

Authority Under Construction: The European Union in Comparative Political Perspective

KATHLEEN R. MCNAMARA
Georgetown University

Abstract

Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism irrevocably upgraded the rigour of European Union scholarship by categorizing the EU as an international organization, and analyzing it in terms of general theories of international relations. The deepening of European governance has meant, however, that the EU today is better understood as a polity in formation, generalizable through the lens of comparative politics instead of international relations. Alongside the burgeoning literature on the EU's politicization, I advocate for comparisons to historical episodes of state-building and nationalism, with particular attention to the role of culture and identity in shoring up, or contesting, political authority. Doing so allows us to better delineate the challenges presented by European citizens' lack of impassioned attachment to the EU, while also informing a broader understanding of the populist backlashes occurring in the context of more global trends of transnational authority construction.

Keywords: European integration; Liberal Intergovernmentalism; political contestation; statebuilding; political development

Introduction

For much of the past two decades, the way we see the European Union has been profoundly shaped by Andrew Moravcsik's landmark *Journal of Common Market Studies* article 'Preferences and Power in the European Union', and his seminal book, *The Choice for Europe* (Moravcsik, 1998). Elegantly laying out a model of the way domestic interests and national bargaining power have produced the particular path of European integration, his liberal intergovernmentalist approach firmly rooted the study of the EU in the broader international relations paradigm by framing the EU as an international organization. While many earlier works largely had been content to describe the fits and starts of European integration as a somewhat *sui generis* set of activities, Moravcsik's insistence on understanding the EU in a broader context of theories of international co-operation under anarchy irrevocably upgraded the rigour of scholarship for future generations.

Since Moravcsik's landmark scholarship, the EU's deepening integration and institutionalization means that EU governance now penetrates into the daily lives of its citizens and encroaches into the core competencies of its member states (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2014; McNamara, 2015a). In turn, this expanding EU governance has generated increasing euroscepticism, deep societal divisions, and a broader crisis of legitimacy for the EU (De Vries, 2018). Today, the EU is politicized, with overtly partisan debates over issues that had previously been strategically masked, and subject to relatively little public discord (Burley and Mattli, 1993; de Wilde *et al.*, 2016; Kriesi, 2016). These developments mean that the EU may be more appropriately studied not

through the lens of traditional models of international relations, but rather from that of comparative politics. Fortunately, the field of EU studies has effectively risen to the challenge of comparative generalizability that Moravcsik posed, by analyzing this new politicization through rigorous theories such as multilevel governance, comparative federalism, electoral politics, and other comparative politics based approaches (Hix, 2006; Jachtenfuchs, 2006; Hooghe and Marks, 2012).

In this essay, I will argue that the EU can be usefully understood by a comparative politics literature that remains less fully exploited by EU scholars, however: the long history of comparative political development and state-building. Comparing the EU to historical episodes of the centralization of political power can more fully illuminate the sources of, and processes at work in, the contestation over the EU today. In particular, such a comparison draws attention to the difficulties of constructing political authority around a new entity. I will highlight how shifting to the lens of comparative political development allows us to better understand the role of culture and identity in the EU project. Felt social solidarity, or a lack thereof, can be key in determining the stability of a governance regime, particularly under situations of stress (Campbell and Hall, 2017).

Both the evolution of the EU and its current crises can only be fully grasped if we ask what sort of shared sense of social solidarity legitimates the EU's political authority today. This is a question that remains unasked by a perspective that categorizes the EU as an international organization. But it is central to comparative politics in its study of nationalism and the role of imagined communities in shoring up new political entities (Anderson, 1993). Comparing the EU to the rise of the nation-state, rather than situating it as a series of intergovernmental bargains, allows us to see how the EU's imagined community has been constructed in ways that deliberately sidestep contestation, and therefore is poorly equipped to deal with the politicization that comes with deepening EU governance. Only by categorizing the EU as an emergent polity, and comparing it to historical episodes of state-building and nationalism, can we more fully and precisely appreciate the difficulties inherent in moving power to a transnational European political entity.

To make this argument, this article proceeds as follows. First, I outline how Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism created a longstanding disciplinary default to the categorization of the EU as an international organization. I note how some scholars chose instead to study the EU as a type of polity in formation, and highlight recent work on the new politicization of the EU that draws from comparative politics instead. Building on this work, I advocate for the inclusion of more explicit comparisons to historical episodes of state-building and nationalism in our study of the EU, with particular attention to the role of culture and identity in shoring up, or contesting, political authority. Doing so allows us to better delineate the challenges presented by European citizens' lack of impassioned attachment to the EU. I end by suggesting that today's EU is indicative of a more universal blurring of national boundaries as the definitive demarcation of political authority. The EU experience can therefore inform a broader understanding of the populist backlashes occurring in the context of the more global trend of transnational authority construction.

I. What Is the EU a Case Of?

Just like the scholar himself, Moravcsik's contributions have cast a big shadow over everyone working in EU studies. At the most fundamental level, one of Moravcsik's key

contributions to the development of EU studies was to bring it squarely into the broader study of International Relations, both methodologically and substantively. Moravcsik forced the field to ask a very basic question, one we insist all first year graduate students answer when they undertake a new research project, yet one that can easily escape us in practice: 'What is this a case of?' This question is far from trivial. European integration studies had been caught in a debate about whether the EU was an 'N of 1' or not, and therefore, how we should study it, with voices on all sides of the debate (Caporaso *et al.*, 1997).

As Rosamund has argued, as with any academic discipline, EU studies has been 'institutionally, socially and discursively constructed' (Rosamund, 2016, p. 19). This creates incentives to study some things and not others, while bracketing possible alternative approaches. Routines of scholarly practice and pedagogy normalize some questions and concepts, and set up the boundaries that determine 'which and what types of work count as admissible to the field' (Rosamund, 2016, p. 19). This construction of a field can often be seen as contributing to 'the gap between theoretical scholarship and political realities' (Manners and Whitman, 2016, p. 4). The power and reach of Moravcsik's work means that it has been undeniably central to such boundary setting in the discipline. In particular, his answer to the question 'what is the EU a case of', coding of the EU as an example of international co-operation among states, was formative for much of the discipline.

In his *JCMS* piece 'Preference and Power,' Moravcsik contrasted his approach with that of neofunctionalism and asserted that European integration 'can only be explained with reference to *general* theories of international relations' (emphasis in original) (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 474). Moravcsik accomplishes this goal by situating the EU within the rational institutionalist international political economy subfield of international relations, a robust social scientific field of study, one with rigorous causal theories and well developed empirical analyses. Moravcsik's two step model of liberal intergovernmentalism, first outlined in the *JCMS* article and more fully expanded on in *The Choice for Europe*, starts with a theory of domestic societal preferences, which is then joined to a model of intergovernmental bargaining among the EU nation-states. The material emphasis in preference formation derives from what Moravcsik notes are 'issue-specific social preferences about the management of interdependence' emphasizing commercial interests in market integration (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 69). In his writing, Moravcsik is cognizant that the EU is a very unusual intergovernmental regime, with characteristics that separate it from standard international organizations, as EU member-states have delegated and pooled sovereignty to an unprecedented extent, while the nature of the EU's supranational legal regime pushes it far beyond all other examples of international cooperation.

Nonetheless, Moravcsik's insights that gained the most impact concerned actors' economic and commercial interests in managing and profiting from integration of markets across borders, and the intergovernmental bargains that secured those interests. He proposed thinking of the EU as a 'stable constitutional equilibrium' where national governments and their citizens recognized the benefits of their EU commitments (Moravcsik, 2005). In this framing, Europe is seen as 'a multilevel distribution of powers that puts EU institutions in charge of the creation and regulation of a European economic and social space but leaves member states in charge of those core powers which, historically,

had constituted them as modern nation-states in the first place' (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2014). The result was, particularly among American scholars, to institutionally and discursively construct the EU as a case of a successful intergovernmental cooperation: in essence, an international organization, albeit it one with important institutionalization above the state.

If the EU is defined as an international organization, even with important caveats, the larger scholarly literature in international relations generally therefore assumes it to be occurring under conditions of anarchy. Much traditional IR scholarship has held tight to a strict divide of seeing anarchy *between* states, and hierarchy only *within* the domestic realm (McConaughy *et al.*, 2018). Anarchy in international relations theory can be defined as the lack of a central, overarching legitimate authority to govern relations among states. In contrast, national governments sit atop a hierarchy of relations among actors within their borders, and hold a legitimate monopoly on the use of force. The assumption of a stark divide between international and national politics also implies that institutions, laws, and shared social identities can help generate political order (or disorder) only *within* states in ways, not across them, given under anarchy and the constraints of the security dilemma. This sharp distinction continues to be taught in introductory classes of international relations, whether to first year university students or in IR doctoral seminars, despite decades of protestations about the inaccuracy and shortcomings of this division (Milner, 1991).

A fruitful lineage of scholars built on Moravcsik's work by zeroing in on these dynamics of cooperation under anarchy. Even those who disagreed with liberal intergovernmentalism's particular causal story anchored their own alternative causal stories within the intergovernmental frame. For example, my own early work that looked to the role of ideas in underpinning European exchange rate cooperation in the run up to the euro characterized it as 'international monetary cooperation' squarely within Moravcsik's IR paradigm (McNamara, 1998, p. 1). Parsons likewise took issue with Moravcsik's material economic emphasis by focusing on ideas as the causal force, but still adhered to a co-operation under anarchy story in his retelling of the logics of European integration (Parsons, 2003). Rosato's narrative of the path of European integration focused on the geopolitical balance of power, but his focus on security dynamics was also very much within the co-operation under anarchy template (Rosato, 2011). More recently, a new wave of 'new intergovernmentalism' work explicitly builds on Moravcsik's approach, emphasizing the role of national governments throughout the last decade of crises (Fabbrini, 2013; Bickerton *et al.*, 2015).

There remains a strong disciplinary incentive in international relations, particularly American-based scholarship, to accept the canonical view that anarchy is the guiding principle of politics among nation-states even as this view has increasingly come under question (Lake, 2009; Mattern and Zarakol, 2016; McConaughy *et al.*, 2018). Yet IR scholarship also has a long tradition of pushing the boundaries of anarchy, from the early Grotian tradition, to Hedley Bull's exploration of what he called the 'anarchical society' among nation-states (Bull, 1977), to those that see international regimes as social institutions in a transnational environment (Ruggie, 1982). Indeed, recent works have argued for more nuanced understandings of the exercise of global power beyond anarchy versus hierarchy (Barnett and Duvall, 2005), or developed the notion of global governors wielding authority (Avant *et al.*, 2010), or argued for the importance of transnational networks in

mediating anarchy (Farrell and Newman, 2014), and investigated the ways in which the international system embodies hierarchical relations (Lake, 2009).

So, arguably, a healthy and productive IR tradition exists that could code the EU as an international organization while situating the EU beyond a strict ‘intergovernmental co-operation in anarchy’ view. In such a framework, we could place the EU at the farthest end of the continuum of anarchy where it bleeds into a much thicker web of relationships, highly institutionalized both formally and informally, with hierarchies and interpenetration across national borders (Farrell and Newman, 2016). This would certainly allow for a more effective analysis of the EU today. But evaluating the EU through the lens of comparative politics, and comparing it to the hierarchical settings of emergent polities, offers important leverage on the EU that the international organization approach simply cannot provide.

II. Comparative Politics and the New Politicization of the EU

Despite the dominance of the Moravcsik-pioneered IR approach, many scholars subsequently began to view the EU as a polity of its own and developed a range of ways to apply and modify theories of comparative politics to better understand it. The fact that a prominent reference book, *The Sage Handbook of European Union Politics* (Jørgensen *et al.*, 2006) includes chapters entitled ‘The European Union as Polity I’ and ‘The European Union as Polity II,’ indicates the richness of this counter approach (Hix, 2006; Jachtenfuchs, 2006). Jachtenfuchs’ thoughtful overview of efforts to grapple with what he terms the ‘Euro-Polity’ points out that the IR-Comparative split is a longstanding cleavage, one that he traces back to the early days of Haas (1975) and Hoffmann (1966) on the side of IR, and Lindberg and Scheingold (1970) on the side of domestic political dynamics (Jachtenfuchs, 2006, p. 159). A generation of scholars followed that took up analysis of the EU from the perspective of comparative politics and comparative public policy (Scharpf, 1988; Tsebelis, 1994; Majone, 1996), focusing on the processes among the EU-level actors as a policy arena unto itself.

Hix is one of the scholars most associated with efforts to rethink the EU as a polity on its own and an entity that shares similar dynamics with nation-states. His multiple-edition textbook encapsulated this development in its title: *The Political System of the European Union* (Hix and Hoyland, 2011). Hix’s comparisons of the EU with domestic political systems anticipated, long before the current set of crises, that the EU’s highly diluted version of political competition, muted electoral contestation, and reliance on technocratic governance is bound to create serious strains on the EU’s legitimacy (Hix, 2006, p. 153). Hix’s comparative parsing out of the lack of EU electoral competition helped shine light on these dynamics in ways inaccessible to a strict international relations approach, but still very much in the ‘normal science’ tradition championed by Moravcsik.

A second major strand of contemporary scholarship also decisively moved beyond the international relations notion of co-operation under anarchy by developing the idea of the EU as a ‘multilevel governance’ form (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Bache and Flinders, 2004). Here, the contention is that understanding the institutional developments, policies, and processes at work in the EU requires seeing the EU as a system of interlocking and permeable levels of governance, from sub-state to national to European. Rather than offering a larger theoretical claim about the nature of the evolution of the EU, multi-level

governance stresses a 'middle-range, meso level theoretical approach that accounts for the day to day workings of European integration and the EU' (Pagoulatos and Tsoukalis, 2012, p. 63). This allows for a much more fine-grained parsing out of the ways in which European level governance is enmeshed in structures and actors within and outside the nation.

The multilevel governance approach therefore has the benefit of introducing more fluidity to our understanding of the EU, by highlighting the contingent sites of authority and governance that have developed over time. While states delegate specific issue area policy-making to the EU, the multilevel governance approach points to the ways in which the interplay of national and EU institutions and policy processes creates opportunities for actors to exploit different capacities, rather than having the categories of governance stay static over time and place (Newman, 2008). This opens the door for a way of seeing the EU as a case of comparative political development, even if the multilevel governance authors do not highlight this potential.

Finally, the most recent wave of scholarship to take up the comparative politics frame is the large and lively literature on the politicization of the EU (De Wilde, 2011; De Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Hooghe and Marks, 2012; Stratham and Trenz, 2013; Grande and Kriesi, 2015). The EU's last decade of crises, beginning with the eurozone meltdown, compounded by the refugee crises, Brexit, and the rising wave of eurosceptic populist parties, has fully demonstrated the ways in which European governance has penetrated into national settings far beyond any intergovernmental regime, unleashing citizen mobilization around European issues. A variety of strands of work drawing on comparative politics have focused on the heightened salience of the EU in political life, the new degrees of polarization around EU issues, and the widening of actors and audiences in explicit discourse and political action around European issues (De Wilde *et al.*, 2016). Scholars have turned their expertise in areas such as social movements to better understand the EU through an explicitly comparative lens, bringing new insights to the EU's evolution (Kriesi, 2016).

This new politicization literature adds greatly to our ability to understand more recent developments in the EU. It is part of the broad category of what Hooghe and Marks have termed 'post-functionalist' theories (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). This literature emphasizes the end of the 'permissive consensus' and the new era of 'constraining dissensus' that pervades much of what was previously uncontested about the European project, highlighting the more critical and more consequential public opinion that comes with this change (Saurugger, 2016). The recognition of these new political realities means the study of the EU has been forced to go far beyond the template of international organizations, and situates the EU instead in terms of the 'normal politics' of national settings (Bache and Flinders, 2004).

In sum, the development of scholarship informed by comparative politics is a necessary and laudable addition to the IR based rigour that Moravcsik's initial, pathbreaking work established. Scholars have rightly zeroed in on the limits of the permissive consensus that marked the early years of the EU's development, providing a much fuller account of the societal actors, coalitions and parties who play a role in the make up of the EU polity today as a shared political space. They also allow for an assessment of the EU's institutions informed and strengthened by comparative public policy approaches and analysis.

But while this burgeoning literature very usefully recognizes the break with the technocratic past of EU politics and has begun to theorize effectively about the new politicization of the EU, it may not give us the full breadth of historical cases and the theoretical tools to analyze today's Europe. Using Moravcsik's exhortation as a guide, we need to situate the EU within broader theories and see it as a 'case of' a broader set of phenomena. Below I sketch out how the lens of state building and political development can do that. In particular, the comparative political development lens usefully draws attention to the role of social and cultural factors that created the foundation for the EU as a technocratic and uncontested polity, in contrast to the history of nation-building. Most consequentially, it points to the real challenges for democratic sustainability in this new era of overt politicization, created by the lack of impassioned national identity underpinning the EU.

III. The EU as an Emergent Political Authority

Despite its flaws and troubles, my contention is that the European Union is best understood as a new political entity that pervasively exerts its political authority above the level of the nation-state. Although it remains incompletely centralized, political authority in the EU has become transnational to the point where we now need to theorize and empirically evaluate the EU as a case of comparative political development, instead of categorizing it as an international organization. The EU, in this view, is just the latest in a long line of emergent polities, be it the Hanseatic League, the Italian City-States, the Holy Roman Empire, or the modern nation-state. The accrual of institutional power to the EU today far outstrips other examples of international co-operation anywhere in the world, transcending anarchy and instead taking on components of hierarchy, with European political authority at its centre. This is all the more true even as the EU's powers are highly contested today, exactly because the stakes are so high for actors within the EU's political system. While the politicization and multilevel governance literature discussed above shares an emphasis on the EU as a polity, there remains important historical comparative leverage that remains unexploited when one resists categorizing the EU explicitly alongside historical polities such as nation-states.

Of course, some EU scholars have indeed explicitly drawn comparisons with historical forms of governance, challenging us to draw out the differences and similarities with past political orders (Ruggie, 1993; Caporaso, 1996; Marks, 1997, 2012; Bartolini, 2005). A few scholars have begun explicitly to compare the EU to historical processes of state formation or state building, without assuming that the EU will or should evolve into a state (Sbragia, 1992, 2005; Ansell and Di Palma, 2004; Kelemen, 2007, 2014; Mérand, 2008; Börner and Eigmüller, 2015; Menon, 2017). Within this approach, work on comparative federalism has provided an alternative way to study the EU that sheds new light on its dynamics (Goldstein, 2001; Nicolaidis and Howse, 2001; Börzel and Hosli, 2003; Kelemen, 2004; Fabbrini, 2005, 2010). But less explored is how comparative political development highlights the role of political authority and the importance of nationalism in supporting it.

To further push forward this line of inquiry, we can start by conceptualizing political authority as the process of creating social control and compliance (Hurd, 1999). While coercion or immediate material payoffs can bring about adherence to rule, force and self-

interest alone will not be sufficient to create a robust political order. Legitimacy, in the sense of a claim to a culturally accepted principle or value regarding the right of that political authority to rule, is necessary as well. Legitimacy is a subtle form of power that rests in a political authority's ability to create consent for its governance while appealing to principles separate from its own particular hold on power. The terms by which political legitimacy is established vary with historical context, as demonstrated by the transition, beginning in eighteenth-century Europe, from the norms of dynastic rule to today's democratic sovereignty (Bukovansky, 2002; McNamara, 2015a). Legitimacy is a necessary precondition for the legal structures and capacities that constitute the manifestation of political authority.

This definition of authority emphasizes the social logics involved. It thus differs from the emphasis on formal control and delegated autonomy by scholars such as Hooghe and Marks, who in evaluating the worldwide progress of regional authority, define authority 'as formal power expressed in legal rules' and (Hooghe and Marks, 2016, p. 16). Instead, it is closer to the view of Barnett and Finnemore that authority implies the 'ability of one actor to use institutional and discursive resources to induce deference from others' (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, p. 5). Thus, the broader cultural and social environment within which this exercise of authority is occurring is crucial: 'Authority is a social construction. It cannot be understood and, indeed, does not exist apart from the social relations that constitute and legitimate it' (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004, p. 20).

Indeed, one of the key sets of logics identified by comparative political development scholars as crucial to the consolidation of political authority rests in the social realm. In addition to political-military (Tilly, 1975; Downing, 1992; Porter, 1994) and economic dynamics (Poggi, 1978; Skowronek, 1982; Spruyt, 1994) that push forward the consolidation of power, social logics are crucial to legitimizing the accrual of power to new authorities, and creating a foundation of community and solidarity to support the exercise of power. The rise of the nation-state, particularly its consolidation into its modern form in the second half of the nineteenth century, was dependent in part on the development of nationalism, the particular political technology generated to legitimate the new polity of the nation-state.

Nationalism can be understood as a set of social logics that naturalized and legitimated state power, often with pernicious effects. The rise of the nation-state occurred in tandem with the sociological building of a polity that various literatures on nationalism have conceptualized with reference to the building of 'social imaginaries' (Taylor, 2004), the generation of a narrative of 'national myths' (Hobsbawm, 1990), or the rise of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1993) to underpin the scaled up polity that was the modern nation-state. Political authorities pursued a wide variety of policies to address the social challenges of state formation, to turn 'Peasants into Frenchman' in the words of historian Eugen Weber's study of nineteenth century France (Weber, 1976). Many of the mechanisms used appear banal and inconsequential, rooted in administrative activities of classification and categorization, but they act to construct the social reality for their subjects in ways that, if successful, shore up the power of the new political authority (McNamara, 2015a). New states used symbols and practices to create Belgians, or Scots, or Indonesians, lumping together previously disassociated peoples in a unified identity and binding them together in a constructed national culture (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Trevor-Roper, 1983).

IV. The EU's Imagined Community: Depoliticized by Design

In the friction-filled process by which individuals shift their identities to incorporate a sense of a larger political space and community, there are some strong patterns that reoccur today in the EU, but their particular content differs dramatically from the state-building described above. When we compare the EU to the history of state-building and nationalism, it is clear that the imagined community constructed to support the European project does not have the impassioned attachment and exclusive sense of belonging found in the traditional nation-state. Rather, to be European is a particularly post-national, cosmopolitan shared identity. This is no accident. The EU has risen to become a powerful, innovative political entity in part because it has been depoliticized and framed by elites as banal and unremarkable, as a way to navigate around the emotional attachment and political salience of existing national identities. The symbols and practices surrounding EU governance continuously shape the everyday lives of Europeans and redraw the boundaries of legitimate authority in a series of social processes that undergird governance (Shore, 2000; Della Salla, 2010; Manners, 2011; Sternberg, 2013; McNamara, 2015a; Kølvrå, 2016). But they have done so in subtle, under the radar ways that do not directly engage political passions, prompt partisan debates, or create deep attachments to the EU as a political community (Delanty, 1995; Cram, 2006; Fligstein, 2008; Risse, 2010).

Unlike the impassioned nationalism of the modern nation-state, the EU's cultural infrastructure is rooted in a specific type of 'banal' authority, which navigates national loyalties while portraying the EU as complementary to, not in competition with, local identities (Cram, 2001, 2009; McNamara, 2015a). The labels, images and practices generated by EU policies are often deracinated, purged of their associations with the powers of the nation-state, and instead standardized into a seemingly unobjectionable blandness. The euro's paper currency displays abstracted bridges and windows – instead of images tied to a specific person or place (Helleiner, 1998, 2002; Shore, 2000; Hymans, 2004). Rather than building one monumental national capital in Brussels to symbolize and practice EU governance, European institutions and their mostly unremarkable buildings are flung far across its member states, with the European Parliament even moving, vagabond-like, between cities (McNamara, 2015b). The creation of a single diplomatic voice for Europe was been labelled the 'High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy', not the European Foreign Minister, symbolically watering down the impact of this potentially pivotal job (Adler-Nissen, 2014, p. 10; McNamara, 2015a, p. 148). Moreover, the symbols and practices of Europe are often 'localized' by nesting them in the member states: the standardized EU passport is issued by each country with its own national crest and the words 'France' or 'Czech Republic' beneath the European Union label. Euro coins balance standardized European symbols and maps on one side while a Celtic harp graces euros originating in Ireland, Queen Beatrix is on Netherland's coins and Cervantes on those of Spain.

Yet the crises of the last decade – the eurozone meltdown, the migrant crisis and Brexit – have pierced this bubble of depoliticization, and made clear the limits of these strategies. While a certain type of cultural infrastructure has underpinned the EU's growing political authority, the absence of real engagement with the public over the EU's ever increasing powers has created a vacuum, one that must be filled if the EU is to survive. Arguably, the EU has advanced exactly because its political culture has avoided directly

confronting the true transformations in sovereignty and political authority that have occurred. This resulted in very anaemic domestic political debates about EU issues – until the surge in populism and anti-establishment critiques that marks today's newly politicized EU. While the culture generated by everyday life under the EU's governance has made the shift in political authority to the EU level palatable, it has not resulted in a strong sense of solidarity rooted in an impassioned, single European identity, but rather, by design, a much less contested, banal 'imagined community' of Europe.

Why is the cultural infrastructure of deliberate depoliticization important? All polities experience policy failures and hard times, but some prove resilient, able to pull together to overcome their troubles without deep lasting cleavages and disintegration (Campbell and Hall, 2017). Part of the reason for success lies in the political legitimacy of the governance system and the sense of shared social solidarity of the citizens within it. Simply put, political systems hang together better if they are made up of people who feel a sense of deep-knit, emotional attachment to the larger political community. Identifying as an imagined community, in Benedict Anderson's seminal phrase, glues together a citizenry and underpins political authority and the accrual of power at the centre of a polity. It would thus make sorting through the eurozone crisis or dealing with the waves of desperate migrants washing up in the Mediterranean much more achievable.

My approach, drawing explicitly on the comparison of the EU to the history of state and nation-building, has fruitful intersections with recent work on politicization and the EU as a polity. De Wilde and Zürn have astutely noted that 'the politicisation of European integration is driven by its increasing authority indicated by the transformation from a traditional international organisation to a more encompassing "political system"' (de Wilde and Zürn, 2012 p. 138). Baglioni and Hurrelmann demonstrate that the discursive construction of the EU as an intergovernmental regime, rather than using symbols and practices to make clear its true status as a pervasive political authority, has constrained the mobilization of a pan-European citizen engagement around the eurozone crisis (Baglioni and Hurrelmann, 2016). They argue that 'cultural opportunity structures' influence politicization patterns, and in the case of the EU, have produced a cultural setting that may push more towards renationalization than a supranationalization of EU politics (Baglioni and Hurrelmann, 2016).

The insights from comparative political development speak also to the observation that it has been the eurosceptics who have driven and benefited from the politicization of European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2009; Hutter *et al.*, 2016). As supporters of the European project have constructed the EU as a depoliticized, banal entity, what should be the normal politics of contested governance end up being severely imbalanced and dysfunctional. In contrast to the history of state and nation-building, the lack of explicit political engagement with the growing authority of the EU means little resilience in the face of inevitable political conflicts. The symbols and practices of Europe's imagined community present the EU's concentration of power in highly abstracted and technical terms, and the strategy of localization nests national and local meanings in broader EU symbols, naturalizing the notion of European authority by surrounding it with accepted loyalties and affinities (McNamara, 2015a). The overall effect is to create a more banal political authority than an impassioned or actively engaged legitimacy, ultimately meaning that the EU is uniquely ill equipped to deal with the current age of overt contestation.

Depoliticization has occurred in a multitude of other ways that, when compared with the political development of nation-states, becomes all the more consequential. Kriesi has delineated how EU supporters de-emphasized the issue of European integration in national elections, sidestepped treaty changes in order to avoid referendums, delegated to technocratic supranational institutions such as the ECB, excluded eurosceptics from mainstream coalitions, eschewed explicit agreements, and stressed regulation over sovereign transfer of power (Kriesi, 2016; see also De Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Genschel and Jachtenfuchs, 2013; Schimmelfennig, 2014).

In contrast to historical cases of democratic development, therefore, the EU has evolved to govern rather than represent. This is deeply problematic as the ever deeper penetration of the EU into people's lives means a greater need to debate the distributional consequences of EU policies, the values promoted, and the choices at stake (De Vries and McNamara, 2018). The more youthful and cosmopolitan citizens of the EU may embrace the everyday European reality and see it as a natural and positive thing, a backdrop to their changed everyday lives that creates more opportunities than it closes down. But those that feel left behind and fearful about the future are not comforted by an expert consensus for the single market, open borders or the euro, but rather wish their voices to be heard. The sleight of hand of the EU's particular cultural strategies of symbols and practices that emphasize the EU as localized and deracinated has clearly bumped up against its limits, and fed the very populism that challenges its existence.

The insights from comparisons of the EU with historical episodes of state and nation-building thus offer new areas of research that would remain hidden under an approach that situates the EU as an international organization or simply in terms of intergovernmental bargains. The overall façade of a technocratically governed, depoliticized EU that was simply addressing the need to manage interdependence, as Liberal Intergovernmentalism might frame the EU, has been punctured by the burgeoning comparative politics literature that sees the EU instead as an object of contested governance. Using an explicit comparison to state-building and particularly, nationalism, allows for an even better understanding of both what makes the EU the extraordinary example of supranational political development as well as highlighting the very serious challenges it confronts. In particular, comparing directly to the history of nationalism makes clearer the ways in which the EU's traditional culture of non-contestation tilts the playing field towards eurosceptics and makes the notion of a deep identity around Europe's post-national cosmopolitanism deeply challenging.

V. Conclusion

The anniversary of Moravcsik's seminal work provides a useful opportunity to appreciate the remarkable innovations and upgrading of EU studies that flowed from his scholarship. As the study of the EU moves forward in the face of forces of disintegration of its very object of study, we need to heed Moravcsik's exhortation of situating the EU in broader literatures that might shine light on the EU's current challenges. The field of EU studies has usefully turned to comparative politics to do so, reorienting our approach to the EU away from international relations to better grapple with the political contestation and impassioned debate that marks today's EU. I suggest that looking to the history and theory

of comparative political development, particularly state-building and the role of nationalism, can help us better grapple with the politics of the EU today.

Situating the EU in this way can be seen as part of a larger conversation among scholars that moves beyond international relation's assumption of anarchy to take account of the multiple transnational sites of political authority that have emerged globally. The deep penetration of the EU's authority is only one example of the transnational logics at work transcending national boundaries, demanding scholars let go of their fixed levels of analysis, and instead see patterns of political life that repeat regardless of territorial unit. These might include multilevel governance throughout the international system, transnational networks of actors, extra-territorial judiciaries and cross border coalitions, to name but a few. In the spirit of Moravcsik's situating the EU within the broader field of political science, our study of the EU may be but the cutting edge of a welcome collapsing of the subfields between International Relations, Comparative Politics, American Politics, and Political Theory. Even as these are sometimes disquieting days for those who prefer the stability of the post-war order, they represent a great opportunity for us to open up our scholarship and understand the world in all its complexities.

Correspondence:

Kathleen R. McNamara
Mortara Center for International Studies
Georgetown University
Washington, DC 20057
USA.
email: kathleen.mcnamara@georgetown.edu

References

- Adler-Nissen, R. (2014) 'Symbolic power in European diplomacy: the struggle between national foreign services and the EU's External Action Service'. *Review of International Studies*, pp. 1–25.
- Anderson, B. (1993) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, Revised Edition* (London: Verso).
- Ansell, C. and Di Palma, G. (eds) (2004) *Restructuring Territoriality: Europe and the United States Compared* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Avant, D., Finnemore, M. and Sell, S. (eds) (2010) *Who Governs the Globe?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Bache, I. and Flinders, M. (eds) (2004) *Multi-level Governance* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Baglioni, S. and Hurrelmann, A. (2016) 'The Eurozone crisis and citizen engagement in EU affairs'. *JCMS*, Vol. 54, Annual Review, pp. 32–47.
- Barnett, M. and Duvall, R. (2005) 'Power in International Relations'. *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Winter, 2005), pp. 39–75.
- Barnett, M. and Finnemore, M. (2004) *Rules for the World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Bartolini, S. (2005) *Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building and Political Structuring Between the Nation-state and the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Bickerton, C.J., Hodson, D. and Puetter, U. (2015) 'The New Intergovernmentalism: European Integration in the Post-Maastricht Era'. *JCMS*, Vol. 53, pp. 703–22.

- Börner, S. and Eigmüller, M. (eds) (2015) *European Integration, Processes of Change and the National Experience* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Börzel, T. and Hosli, M. (2003) 'Brussels between Bern and Berlin: Comparative Federalism Meets the European Union'. *Governance*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 179–202.
- Bukovansky, M. (2002) *Legitimacy and Power Politics: The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Bull, H. (1977) *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan).
- Burley, A.M. and Mattli, W. (1993) 'Europe before the Court: A Political Theory of Legal Integration'. *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Winter), pp. 41–76.
- Campbell, J. and Hall, J. (2017) *The Paradox of Vulnerability* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Caporaso, J. (1996) 'The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory or Post-Modern?' *JCMS*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp. 29–52.
- Caporaso, J.A., Marks, G., Moravcsik, A. and Pollack, M. (1997) 'Does the European Union Represent an N of 1?' *ECSA Review*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 1–5.
- Cram, L. (2001) 'Imagining the Union: A Case of Banal Europeanism?' In Wallace, H. (ed.) *Interlocking Dimensions of European Integration* (London: Palgrave).
- Cram, L. (2006) 'Inventing the People: Civil Society Participation and the Enhabitation of the EU'. In Smismans, S. (ed.) *Civil Society & Legitimate European Governance* (London: Edward Elgar).
- Cram, L. (2009) 'Introduction. Banal Europeanism: European Union Identity and National Identities in Synergy'. *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 101–8.
- De Vries, C. (2018) *Euroskepticism and the Future of European Integration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- De Vries, C. and McNamara, K. (2018) 'How Choice Can Save Europe: the EU Needs Less Technocracy and More Democracy'. *ForeignAffairs.com*, 14 May.
- De Wilde, P. (2011) 'No Polity for Old Politics? A Framework for Analyzing the Politicization of European Integration'. *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 33, No. 5, pp. 559–75.
- De Wilde, P., Leupold, A. and Schmidtke, H. (2016) 'Introduction: the Differentiated Politicisation of European Governance'. *West European Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 3–22.
- De Wilde, P. and Zürn, M. (2012) 'Can the Politicization of European Integration be Reversed?' *JCMS*, Vol. 50, No. S1, pp. 137–53.
- Delanty, G. (1995) *Inventing Europe: Ideas, Identity, Reality* (New York: St Martin's Press).
- Della Salla, V. (2010) 'Political Myth, Mythology and the European Union'. *JCMS*, Vol. 48, No. 1, pp. 1–19.
- Downing, B. (1992) *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Fabbrini, S. (2005) *Federalism and Democracy in the European Union and the United States* (London: Routledge).
- Fabbrini, S. (2010) *Compound Democracies: Why the United States and Europe are Becoming Similar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Fabbrini, S. (2013) 'Intergovernmentalism and Its Limits: Assessing the European Union's Answer to the Euro Crisis'. *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 9, pp. 1003–29.
- Farrell, H. and Newman, A. (2014) 'Domestic Institutions Beyond the Nation-State: Charting the New Interdependence Approach'. *World Politics*, Vol. 662, No. 2, pp. 331–63.
- Farrell, H. and Newman, A. (2016) 'The New Interdependence Approach: Theoretical Development and Empirical Demonstration'. *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 713–36.
- Fligstein, N. (2008) *Euro-clash: The EU, European Identity, and the Future of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

- Genschel, P. and Jachtenfuchs, M. (eds) (2014) *Beyond the Regulatory Polity? The European Integration of Core State Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Goldstein, L. (2001) *Constituting Federal Sovereignty: The European Union in Comparative Context* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Grande, E. and Kriesi, H. (2015) 'The restructuring of political conflict in Europe and the politicization of European integration'. In Risse, T. (ed.) *European Public Spheres: Politics is Back* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 190–223.
- Haas, E. (1975) *The Obsolescence of Regional Integration Theory* (Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California).
- Helleiner, E. (1998) 'National Currencies and National Identities'. *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 41, No. 10, pp. 1409–36.
- Helleiner, E. (2002) *The Making of National Money: Territorial Currencies in Historical Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Hix, S. (2006, 2006) 'The EU as a Polity (I)'. In Jørgensen, K., Pollack, M. and Rosamund, B. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of European Union Politics* (New York: Sage Press).
- Hix, S. and Hoyland, B. (2011) *The Political System of the European Union* (London: Palgrave).
- Hobsbawm, E. (1990) *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds) (1983) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hoffmann, S. (1966) 'Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe'. *Daedalus*, Vol. 95, No. 3, (Summer, pp. 862–915).
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2001) *Multilevel Governance and European Integration* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield).
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2009) 'A Postfunctionalist Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus'. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 1–23.
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2012) 'Politicization'. *The Oxford Handbook of the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2016) *Measuring Regional Authority: A Post-Functionalist Theory of Governance* (Vol. 1) (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hurd, I. (1999) 'Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics'. *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 2, pp. 379–408.
- Hutter, S., Grande, E. and Kriesi, H. (eds) (2016) *Politicizing Europe. Integration and Mass Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Hymans, J. (2004) 'The Changing Color of Money'. *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 5–31.
- Jachtenfuchs, M. (2006, 2006) 'The EU as a Polity (II)'. In Jørgensen, K., Pollack, M. and Rosamund, B. (eds) *The SAGE Handbook of European Union Politics* (New York: Sage Press).
- Jørgensen, K., Pollack, M. and Rosamund, B. (2006) *The SAGE Handbook of European Union Politics* (New York: Sage Press).
- Kelemen, R.D. (2004) *The Rules of Federalism: Institutions and Regulatory Politics in the EU and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).
- Kelemen, R.D. (2007) 'Built to Last? The Durability of EU Federalism'. In Meunier, S. and McNamara, K.R. (eds) *Making History: State of the European Union* (Vol. 8) (Oxford University Press), pp. 51–66.
- Kelemen, R.D. (2014) 'Building the New European State? Federalism, Core State Powers and European Integration'. In Genschel, P. and Jachtenfuchs, M. (eds) *Beyond the Regulatory Polity: The European Integration of Core State Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 211–29.

- Kølvraa, C. (2016) 'European Fantasies: On the EU's Political Myths and the Affective Potential of Utopian Imaginaries for European Identity'. *JCMS*, Vol. 54, pp. 169–84.
- Kriesi, H. (2016) 'The Politicization of European Integration'. *JCMS*, Vol. 54. Annual Review, pp. 32–47.
- Lake, D. (2009) *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Lindberg, L. and Scheingold, S. (1970) *Europe's Would Be Polity* (New York: Prentice Hall Press).
- Majone, G. (1996) *Regulating Europe* (New York: Routledge).
- Manners, I. (2011) 'Symbolism in European Integration'. *Comparative European Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 243–68.
- Manners, I. and Whitman, R. (2016) 'Another Theory is Possible: Dissident Voices in Theorising Europe'. *JCMS*, Vol. 54, pp. 3–18.
- Marks, G. (1997) 'A Third Lens: Comparing European Integration and State Building'. In Klausen, J. and Tilly, L. (eds) *European Integration in Social and Historical Perspective: 1850 to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield), pp. 23–43.
- Marks, G. (2012) 'Europe and its Empires: From Rome to the European Union'. *JCMS*, Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 1–20.
- Mattern, J.B. and Zarakol, A. (2016) 'Hierarchies in World Politics'. *International Organization*, Vol. 70, No. 3, pp. 623–54.
- McConaughy, M., Musgrave, P. and Nexon, D. (2018) 'Beyond Anarchy: Logics of Political Organization, Hierarchy, and International Structure'. *International Theory*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 181–218.
- McNamara, K.R. (1998) *The Currency of Ideas: Monetary Politics in the European Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- McNamara, K.R. (2015a) *The Politics of Everyday Europe: Constructing Authority in the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- McNamara, K.R. (2015b) 'Building Culture: The Architecture and Geography of Governance in the European Union'. In Börner, S. and Eigmüller, M. (eds) *European Integration, Processes of Change and the National Experience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Menon, A. (2017) 'Defence Policy and the European State: Insights from American Experience'. In King, D. and Le Gales, P. (eds) *The Reconfiguration of the State in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Mérand, F. (2008) *European Defence Policy: Beyond the Nation State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Milner, H. (1991) 'The Assumption of Anarchy in International Relations Theory: A Critique'. *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 67–85.
- Moravcsik, A. (1993) 'Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach'. *JCMS*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 473–524.
- Moravcsik, A. (1998) *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Moravcsik, A. (2005) 'The European Constitutional Compromise and the Neofunctionalist Legacy'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 349–86.
- Moravcsik, A. and Schimmelfennig, F. (2009) 'Liberal Intergovernmentalism'. In Wiene, A. and Diez, T. (eds) *European Integration Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Newman, A. (2008) *Protectors of Privacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).
- Nicolaides, K. and Howse, R. (eds) (2001) *The Federal Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Pagoulatos, G. and Tsoukalis, L. (2012) 'Multilevel Governance'. In Jones, E., Menon, A. and Weatherill, S. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Parsons, C.A. (2003) *Certain Idea of Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

- Poggi, G. (1978) *The Development of the Modern State* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press).
- Porter, B. (1994) *War and the Rise of the State* (New York, NY: Free Press).
- Risse, T. (2010) *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Rosamund, B. (2016) 'Field of Dreams: the Discursive Construction of EU Studies, Intellectual Dissidence and the Practice of 'Normal Science''. *JCMS*, Vol. 54, pp. 19–36.
- Rosato, S. (2011) *Europe United: Power Politics and the Making of the European Community* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
- Ruggie, J.G. (1982) 'International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order'. *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 379–415.
- Ruggie, J.G. (1993) 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations'. *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 1, pp. 139–74.
- Saurugger, S. (2016) 'Sociological Approaches to the European Union in Times of Turmoil'. *JCMS, Volucella*, Vol. 54, pp. 70–86.
- Sbragia, A. (1992) 'Thinking about the European Future: The Uses of Comparison'. In Sbragia, A. (ed.) *Euro-Politics: Politics and Policymaking in the 'New' European Community* (Washington, DC: Brookings), pp. 257–92.
- Sbragia, A. (2005) 'Territory, Electorates, and Markets in the United States: The Construction of Democratic Federalism and its Implications for the European Union'. In Fabbrini, S. (ed.) *Democracy and Federalism in the EU and US: Exploring Post-National Governance* (London: Routledge), pp. 93–103.
- Scharpf, F.W. (1988) 'The Joint-Decision Trap: Lessons From German Federalism And European Integration'. *Public Administration*, Vol. 66, pp. 239–78.
- Schimmelfennig, F. (2014) 'European Integration in the Euro Crisis: The Limits of Postfunctionalism'. *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 321–37.
- Shore, C. (2000) *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (London: Routledge).
- Skowronek, S. (1982) *Building a New American State: the Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1977–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Spruyt, H. (1994) *The Sovereign State and its Competitors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Sternberg, C.S. (2013) *The Struggle for EU Legitimacy: Public Contestation 1950–2005* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan).
- Stratham, P. and Trenz, H. (2013) 'How EU Politicization Can Emerge Through Contestation'. *JCMS*, Vol. 51, pp. 965–80.
- Taylor, C. (2004) *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press).
- Tilly, C. (ed.) (1975) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Trevor-Roper, H. (1983) 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland'. In Hobsbawm, E.J. and Ranger, T.O. (eds) *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Tsebelis, G. (1994) 'The Power of the European Parliament as a Conditional Agenda Setter'. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 88, No. 1, pp. 128–42.
- Weber, E. (1976) *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press).