

How Did it Begin and What Are the Lessons for Asia? European Integration in a Historical Perspective

Presentation Summary

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Despite the common supposition that the unprecedented character of the EU essentially allows for no serious comparison between the European and any other regionalism, the paper reexamines the European integration in its early stages to draw significant implications for studying the contemporary regionalism in East Asia.

In the concrete the paper focuses on the historical processes that led to the establishment of the customs union, namely European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 by the Rome Treaty. It is to be reminded that only thereafter did the Commission and the Court take the initiative successively to shape the supranational governance and the legal order within the European community. Drawing on the theoretical propositions of the “Liberal Intergovernmentalism” elaborated by Andrew Moravcsik, the paper first critically reassess the intergovernmental negotiations in terms of the domestic preference formation, intergovernmental bargaining, and the institutional arrangements necessary to secure the credible commitments by the signatory governments.

Second, beyond the specific process towards the EEC, the paper depicts the preceding trade liberalization concepts and schemes such as Benelux customs union, European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) as well as international organizations including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). It is emphasized that the creation of the EEC is to be understood as the end result of a continuous search for the viable solution of the trade liberalization by the European governments. Before the conclusion of the Rome Treaty a wide range of trade integration concepts had been proposed in competition with each other on a number of mutually overlapping intergovernmental forums.

Thirdly, in conclusion, the contemporary formalized institutional integration in East Asia is analyzed in light of the above European experiences. Especially in the recent years the East Asian region has been vigorously enhancing the intergovernmental institution building such as East Asia Summit as well as multi- and bilateral FTA. Paying due attention to the de facto economic regionalization and the various kinds of

network building by non-state actors, the regionalisms in Europe and East Asia will be compared in a nuanced way. Thus the paper aims to contribute to discussions on the future prospects of the East Asian regionalism.