

The European Integration Movement: A Constitutional Sovereignty Building Process

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Abstract

The Single European Act, as well as the creation of the European Union, has rekindled debate on approaches to EU/EC studies since the early 1980s. A general review of American scholars' efforts in EU/EC studies since the late fifties brings the author to doubt that theory-led approaches are the best way to study European integration. These doubts lead the author to search for a new starting point, based on historical comparison, for EU/EC studies. With a detailed analysis of the belief systems behind European integration, which developed over the past six hundred years, a new concept is presented. The EU/EC is viewed as a "constitutional sovereignty with neither written constitution nor nation." European integration is regarded as the building process of this sovereignty. From this concept, some interesting hypotheses are then deduced, which are open to test based upon a comparative analysis of EU/EC history. Finally, some tentative but important conclusions are drawn. With these conclusions, the EU/EC can be better described and explained, while they also constitute the starting point of a new approach. In conclusion, constitutional sovereignty building based upon historical comparative analysis merits more research in EU/EC studies.

Key Words: European Union, integration theory, constitutional sovereignty, nation building