect of the writing and launching of the 1985 White Paper, to have drawn on and invented a degree of charismatic type authority.

#### ***'Legal-Rational' Legitimation***<sup>10</sup>

Formal, 'legal-rational' type legitimation was critical to the success of the White Paper. There are a number of factors which we can cite briefly here. First, Delors' appointment as Commission president derived a legitimacy from the fact that he was the unanimously agreed nominee of the then ten Heads of State and Government. Second, and less obviously, Delors derived a certain authority, in addition to his reputation as a good economist, hard worker, and expert, by virtue of coming from France, a country which since the beginnings of the Community had provided European leadership in some form (Monnet and Schuman gave leadership in the positive sense of political initiatives and the laying

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<sup>9</sup>See for example J. Delors et Clithène, *La France par l'Europe* (1988) (Grasset: Paris), a book co-authored by Delors.

<sup>10</sup>'Finally, there is domination by virtue of 'legality', by virtue of the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional 'competence' based on rationally created *rules*. In this case, obedience is expected in discharging statutory obligations. This is domination as exercised by the modern 'servant of the state' and by all those bearers of power who in this respect resemble him.' Gerth and Mills, p.79.

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down of the institutional foundations of today's Union; de Gaulle displayed both positive and negative forms of leadership within Europe, and from both within and outside formal office). In being French, Delors, we can assume, would enjoy at least a *de facto* legitimacy as Commission President, in the form of a sense of commitment to the building of Europe, and a familiarity with the workings of the Community.

A third illustration of the significance of legal-rational type authority for Delors in the case of the 1995 paper relates to the fact that the idea of completing the White Paper was acceptable to all member state leaders; a factor which Delors invariably highlights in his accounts of his period. Fourth, and most significant, is the relation that the White Paper initiative bore to the Treaty of Rome. This relation features in Delors' address to the European parliament which we have mentioned above. The White Paper drew much of its acceptability and legitimacy from the fact that its provisions were intended to fulfil those of the Treaty of Rome. That treaty had established a common market as a goal; the internal market initiative would finally fulfil that goal. Delors emphasised, moreover, the moral quality of the member states' obligation to assume their treaty-related responsibilities. In this respect, we can see that there is a close link between 'traditional' and 'legal-rational' types of authority: the White paper would both fulfil a treaty obligation and revive the more traditional-type notion of the Community's general interest, as also enshrined in the treaty.

There are other factors relating to this aspect of the White Paper's legitimacy, which concern the Commission more directly. In 1985 the Commission, in relation to the other EC institutions, was treated as something of a poor relation: dispirited and disempowered by years of the Luxembourg compromise, enduring divergent national interests on



specific policy issues and, more generally, divergent national views over the meaning and goals of Europe. It had had ideas but had been relatively unable, with certain exceptions, to implement them. Internally, the Commission did not appear as a dynamic, forceful institution ferociously guarding the Community's general interest. It appeared prone to internal power games, and its administrative services lacking in enthusiasm or direction. Yet it had a treaty-bound obligation to orientate the integration process by force of its proposals, and to see to it that the Treaty's provisions were implemented. Delors' arrival coincided with a revival of the Commission's rights; its sense of obligations and duties, and a revitalisation of its capabilities.

It would appear from our brief overview of the 1985 White Paper that the 'charismatic' and 'traditional' forms of legitimation, and Delors' exploitation of them, seemed the most significant sources of authority for Delors in 1985. There *were* 'legal-rational' sources of authority, but there were also considerable obstacles in this respect (the neglect of the Commission in the EC decision-making process; the poor record and reputation of the Commission in that process). Delors would subsequently set about enhancing the 'legal-rational' sources of his authority by revitalising the Commission, pushing through institutional reform in the SEA, and making the Commission a vital part of the integration process. By 1993 and the second of our White Papers, the Commission had experienced both a virtually unrivalled precedence amongst the EU institutions, but also, and subsequently, a relative decline in relation to these other institutions.

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*The 1993 White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness And Employment*<sup>11</sup>

Like the 1985 White Paper, that of 1993 was based on an idea which was common currency within the EU: tackling Europe's unemployment and addressing its long-term competitiveness. Unlike the 1985 White Paper, it did not come straight from the treaty of Rome, or even, with some exceptions, of Maastricht, but, to a large extent, from Delors' blueprint for a European model of society. To a degree, of course, the 1993 White Paper took its cue from groundwork which had already been done in the EU context: it was a logical extension to the goals of Single European Market, Economic and Monetary Union, and social Europe. As a discrete initiative, however, in its form and content, the 1993 White Paper came out of Doctor Delors' medicine bag; he personally wrote a lot of it; and much of its terminology can be found almost verbatim in earlier publications and writings of Delors' and his collaborators (for example, in *La France par l'Europe*).<sup>12</sup> An important feature of the White Paper, and Delors' presentation of it (at the time and since) is its focus on national-level, rather than supranational, measures for tackling the problems it raises. This and other aspects of the 1993 White Paper raise interesting questions about Delors' leadership and its sources of authority in this case.

First let us summarise the initiative. At the Copenhagen European Council meeting in June 1993 Delors presented to the national leaders an analysis of Europe's economic ills.<sup>13</sup> On the basis of his presentation, the

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<sup>11</sup>*Growth, Competitiveness and Employment. The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century. White Paper.* Reproduced in *Bulletin of the EC. Supplement 6/93*.

<sup>12</sup>See George Ross (1995) *Jacques Delors and European Integration* (Polity Press: Cambridge), p.225: 'No one who read the White Paper could fail to be impressed, in particular when the Commission's effort was contrasted with other programmatic contenders on the field. Moreover, no one familiar with Europe's recent history could overlook that its vertebrae were trademark ideas of Jacques Delors.'

<sup>13</sup>*Entering the 21st Century. Prospects for the European Economy*

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Commission was granted a mandate by the European Council to produce a White Paper, which it subsequently presented to the Brussels European Council of December 1993. That summit approved the White Paper, although it rejected certain of its financial implications and demands. The paper itself, as a document, was very different to that of 1985: it was not a list of proposals to be made by the Commission and agreed by the member states, but a series of *réflexions* and indications of how these could be implemented. It was in three parts: Part A a discussion and analysis of 'The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century', and in the writing of which Delors personally played a significant part; Part B, the results of preparatory work on 'The conditions of growth, competitiveness and more jobs', in which the Commission's administrative services had been more deeply involved; and Part C (in a separate volume), 'The Contributions of the Member States'. The White Paper addressed Europe's chronic unemployment and relative lack of competitiveness; it suggested how national employment policies could tackle the situation, and where European-wide action (for example in the case of energy and transport, and information and communication infrastructures) was appropriate.

***'Traditional'-Type Legitimation***

When we compare the situation and circumstances of 1993 with those of 1985, we can note several significant differences, which have already been amply documented and analysed. By 1993, Europe's publics and electorates were considered to have awoken to the reality of European integration. They had been offered, in certain countries (Denmark, France, Ireland for example), the opportunity to pronounce their views on the integration process in the form of the ratification by referendum of the

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Maastricht Treaty on European Union; the results had indicated a high degree of dissatisfaction with the content and form of that process.

The Maastricht Treaty had itself attempted to respond to what was perceived as a growing concern among national publics about the effects of European integration, as the process had accelerated and intensified during the second half of the 1980s; and to popular suspicion, often fuelled by the media, that politicians - national and supranational - were failing to make European integration work in favour of individuals' prosperity and interests. The treaty had also responded to elite concerns about the so-called 'democratic deficit' of the EU (the national elites - themselves in many cases divided over Europe - were worried about the effects on their electorates of such a deficit) by altering the balance of power between the EU's institutions in relation to whether they represented the EU citizens directly (the EP; national parliaments); indirectly (the Council of Ministers and the European Council) or not at all (the Commission). Part of this redefining of responsibilities and accountabilities corresponded to a complex situation in which the Commission (or more accurately, Delors' Commission) was caught between acting as the scapegoat for unpopular aspects of integration, and continuing to implement and drive that process.

In relation to our Weberian concept of 'traditional' legitimation, therefore, where a leader's acts and decisions are authorised by a sense, shared by leader and follower alike, of the 'unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform' - here, to the ideals, requirements and rules of European integration and unity - the situation in 1993 was far more complex than in 1985. Superficially, there was more awareness and understanding of the concept and reality of 'Europe'. But a result of the Delors' first two four-year mandates of the Commission had in effect been to produce an inflammatory mixture of

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expectations, hopes, and fears about the Commission's impact on the integration process; about Delors' scope for influence, and the legitimacy of this; about the goals of the Union and so on. Nine years of rapid integration had had the side-effect of rendering the notion of the European general interest and the content of the myth of a united Europe more transparent than in 1985, but far more complex and openly controversial. These were the rocky waters into which the 1993 White Paper was launched. Did Delors' strategy account for the less favourable *air du temps*?

#### ***'Charismatic'-Type Legitimation***

By 1993 Delors had a record and a reputation as Commission President. He was into his third mandate, and was by now a household name throughout the EU and beyond. He had become synonymous with the good and bad of nine years of integration, as we suggested above. This was a set of conditions in circumstances in which any initiative associated with Delors was potentially risky, in terms of being misunderstood or simply unwelcome.

We said in relation to the 1985 White Paper that a leader's 'charisma', in Weberian terms, concerns that leader's relations with others, primarily his/her followers. We also said that a peculiarity of Delors' post was that he had no followers of his own, by virtue of his post, and that in compensation for this feature, Delors identified and created audiences and potential followers and addressed them frequently. In the case of 1993 we see that the relations that Delors maintained with certain constituencies was as important to the success of the White Paper as in 1985.

In 1993, Delors focused on his relations with the national Heads of States and Government, dealing them over the White Paper, as he said, a

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*coup de poing à l'estomac* - a punch in the stomach - the punch taking the form of facts and figures about Europe's economic situation, problems and prospects; a form of shock tactics. He set out to frighten them, not simply with the raw facts of the EU's economic life, but with his expertise and knowledge (and that of his collaborators), and ability to present this clearly and graphically.<sup>14</sup> The power of the picture he presented them, furthermore, was reinforced by the fact that, in a similar way as in 1985, the subject in question - tackling Europe's declining competitiveness; its difficulties in creating decent and enduring growth, or 'seams' (*gisements*) of employment - was an element of Delors' political philosophy and action plan for the preservation (through adaptation) of the European model of society, of which the essential features are: competitiveness, cooperation and solidarity, and a mixed economy. Forming part of Delors' long-term vision lent the strength of personal convictions and beliefs to the content of the White Paper.

We have suggested that the 1993 White Paper was in some respects Delors' valedictory gesture of salvation to the EU: telling Europe's leaders how to get Europe's populations back to work. As in 1985, the 1993 White Paper was based on a 'big idea' for European integration, and the presentation of that idea, to the relevant constituencies, as essential for the survival, not only of the idea of Europe, but of the economic and social health of the member states. Unlike 1985, Delors' discourse on the White Paper, and the content of the document itself, is far more careful and explicit in demarcating the responsibilities of the Commission from those of the member states.

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<sup>14</sup>Je suis arrivé avec mes graphiques et je leur ai dit: «Attention, Messieurs, l'Europe est à nouveau tentée par le déclin.» Cela a été un choc pour les gouvernements qui ont tous compris l'avertissement et approuvé mon analyse.' Jacques Delors (1994) *L'Unité d'un homme. Entretiens avec Dominique Wolton* (Odile Jacob: Paris), p.293.

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*'Rational-Legal'-Type Legitimation*

We said that the 1985 White Paper on Completing the Internal Market derived a good deal of its legitimacy from the fact that it was intended to fulfil outstanding treaty obligations, where the Commission had a clear mandate and duty to act. This was not so in 1993: the Commission had no mandate to initiate legislation in, say, employment policy or, more generally, broad economic policy. Any Commission proposal in such areas would therefore have to look elsewhere for its formal (rational-legal) sources of authority. We have already suggested that the Paper derived part of its legitimacy from other sources altogether - the 'traditional' need for Europe to be economically prosperous, and peaceful; the 'charismatic' force of the ideas in the Paper, and their presentation and argumentation.

Somewhat paradoxically, given what we have said above about the Commission acting as scapegoat for the so-called democratic deficit and the negative consequences of integration, the Commission's status and reputation as an expert and competent institution provided a form of formal legitimacy by 1993, on which the White Paper could and did draw. The Commission by then had extracted from the member states members of an increasingly high calibre, in the sense of their political experience, status and expertise. Several were national politicians with, arguably, a national political future as well as past; this was also true of Delors himself, who gradually, in 1993-4, became seen as a contender for the 1995 French presidential election. In these respects the Commission's White Paper could take for granted, in a way that was less evident in 1985, that its proposals would be given serious consideration by the member state governments.

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Internally, the Commission mobilised its resources differently compared with 1985 to produce a document with similar speed to that of 1985. The 1993 White Paper drew deeper and wider within the Commission for the research, presentation and coordination of its ideas, and was able to absorb the existence of more varied and powerful viewpoints from within the College of Commissioners than had been the case in 1985, and deal relatively constructively with conflict where it arose. A *cellule de prospective*, or think tank, reporting to the president, was able to provide more support and input than had been the case with the machinery which Delors had inherited in 1985.

The manner in which Delors spoke publicly of the 1993 White Paper and the Commission's responsibilities and duties therein provides, albeit in a form exaggerated, doubtless, for rhetorical effect, a reflection of Delors' understanding and assessment of the formal-type legitimation of the White Paper: it was a case of the Commission serving the member states, providing them with the work requested of them; they worked honestly and to the best of their abilities, and to the specifications set by the member states. The best illustration of this image is contained in a televised interview with Delors on French television on the weekend of the December 1993 Brussels summit, at which the European Council pronounced on the White Paper.

Delors was first asked whether he thought that the Brussels European Council, which had taken place over the weekend when the interview was held, would change anything for ordinary French people. In other words, would the fact that the Commission's White Paper was welcomed by the national leaders improve people's lives? Delors based his reply on the metaphor of himself as a simple, honest craftsman working on behalf of others, and experiencing pride when his work is recognised and praised:



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Il faut voir les limites de ce qui a été fait. Je suis content comme sans doute vous êtes satisfaite quand on vous fait des compliments pour votre travail? (...) J'ai la réaction d'un artisan, on me dit que c'est un bon travail, je suis content. (...) Je ne suis pas là pour construire l'Europe, je suis là pour construire une Europe au bénéfice des peuples, de l'indépendance et du rôle de l'Europe dans le monde. (Of course there are limits to what has been accomplished. I am pleased, like you no doubt are satisfied when you are complimented on your work. I react like a craftsman; they tell me that I've done a good job and I'm pleased (...). I'm not here to build Europe, I'm here to build a Europe for the people, an independent Europe, with a role in the world).

There are three remarks we can make here. First, Delors stated the objectives which guided his presidency: to build a Europe at the service of its people, its independence and its role in the world. These were principles which legitimated his interpretation of his mission as President, and on which he should be judged. Second, the motif of the *artisan*, the craftsman, was one which recurred in Delors' discourse, and which expressed his desire to endow his work with the qualities of the honest worker who executes a tricky or delicate task to the best of his ability, with loving attention, creativity, and a high degree of skill. Third, using the craftsman metaphor lead Delors to deliver these responses in an emotional tone, signifying his commitment and authenticity, criteria which should be taken into account in any judgment of his record.

Later in the same interview, when asked whether he would have confronted the Heads of State and Government at the Brussels summit if they failed to adopt the White Paper, he related an anecdote:

Bien sûr! A un moment, la discussion s'effilochoit, pour reprendre cette remarque de l'artisan, je peux le dire, ce n'est pas indiscret, je leur

ai tenu le langage suivant: J'ai le sentiment que je suis dans la peau d'un artisan à qui on a demandé une table et six chaises. Il les apporte le vendredi, on le félicite, "travail remarquable", le samedi, par curiosité, il va voir chez celui qui avait commandité cette œuvre, où sont les six chaises et la table, et il apprend malheureusement qu'elles sont au grenier. Et bien, si vous ne vous mettez pas d'accord, c'est cela que je dirai à la presse. (Of course! There was a moment when the discussion had run out of steam. To take up the craftsman remark again, and I don't think I'm being indiscreet, I spoke to them in the following terms. I said: I get the feeling that I'm like the craftsman who has been asked to make a table and six chairs. He brings them on Friday, he's congratulated - 'remarkable work'! On the Saturday, out of curiosity, he goes to see the person who placed the order and he learns that the table and six chairs have been put in the attic.' Well, if you don't reach an agreement, that's what I'll tell the press).

This last response, taken with what has gone before, suggests that Delors combined in this interview the discourse of the visionary President and that of the President-craftsman applying his skill to tasks set by his masters. On both counts, he was laying down the markers of his legitimacy: he was competent and dedicated to executing the tasks he was given. Elsewhere in the same interview, Delors made much of the fact that he did not, in the 1993 White Paper, ask the governments for more Commission 'competencies'; that the White Paper mainly proposed national-level measures.<sup>15</sup> Again, even while discounting the rhetorical

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<sup>15</sup>Delors expresses this demarcation of responsibilities in his interviews with Dominique Wolton. Jacques Delors, *L'Unité d'un homme*, p.296 (translations mine): *Dominique Wolton*: 'Dans le Livre blanc, vous préconisez aussi un certain nombre de grands travaux, des mesures pour l'environnement et des mesures en faveur des autoroutes de l'information.' (In the White Paper, you also call for a certain number of large-scale projects, measures for the environment and measures in favour of the information highway).

intentions of such statements, they indicate Delors' perception of the legal-rational-type basis for the White Paper, its constraints and opportunities.

By 1993, the sources of Delors' legitimacy were primarily his individual record as Commission President, his personal input of ideas into the White Paper ('charismatic' type forms of legitimation); the strength of the Commission's reputation as a technically competent EU institution,

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*Jacques Delors*: 'L'emploi relève essentiellement des compétences nationales. Le Livre blanc est un cadre général pour la réflexion et la négociation. Les pays membres ont été surpris, car ils se sont aperçus que je ne demandais pas de pouvoirs supplémentaires, mais que je fournissais un cadre pour la réflexion tant au niveau national qu'au niveau européen.' (Employment is essentially a matter for national competencies. The White Paper provides a general framework for reflection and negotiation. The member states were surprised, because they realised that I was not asking for extra powers, but that I was providing a framework for reflection at the national as much as at the European level.)

*DW*: 'C'est une des raisons pour lesquelles le Livre blanc a été bien reçu?' (And that's one of the reasons why the White Paper was well received?)

*JD*: 'C'est une des raisons, l'autre est que l'analyse a été jugée correcte par les pays membres. Même le président Clinton l'a vantée à plusieurs reprises!' (It was one of the reasons; the other is that the analysis was deemed accurate by the member states. Even President Clinton praised it on several occasions!)

Later in the same set of exchanges on the White Paper, Delors sums up the obstacles faced by the Commission in its proposals, and how in this case he responded (emphasis mine):

*JD*: Vous vous rendez bien compte qu'à travers le Livre blanc se livre une autre bataille, qui n'a jamais cessé, entre ceux qui sont partisans d'une organisation politique de l'Europe et ceux qui ne voient dans nos affaires que la création d'un grand marché ouvert au reste du monde. Cette bataille-là est sous-jacente à toutes les péripéties de la construction européenne.' (You realise that through the White Paper there is another battle being fought, a battle which has never ceased between those who favour a political form of organisation for Europe, and those who only see Europe as the creation of a large market open to the rest of the world. That battle underlies all the ups and downs of European integration).

*DW*: Mille fois d'accord, mais pourquoi ne pas le dire plus nettement? (I couldn't agree more, but why don't you say so more clearly?)

*JD*: 'Parce que, en le disant plus nettement, j'aurais créé un conflit qui aurait empêché d'avancer sur les infrastructures de transport et sur les technologies de l'information. **Le mérite du Livre blanc est d'avoir été accepté par douze pays qui ne sont pas d'accord entre eux sur les finalités de l'Europe.** Alors, pourquoi faire perdre du temps à l'Europe, qui est en retard du point de vue de la compétitivité, en concentrant le débat sur les finalités de l'Europe à propos de cela? Quelle erreur aurais-je faite?' (Because if I had said so more clearly, I would have created a conflict which would have prevented progress on the transport infrastructures and information technology. The strength of the White Paper is that it was accepted by twelve countries who do not agree on the goals of European integration. So why would I have let Europe lose more time, when it is already behind in terms of competitiveness, by focusing attention on the goals of Europe in this respect? What a huge mistake I would have made!).

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and Delors' discourse of limiting the scope and volume of EU-level measures (rational-legal type). These sources were not uncontested, however, and Delors accounted for this fact in his presentation of the initiative. 'Traditional'-type legitimation was more problematic and complex than in 1985 and is central to an assessment of Delors' leadership legitimacy more generally, as we see below.

### **Conclusions**

Our comparison of the two White Papers suggests that our use of the Weberian ideal-types of leadership legitimation is one way to organise the empirical data arising from Delors' Commission presidency, and shed light on it. We have been able to account for the individual, Delors, the post of Commission president, the Commission as an institution, and the wider EU political system. We have seen the effects of changes in these factors and in their interactions. Most significantly, we hope to have shown, without overstating the individual in politics or theorising his/her significance out of all proportion, how an individual can respond to changing circumstances in such a way as to exploit these fully, and the particular conditions under which such an interaction and influence takes place in the EU. Even if Delors quickly turns out to have been a 'has been' (which is unlikely), we hope that this approach has broader applications: to other sources of EU leadership, for example.

Delors' Commission presidency allowed for a leadership by ideas; for the putting into place of visionary strategies; for orienting others to take the political decisions required to implement ideas and strategies; to implement conviction politics and the authenticity of vision; to mobilise, nudge, suggest, marshal, guide the member states. This was a role which fitted Delors' experience, character, and thinking very well, as

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demonstrated by his political career before 1985. In these respects, our study would suggest that 'charismatic'-type sources of legitimacy - those associated with the individual leader, his/her qualities and characteristics, and the acceptability of these to his/her 'followers' - were key to the success of Delors' Commission leadership; that he exploited these potentialities to the full. Moreover, the history of the EU has in part been the history of 'charismatic' individuals (the 'founding fathers'; national leaders such as de Gaulle and Thatcher, Mitterrand; supranational leaders such as Monnet, Hallstein and Delors).

There were inherent obstacles, however, for a charismatic Commission President: Delors' style of Commission presidency exposed the ambiguities of the 'legal-rational', formal-type sources of the Commission's legitimacy; and particularly those of the Commission President. Delors tackled his legal-rational legitimacy base (primarily the Commission's competence; its independence and its enacting of the general interest) by drawing on what little did exist, and expanding it where possible (fulfilling the Commission's Treaty-bound duties and obligations; hurrying institutional reform in the form of the SEA). Partly as a result of the experience of Delors, having revealed the potential of the Commission, the Maastricht treaty, moreover, provided for greater collegiality, expertise and independence i.e. a for strengthening of the Commission's qualities as prescribed by the Treaty of Rome. Maastricht, in other words, tried to ensure that a better team was put in place. This step leaves Commission able to fulfil its mission and task and gives it the means to do so; and it confronts national leaders with their responsibilities: to choose and compile an effective Commission.

However, while Delors' presidency revealed the advantages of the status of appointed (rather than elected) leadership - the potential gains in efficiency through distance from electoral constraints; the extent to which

the screen between the Commission and national opinions could be exploited (for example by Delors in his discourse) to expose and remind the member states of their formal rights, obligations and duties - it also revealed the limitations of such a status, as illustrated by the extent to which the Commission, and above all Delors, served as scapegoat in the early 1990s for the EU's problems, for public opinions and national political elites alike. In helping restore the Commission to the grandeur of its task, Delors' and the Commission's right to fulfil that task became seen as increasingly dubious. The Commission's formal sources of authority, in other words, when exploited fully, raise questions about the appropriateness of that authority. In a similar manner, the Commission's scope for 'charismatic'-type authority (its requiring of vision and ideas; the relatively undefined role of the Commission president) carries its own inherent ambiguities: Delors drew on his individual qualities and abilities in order to transform the Commission presidency, but in so doing exposed that presidency to close scrutiny and questioning.

Our explanation for the contradictions which we have highlighted lies in the problematic nature of the Commission's (and EU's more generally) 'traditional'-type sources of legitimacy. If the EU has a crisis of legitimacy, then this is it: it is of the 'traditional' kind. The EU at the outset was a venture arising from the very specific and pressing circumstances of the post-war years in Europe, with aims which extended beyond purely rational goals of economic national or social interest. It was intended to possess characteristics of a quasi-moral, spiritual dimension. Yet when compared with national polities, the EU has not developed sources of 'traditional'-type legitimacy associated with the nation state: the shared experiences of history, political tradition, language, habit, customs, ritual, and so on; the 'unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform' which, while

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exaggerating the nature of national unity and allegiance, nevertheless provides a striking image of what most EU nation states have, and the EU does not.

This problematic dimension to the EU is manifested in many ways: by the lack of a European-wide sense of citizenry or, even of belonging; of a European-wide media, or even intellectual community; by the lack of transnational metaphors, myths or clichés for Europe; by the lack of a 'European' audience to listen to Delors' 'European' message. Its more obvious manifestation is the divergence between member states concerning both the substance of 'Europe' - the existence and definition of the 'general interest' - and the procedure of 'Europe' - how the Commission president should be appointed; where power should lie; what should be done openly, what in secret and so on; where treaties are appropriate and where they are not; when they should be revised, and what terms they should include to describe their aims and processes (federalism? a federal vocation? subsidiarity?)

Leadership in the EU context, we suggest, therefore, in the sense of providing a voice for Europe, and a European voice (articulating the 'general interest') as did Delors, cannot therefore be legitimised, or not easily so, in terms of a European tradition, or expectations, or common references, prevailing common values and norms. In such a context, the 'charismatic' and 'legal-rational' types of legitimacy which we have discussed are, inevitably, controversial, since they are expressions of the compromises reached over the nature of Europe's 'traditional' legitimacy, rather than of a lasting consensus in this respect. In order to further measure and conceptualise Delors' Commission Presidency in these terms, we would need to compare it with that of his predecessors and successors, or with other forms of leadership of the EU. From what we have said, however, it would appear that Delors' Commission presidency

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provides considerable material for the study of questions of legitimacy and authority in the EU, and that the Weberian ideal-types of legitimated authority can be used as tools in this study.