

A faint, light gray map of Europe serves as the background for the slide. The map shows the outlines of the continents and major islands, with a slightly textured or watercolor-like appearance.

# WHAT DO ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINARY LENSES BRING TO THE STUDY OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?

Leonardo Carella – EU in Crisis – Week 1

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- Mapping the theoretical frameworks under consideration
- International Relations and the study of EU integration
  - Neofunctionalism and Liberal Intergovernmentalism
  - New Regionalism
- Comparative Politics and the study of integration
  - EU as a political system
  - Comparative federalism
  - EU as Empire/ neo-medioevalist Europe
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# SITUATING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

- What is the EU an instance of?
  - An international organisation (IO)
  - A polity or political system
- What type of IO is it?
  - A *sui generis* type of IO
  - An IO like all others
  - A specific subtype of IO (a regional organisation)
- What type of polity-in-the-making is it?
  - A *sui generis* polity
  - A polity like all others
  - A specific subtype of polity (a federation or an Empire)

# SITUATING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

An IO/polity largely  
*sui generis*

an IO/polity like  
any other

A specific subtype  
of IO/polity

The EU as an  
*international  
organisation*

International relations

neofunctionalism  
(with exceptions)

intergovernmentalism

new regionalism

The EU as  
a *polity* or  
*political  
system*

Comparative politics

'new governance'

Hix, 'off-the-shelf' CP  
frameworks

Comparative  
federalism  
EU as Empire

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Traditionally 'home discipline' for EU studies (Haas, Lindberg, Hoffman).
- Main branches of the 'rationalist' tradition (somewhat obsolete debate):
  - *Neofunctionalism* -> conceptualises integration as 'emergent supranationalism', whereby nation states respond to similar functional pressures by delegating competences to supranational institutions, which in turn gain power and act as increasingly autonomous actors in the following steps of integration.
  - *Liberal intergovernmentalism* -> conceptualises integration as 'interstate bargaining', whereby national governments form their preferences domestically and then act upon them at EU level. As governments remain the gatekeepers of integration, LI tends to be more sceptical about the extent of upwards delegation.

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Neofunctionalists acknowledge that the EU is morphing into something *more substantial than existing IOs*; its object of study – integration – is the process that leads to it:
  - 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.’ (Haas, 1958).
- Liberal Intergovernmentalism, conversely, denies the EU this ‘special’ status:
  - ‘Lessons from the EC experience are directly applicable to problems facing the WTO, NAFTA and other international organizations’ (Moravcsik, 1997)

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- What IR brings to the study of EU integration:
  - Intuition that politics *among* states is distinct from politics *within* states.
    - transnational as well as international relations
  - Focus on elite actors: in LI, key role assigned to the governments of member states; in NF, power is more policentric but still wielded mainly by elite actors (transnational pressure groups, the Commission, the ECB)
  - The extent of integration is the main element of tension in EU politics: actors' preferences lie on a nation-state/supranational entity continuum.
  - EU integration is located in a wider context of global dynamics: the international arena – other IOs (NATO), states (the US) and non-state actors (migrants) – provides inputs affecting integrative pressures on member states, and responds to EU and member states' policies.

# NEW REGIONALISM

- It conceptualises the EU as an analogue/comparator of regional organisations such as MERCOSUR, ASEAN, NAFTA, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).
  - 'It is vital that EU scholars cease to consider themselves students of the only 'real' form of regional integration. The biggest advantage here is the liberation of EU studies from its infamous N=1 problem. [...] regionalism/ization and the EU can no longer be considered to mean the same thing.' (Warleigh-Jack and Rosamond, 2010)
- Twofold perspective on integration:
  - exogenous perspective: regionalisation as a *response* to globalisation, and constantly shaped by global pressures.
  - endogenous perspective: regional integration is shaped from state, non-state and sub-state actors within the region.



# NEW REGIONALISM

- What NR brings to the study of the EU:
  - Recognises the role of the EU as a 'manager' of globalisation, in contrast with the (sometimes) narrow focus on internal drivers of NF.
  - Introduces a comparative dimension, while retaining the IR conceptualisation of the EU as an IO:
    - 'open regionalism' (Asia) vs 'closed regionalism' (EU).
    - different conceptions of market integration, institutional divergence.
  - Considers regional integrative processes across the world as interlinked through processes of e.g. diffusion, competition and emulation.
  - The field is heavily influenced by critical approaches (WST), which enrich a field where these used to be somewhat marginal.

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

- Parallel to the acceleration of the pace of integration at the turn of the 1990s, Hix stimulated a debate among EU scholars as to whether the 'new EU' has acquired the characteristics of a polity, and therefore whether it is best studied with the toolkit of CP:
  - “Although the political system of the EC may only be ‘part formed’ and largely *sui generis*, politics in the EC is not inherently different from the practice of government in any democratic system” (Hix, 1994)
  - Call for “Applying tools and concepts developed for the study of a general phenomenon to the same phenomenon in the EU” (Hix, 1998)

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Hix's (1994, 1999) critique:

- 1. The 'new EU' performs executive, legislative and judicial functions in the context of a formally codified institutional architecture – thus it has the features of a political system
- The policy process in areas where competences are exclusive to the EU or shared between MS and the EU is more similar to political processes that normally takes place within states than to international/interstate bargaining.

FIGURE 1  
A TYPOLOGY OF MULTI-LEVEL POLITICAL SYSTEMS

		<i>Vertical Institutions</i>	
		Independent	Interlocking
<i>Horizontal Institutions</i>	Parliamentary	1 Australia Austria Belgium Canada	2  Germany
	Presidential	3  USA	4  (no cases)
	Collegial Executive	5  Switzerland	6  European Union

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

- 2. The EU is not 'politics free' anymore:
  - through budget expansion, single market rules, social and monetary policy, allocative implications of EU policy are substantial, and thus conflicts over economic regulation akin to a Left-Right axis emerge alongside the classical pro/anti-integration axis.
  - EU legislation on other policy areas (environment, equal opportunities) has an increasing impact on the allocation of values and norms in Europe.
- 3. Correspondingly, the EU is not an 'elite' affair anymore: it is (being) politicised at mass level.

DIMENSIONS AND ALIGNMENTS IN EUROPEAN UNION POLITICS

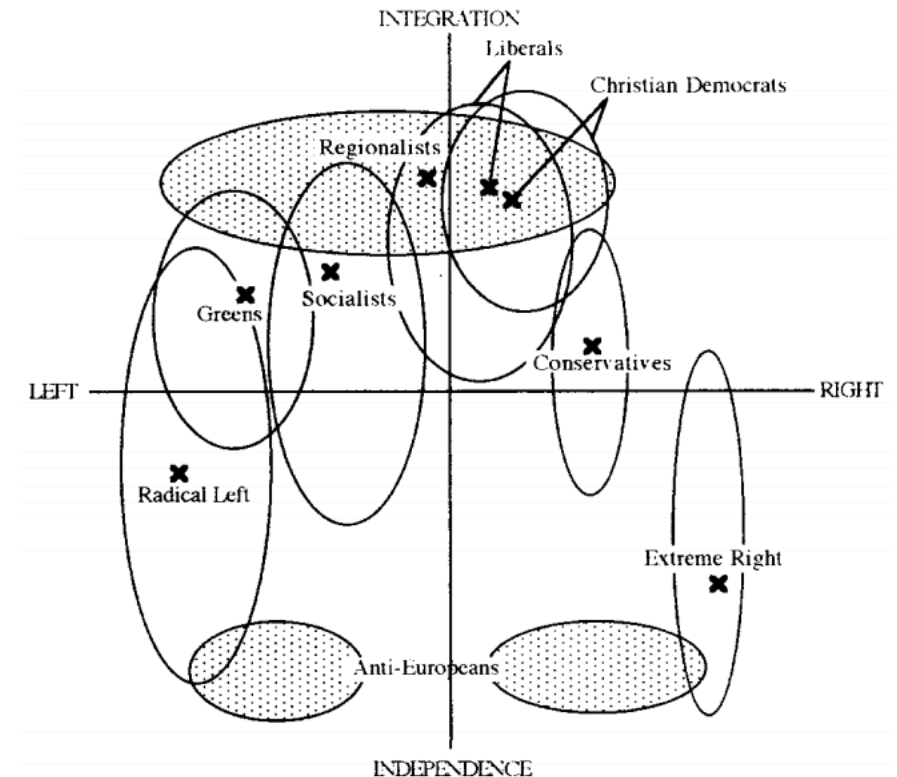


Figure 4. The party families in the European Union political space.

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

If the EU is a political system how are we to study its politics?

- 1. As 'sui generis' case: the unique set of multi-level, non-hierarchical and regulatory institutions, and the hybrid coalitions of state and non-state actors produce a unique style of policy-making and thus warrant a new language to study its policy process:
- A 'post-modern form of state' (Caporaso, 1996)
- A 'regulatory state' (Majone, 1994)
- 'Network governance' (Kohler-Koch, 1999)
- Problem with 'network governance': Mostly descriptive theoretical tools, not a predictive theory of decision-making.

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

- If the EU is a political system how are we to study its politics?
- 2. As a case study in comparative perspective: “We have no general theory of American or German government so why should there be a general theory of the EU?” -> ‘off-the-shelf’ mid-range theories of CP
  - Legislative politics: Council and EP as a bicameral legislature (Tsebelis and Garrett, 2000)
  - Executive politics: principal-agent models of Commission-Member States relationships; comparative central banking (Pollard, 2003)
  - Judicial politics: ECJ compliance and enforcement mechanisms
  - Democracy: EU as a ‘consociational democracy’ (Hix, 1994)

# COMPARATIVE POLITICS

- What comparative politics brings to the study of EU integration:
  - Integration not only as the *dependent* variable, but also as the *independent* variable: once some degree of integration is achieved, what kind of policy output and politics does it produce?
  - The extent of integration is not the only dimension of conflict: the politics of the EU are about redistribution and values as well.
  - Functionalist pressures to integrate and interstate bargaining may explain well 'history-making' decisions, but much of the day-by-day policy-making at EU level is produced by EU-specific policy networks operating through EU-specific rules and institutions.
  - Better suited to integrate mass-level actors? EU politicization.



# COMPARATIVE FEDERALISM

If the EU is a political system how are we to study its politics?

- 3.1 As a the politics of a federation
- In this perspective, EU is characterised by:
  - Accommodation of constituents units in decision-making, consent necessary for constitutional change
  - Combination of self-rule and shared rule
  - Constitutionally recognised and protected unity *and* diversity
  - Primacy of Supreme Court ruling in the regulation of the allocation of competences
  - Multi-level and/or multi-centred governance structures





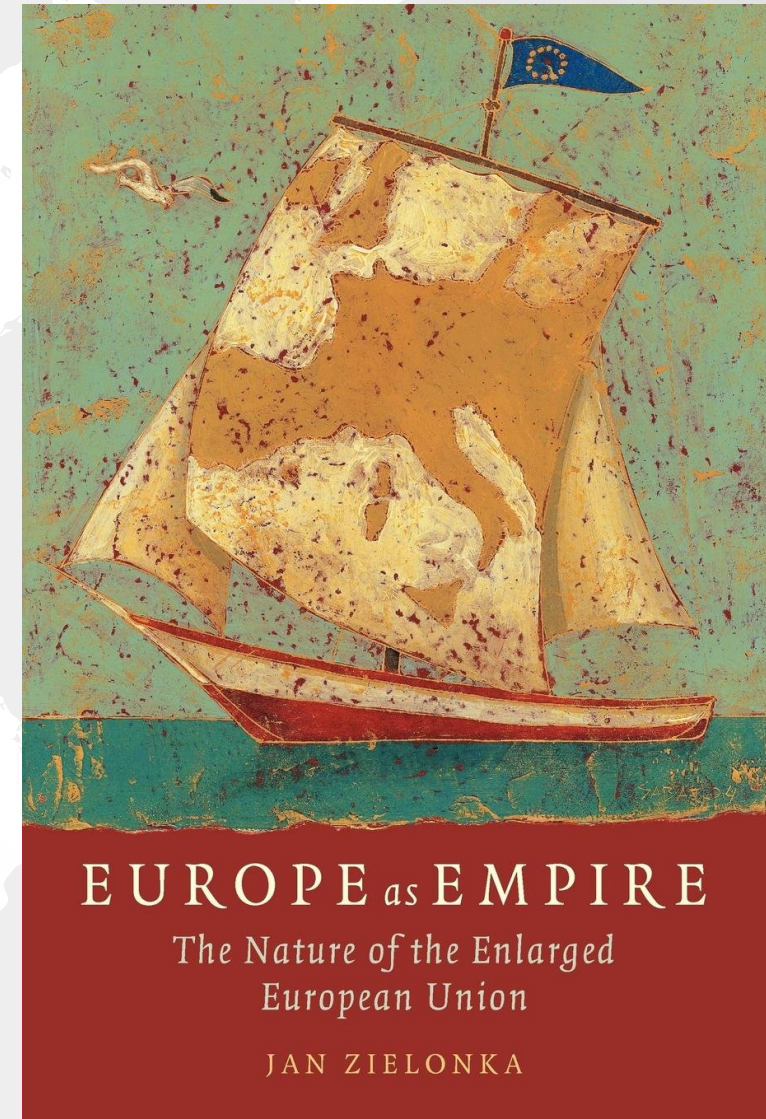
# COMPARATIVE FEDERALISM

What comparative federalism brings to the study of integration:

- Methodological implication: fruitful comparison with federal states (US, Germany, Canada, Australia)
- Federalist theory can explain differences in federal control of state discretion as the result of differences in the basic institutional structures of the federal polities or of their units.
- Federalist theory can prospect the kind of issues that an institution like the EU is likely to face in its process of institution-building.
- Recognition that the oscillation between the poles of unity and autonomy is the norm of the process of integration -> explaining *dis*-integration?

# EU AS EMPIRE

- If the EU is a political system how are we to study its politics?
- 3.2 As an Empire
- “...a hierarchically organised political system with a hub-like structure – a rimless wheel – within which a core elite and a state dominate peripheral elites and societies by serving as intermediaries for their significant interactions and by channelling resource flows from the periphery to the core and back to the periphery” (Motyl, 2001)
- ‘Neo-medioevalism’ (Zielonka, 2006)



# EU AS EMPIRE

In this perspective, the EU is characterised by

- Structural asymmetries of power between the 'core' (e.g. North-West) and the periphery (e.g. South-East)
- Dissociation between functional competencies and territorial constituencies
- A patchwork of diversified types of citizenship with distinct rights and duties
- Boundaries (both territorial and functional) in flux -> EU as an 'open ended project'
- Multiple and overlapping identities, varying degrees of legitimacy of institutions between core and periphery.

# EU AS EMPIRE

What the 'EU as Empire' perspective brings to the study of integration:

- The analytical tools to study the power and domination dynamics that come with the process of integration.
- The recognition that 'variable geometries' are not temporary or exceptional features of the polity, but may be inherent in the nature of the political system.
- Historical comparisons for the study of *dis*-integration?

# CONCLUSION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

- The IR/CP debate is rather fruitless, more useful:
  - to recognise complementarities between the two approaches: as the EU blurs the boundaries between domestic and international spheres, disciplinary boundaries must be crossed to study it.
  - to identify in which cases each approach has more explanatory power (Risse-Kappen), depending on level of integration of policy area and member states' domestic structure.
  - to recognise that the study of EU integration and of the politics of the EU are intertwined.
- Increased eclecticism *within* both camps as well:
  - Integration of ideational factors in 'rationalist' frameworks: constructivism and post-functionalism in IR and HI in CP.