



Tentative Comments on the papers by Prof. Usui and Prof. Hirashima

Stephen Day, Faculty of Economics, Oita University

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Comparative Regionalism: EU and East Asia

- Objective: to seek a thorough understanding /provide an explanation of regionalism. Ask what type of theoretical framework and/or perspective from EU Studies might be able to contribute to East Asian Studies?



Comparative Regionalism: EU and East Asia

- EU and ASEAN represent real-life but different contexts (lots of “how” and “why” questions) so how best to proceed with a comparative investigation?
 - Understanding similarities – processes?
 - Understanding differences – context?
 - Understanding actor behaviour – institutional approach?
 - Accounting for the differences – looking for *signs of institutionalization*?



We know where we are but how did we get here?

- Both papers are concerned with ‘process’ and highlight the significance of *endogenous* and *exogenous* factors
- Both papers ask whether outcomes are a result of conscious design or unintended consequences? Both highlight the significance of actors (*purposive action*) while recognising that they are operating in a *context framed by institutional rules*.



We know where we are but how did we get here?

- Prof. Hirashima focuses on the ‘formation process of the EEC’ i.e. developments leading up to the establishment of the Rome Treaties (a constitutive framework). In the case of East Asia he highlights that regionalism compared to regionalization remains underdeveloped
- Prof. Usui is interested in signs of *acquis development* in environmental policy (low politics) and how such developments have come about. He remains concerned with day-to-day realities of policy-making rather than a ‘snap-shot’ of grand events.



We know where we are but how did we get here?

- Neither paper blindly follows one theoretical viewpoint. Liberal Intergovernmentalism is analyzed but its emphasis on economic interests is considered too narrow for Prof. Hirashima. He goes onto to highlight the significance of mutual learning (sociological institutionalism). Prof. Usui is drawn to historical and sociological institutionalism



We know where we are but how did we get here?

- Both papers recognize the issue of context. As Prof. Usui remarks ‘old regionalism in the context of the Cold War and new regionalism in the context of globalization’.
- Prof. Hirashima highlights, for example, the role of the United States facilitating (Europe) and resisting (East Asia) regional integration processes.



Where are we heading?

- Prof. Usui mentions three possible futures for this region: *East Asian Community*; *East Asian Cooperation*; *East Asian Variable Geometry*
- Prof. Hirashima implies that future development is difficult to predict because outcomes tend to emerge from ‘*operational practice*’ hence can’t really be pre-determined.
- Hence the possibilities of unintended consequences is apparent in both cases.



Methodological approach process tracing

- 1. Seek out the key informants. Interview them at different points in time (issues relating to consistency; changes)
- 2. Qualitative content analysis of major media and specialist publications
- 3. Consult official publications/records. If possible seek out material that is not in the public domain
- 4. Seek to triangulate all of your material
- Taken from J Checkel 'Norms, institutions, and national identity in contemporary Europe', *International Studies Quarterly*, 43, 1999.



Theoretical/conceptual approach

- **Three Institutionalisms**

- It is, of course, difficult to ascertain whether a shift in preferences is driven by
 - a rational response to circumstances
 - Impact of path dependence and ‘lock-in’
 - as a result of norm diffusion and group learning
- In recent years there have been a number of attempts to develop a some form of theoretical synthesis.
- ***Rational Choice Institutionalism*** – actors behaviour takes place within institutional constraints. RCI ‘argued that purely intergovernmental models of EU decision-making underestimated the causal importance of formal EU rules in shaping policy outcomes...such as unanimous decision-making’ Mark Pollack, p.20
- Mark A. Pollack ‘Theorizing EU Policy-Making’, in Helen Wallace, William Wallace & Mark A. Pollack, *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford: OUP, fifth edition, 2005, p.20



Three Institutionalisms

- **Historical Institutionalism**, according to Bache and George (p.26) HI takes ‘a broader definition of institutions to incorporate also informal constraints on behaviour such as values and behavioural norms.’ HI also raises issues such as path dependency and ‘lock-in’.
- **Sociological Institutionalism** – operating within a context that ‘constitutes’ an actors preferences by influencing norms and values (‘frames of meaning’)
 - ‘In this view, actors confronting a given situation do not consult a fixed set of preferences and calculate their actions in order to maximize their expected utility, but look to socially constructed roles and institutional rules and ask what sort of behaviour is appropriate in that situation.’ Mark A. Pollack (p. 23)
- Ian Bache and Stephen George, *Politics in the European Union*, Second Edition, Oxford: OUP, 2006
- Mark A. Pollack ‘Theorizing EU Policy-Making’, in Helen Wallace, William Wallace & Mark A. Pollack, *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford: OUP, fifth edition, 2005, p.20



The pursuit of institutionalization

- We need an understanding of the genetic characteristics of an organization/and or policy and the way those characteristics ‘set’ subsequent trajectory.
- We need to think about/explain how/why institutions evolve in the wake of their genesis moment. This is often deemed to be a pursuit of institutionalization. For Samuel Huntingdon institutionalization is ‘the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability’. He stressed the need to look at an organizations: *Adaptability, complexity, autonomy, intra-organizational coherence/consensus*
- Samuel Huntingdon, Political Order in Changing Societies, Yale University Press 1968.



Institutionalization and the need for a role

- Another way of thinking about organizational development is to ask about its role and significance. Is an organization (or policy) seen as ‘a means to an end’ or ‘an end in itself’.
- While much attention is given to the possibilities of ‘Path dependence’ and ‘lock-in’ in the wider literature we should not forget the possibilities for ‘***path-shaping***’/’***crafting***’. This may arise as a consequence of (among others): governmental change, the pursuit of institutionalization; impact of conjunctural factors etc.



Driving force for change?

- National leaders are meant to be able to turn a vision into a reality. However much depends on their room for manoeuvre/leeway. If commitments are ambiguous (***lowest common denominator***) and lack enforcement mechanisms then it is easy to declare support.
- However once you sign up and are part of an organization a new set of processes may be unleashed (***unforeseen circumstances***)
- Parallels here with the way Japan signed up to the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation after China and India had already done so



Dealing with the East Asian Spaghetti bowl

- Can the governments of ASEAN (+3) actually deliver?
- What role is going to be played by governments, business and grass roots organizations?
- Are we likely to see top-down OR bottom-up Community building?
- What impact will the establishment of various Working Groups and the two embryonic regional environmental agencies have? (opportunities for policy learning?)
- What impact will the proposed 2007 ASEAN Charter and the pursuit of an ASEAN Free Trade Area have? How feasible is the goal of the 2020 ASEAN Community?



Dealing with the East Asian Spaghetti bowl

- ASEAN +3 (+3)?; Japan and China – thoughts about East Asian Community. Issues of regional leadership
- Bilateral FTAs – adding to the complexity?
- Bali Concord II – stepping up co-ordination in a number of security and political related areas including the environment
- Signs of institutionalization in the economic sphere – ASEAN-China FTArea; ASEA-Korea FTArea; the pursuit of an Asian Currency Union (ACU)



Dealing with the East Asian Spaghetti bowl

- The lack of institutionalization in the political sphere **may** make it harder to move beyond ‘soft commitments’/‘lowest common denominator’
- Is the focus on policy outputs leading to institution building (in contrast to the approach of the EU that pursued a pathway of institution building to bring about policy outputs) an effective strategy?
Interesting the EU’s approach has been criticized for ‘navel-gazing’ and the latest buzz word in ‘a EU of results’.



Concluding remarks

- The Indonesian Minister of Trade (June 2006) at the World Economic Forum on East Asia claimed that:
 - ‘there will be a softer institutional structure in East Asia compared to the EU with more flexible rules. The movers will be MNC/private business (rather than bureaucrats and national politicians). The governments role will be that of a facilitator (rather than as a leader as in Europe).’
- An MP3 of the meeting can be found at:
- http://gaia.worldtelevision.com/wef/worldeconomicforum_eastasia2006/Default.aspx?sn=00003



Concluding remarks

- H.E Ong Keng Yong, Secretary-General of ASEAN, April 2006
 - ‘The challenge to our leadership is to inspire extraordinary aspirations to break out from the confines of our physical borders, resource limitations, and mind-sets...In this competitive environment, we must learn the attributes of being adaptive, pragmatic, flexible and swift decision makers while keeping our feet on the ground.’
- ‘Leadership and Strategic Vision for the Development of East Asia’, speech given at the 2nd Asian Economic Forum, University of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 25 April, 2006. *Emphasis added.*



Where next?

- *If ASEAN/East Asian Regionalism is to move beyond low institutionalization then maybe it needs to strengthen its organisational structure thereby giving it the possibility to create a brand identity and illustrate a capacity to bring a *value-added*.*
- This in turn, could be used as a prerequisite for building trust which opens more lee-way to pursue a higher degree of institutionalisation and organisational development.
- There is also an argument that the pursuit of institutionalization is not appropriate in an East Asian context and will only lead to a dead-end!