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# Intergovernmentalism and Liberal Intergovernmentalism

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# Intergovernmentalism

- Intergovernmentalism has been influenced by **realist and neo-realist** assumptions that **privilege the role of the state and national interest** in explaining European integration (or cooperation).
- Intergovernmentalists believe that **sovereignty** rests with the EU's member states, although it may be in states' interests to **share/pool sovereignty** and to delegate it to European-level institutions.

# Intergovernmentalism

- **Costs and benefits** attached to involvement in the European cooperation
- Cooperation within the EU: **conservative and pragmatic**
- Integration seen as a **zero-sum game**
- European integration = normal behaviour of state actors (just one example of a more general phenomenon)
  - *European integration is normal or even 'mundane'* (O'Neill 1996: 57)

# Intergovernmentalism

- Particular conception of the **sovereignty of nation states**
- One useful definition: *Sovereignty implies 'the legal capacity of national decision makers to take decisions without being subject to external restraints'* (Nugent 1999: 502);
- Intergovernmental cooperation might also involve a **delegation of sovereignty**: national governments find it in their interest to hand over certain (regulatory) functions in order to make cooperation work more effectively.

# Intergovernmentalism

## Stanley Hoffmann

- Key proponent of intergovernmentalism in the mid 1960s.
- His work on French, European, and international politics led him to critique the work of the neo-functionalists.
- Hoffmann distinguished between **high and low politics**, arguing that while functional integration might be possible in less controversial areas (the economic sphere), states would resist any incursion into areas of high politics (the political sphere).
- **Logic of diversity** (instead of logic of integration)
- States more than **just 'black boxes'**; they represented communities of identity and belonging.



# Intergovernmentalism

- **Critique**

- rejection of his **rigid demarcation between high and low politics**
- fail to take into consideration the **novelty and complexity of the European integration**

# Liberal intergovernmentalism



## Robert Putnam: two-level games (1988)

- exploring the dynamics of domestic and international politics using the metaphor of 'two-level games'
  - 1) First game (domestic stage): policy preference formation.**
  - 2) Second game (international stage): striking of inter-state bargains.**
- At the domestic level, power-seeking/enhancing office holders aim to build coalitions of support among domestic groups. At the international level, the same actors seek to bargain in ways that enhance their positions domestically by meeting the demands of key domestic constituents (Rosamond 2000:136).



## 1 The domestic level

(i.e. government national policy)

National preference formation = The way that governments decide on their national policy preferences (i.e. what they want).



## 2 The international level

(i.e. government to government)

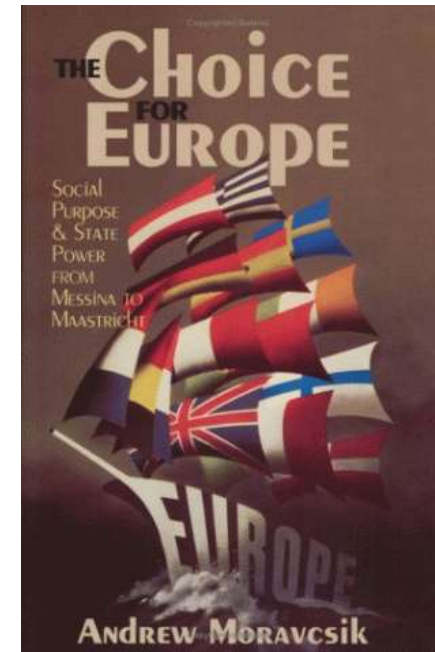
Interstate bargaining = The bargaining process that goes on between states when they have to make decisions at an international (in this case European) level.



# Liberal intergovernmentalism

## Andrew Moravcsik

- Professor of Politics, Director of the European Union Program at Princeton University's
- **The Choice for Europe** ("the most important work in the field")





Integration as a process

Supranational

Weakening the Nation State



Integration as a choice

State-Centric

Strengthening, or even  
'rescuing', the Nation State  
(Milward 1992)

# Liberal intergovernmentalism

- Since the early 1990s, Andrew Moravcsik's theory of LI has become one of the **most important** account of the European integration process (*model of parsimony and clarity*)
- Incorporates both **realist and neo-liberal** elements
- Deals explicitly with the **interface between domestic and international politics**
- **Sssumptions drawn from the 'rational actor model'**
- **Importance of the *preferences* and *power* of states**
- All decisions made by the EU are ultimately the result of **bargain amongst states**

# Liberal intergovernmentalism

## Three elements of LI theory

- Two separate dimensions to LI: the **supply side and the demand side**
- **National preference formation**
  - State goals shaped by **domestic pressures and interactions**
  - Draws on **liberal theories of national preference formation**
  - National political institutions are subject to **many pressures** from nationally based interests
  - Usually the interests of dominant (usually economic) groups
- (*“the vital interest behind General de Gaulle's opposition to British membership in the EC ... was not the pursuit of French grandeur but the price of French wheat”* (Moravcsik 1998: 7).

# Liberal intergovernmentalism

## – Intergovernmental bargains

- Intergovernmentalist theories of inter-state relations + general theories of bargaining and negotiation
- The importance of **governmental elites** in shaping inter-state relations.
- At this point, states are considered as **unitary actors**
- **Limited impact of supranational institutions**

# Liberal intergovernmentalism

## – International delegation

- Inspired by **liberal institutionalism of Robert Keohane** (1989)
- **Delegated and pooled sovereignty** in international institutions.
- European institutions create **linkages and compromises** a issues where **non-compliance** would be a temptation.

# Liberal intergovernmentalism

## Critique

- LI **does not fit the facts** (too selective with his empirical references)
- **Too narrow** conception of the state
- Two-level game metaphor **imprecise**
- **Underestimation of the role** of supranational actors within the European integration
- Too much **emphasis on formal aspects** of that process

# Liberal intergovernmentalism

## Summary

- LI provides a tripartite explanation of integrative outcomes: as national preference formation; inter-state bargaining; and institutional delegation.
- The theory supplements a rich account of bargaining inside the Council, with a concern for how national interests (or preferences) are formed.
- Moravcsik argues that it is mainly powerful domestic economic interests determine national interest.
- Moravcsik is criticized for focusing only on 'history-making decisions' (treaty change in particular) and for ignoring day-to-day politics and the multi-level character of the European Union.



**Thank you very much for your attention**

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