

Lecture 2: European integration and its theories

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1. Introduction

- puzzle of European integration, i.e. the transfer and pooling of sovereignty;
- the need of theories: the analysis and result is influenced by the theory adopted;
- theories of European integration: neo-functionalism and (liberal) intergovernmentalism.

Structure of the lecture:

- the importance of theory;
- theories of European integration;
- evaluation and criticism of the theories of European integration;

2. The importance of theory:

- theories are necessary in that they provide concepts to produce ordered and, thus, meaningful observations;
- no statements about social phenomena are possible in a theoretical vacuum;
- theories are important in that they tell us which actors to look at and which phenomena to observe;
- theories influence the questions asked, the way research is carried out and, at least to some extent, has an impact on the research results;

3. Theories of European integration

a) Neo-functionalism:

- start of integration: primacy of welfare issues better dealt with at supranational level;
- "Integration":
'Political integration is the process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. The end result of a process of political integration is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones' (Haas: 1958, p.16).

Neo-functionalism

- "Spill-over":

In its most general formulation, “spill-over” refers to a situation in which a given action, related to a specific goal, creates a situation in which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition and a need for more action, and so forth (Lindberg: 1963, p.10).

- functional spill-over;

Neo-functionalism:

- political spill-over;
- cultivated spill-over;
- automaticity of integration process;

Empirical application of neo-functionalism:

- move from ECSC to EEC and Euratom in 1957 as functional spill-over;
- acceleration of timetable to set up common market in early 1960s due to pressure from industrialists, i.e. political spill-over;
- halt of European integration in 1965: de Gaulle's empty chair crisis;

Problems of neo-functionalism:

- spill-over implies an inevitable, teleological process of further integration along an objective economic rationality;
- European integration explained through emphasis on internal dynamics, while wider structure is neglected;

b) Intergovernmentalism:

- core concepts derived from (neo-) realism: (1) states as only important actors; (2) anarchic international system; and (3) distribution of capabilities as main explanatory variable;
- Hoffmann: logic of diversity in 'high politics' (e.g. defence policy, foreign policy) is contrasted with logic of integration in 'low politics' (e.g. welfare issues);
- convergence of national preferences as precondition for European integration.

Intergovernmentalism:

- application to start of European integration: bipolar structure made security concerns between Western European countries obsolete;
- Problems: (1) neglect of domestic politics; and (2) why was there a transfer and pooling of sovereignty since mid-1980s?

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c) Liberal Intergovernmentalism: Moravcsik.

- liberal theory of national preference formation;
- intergovernmentalist analysis of interstate relations;
- extended version of regime theory;

Liberal intergovernmentalism – application:

Internal Market programme in 1985:

- new domestic convergence around neo-liberal economics: due to a change in government composition (Cameron);
- changing international structure, where USA and Japan had been more successful at overcoming the economic recession of the 1970s;

Liberal intergovernmentalism – problems:

- transnational actors such as TNCs, having played an important role, cannot be taken into account;
- Commission/Delors were crucial in the coming about of the Internal Market programme;
- wrong emphasis on inter-state negotiations, overlooking role of agenda setting and ratification processes;

Integration theories – which way forward?

Combination of neo-functionalism and state-centric approaches cannot offer a way out.

Solution:

- both approaches are valid as long as they are seen with their limitations;
- (liberal) intergovernmentalism: good for analysis of negotiations;
- Neo-functionalism: good for analysis of (transnational) interest groups and supranational institutions;