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Regionalism and liberal nationalism in the European Union. A case *Sui Generis*?

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ABSTRACT

Ernst B. Haas pioneered the formation of European integration studies outside the field of International Relations. The European Coal and Steal Community of 1951 was already more supranational than any existing international organisation to date. Supranationalism subsequently expanded with European integration. In his attempt to account for the supranationalism of European regionalism, Haas had developed his neofunctionalism as a general theory, which could be applied to other regions as well as the global level. EU scholars, in contrast, began to treat the EU as a case *sui generis* insisting on its unique supranational nature. The paper revisits the question of the uniqueness of European regionalism. Combining Ernst Haas' works on supranational regionalism and liberal nationalism, the EU is approached as a strong form of supranational regionalism that has transformed interstate relations in Europe towards what he called 'cosmopolitan internationalism'. The paper argues that liberal nationalism is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for this transformation. It, however, provides an explanation for the contestation of the EU as a model of liberal regionalism by non-liberal forms of nationalism.

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Introduction

Ernst B. Haas pioneered the formation of European integration studies as a field outside International Relations (IR). To be sure, regional integration often develops out of international cooperation. When states, however, increasingly pool and delegate sovereignty at the regional level, the quality of their relations changes from international cooperation to supranational

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integration. The neofunctionalist dynamics of European integration, which Ernst B. Haas (EBH) identified in *The Uniting of Europe* to explain the creation of the European Economic Community in 1956 (Haas, 1958), increasingly moved scholarship on European integration out of the orbit of IR. Its supranationalism had already made the European Coal and Steal Community of 1951 into more than an international organisation or confederation of states. The pooling and delegation of national sovereignty subsequently expanded with European integration, without, however, turning the European Union (EU) into a European federal state. In his attempt to account for these dynamics of European integration, EBH had developed his neofunctionalism as a general theory to be applied to other regions as well as the global level (Haas, 1964; Haas, 1966; Haas, 1967). EU scholars, however, began to treat the EU as a case *sui generis* insisting on its unique supranational nature. EBH himself claimed that the EU's 'multilateralism is a *unique* mixture of federal and intergovernmental decision-making practices' (emphasis added) (Haas, 2000, p. 446).

This paper revisits the question of the uniqueness of European integration focusing on the relationship between liberalism, nationalism and regionalism. Bringing together EBH's theorising of regionalism with his less well-known work on liberal nationalism (Haas, 1997), the EU is conceptualised as a form of supranational regionalism transforming interstate relations in Europe towards a form of 'cosmopolitan internationalism' (Haas, 1997, p. 349). EBH's theory of neofunctionalism had theorised the emergence of supranational regionalism in Europe already in the 1950s. Forty years later, EBH linked it to the liberal nationalism of the EU's member states.

The paper argues that liberal nationalism is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for supranational regionalism. It, however, provides an explanation for the contestation of the EU as a model of liberal and supranational regionalism by non-liberal forms of nationalism. To develop this argument, the paper starts by comparing European integration to regionalism in other parts of the world. The comparison underscores that the EU is not only the world's most supranational form of regionalism; it is also the most liberal. The second part explores the link between supranational regionalism and liberalism. European integration theories directly or indirectly link liberal democracy and market economy to supranational integration. EBH's liberal nationalism provides a theoretical link between liberalism and supranationalism. A comparison of the EU with other regional organisations, however, suggests that liberal nationalism is not a precondition for either supranational or liberal regionalism. Moreover, liberal and supranational regionalism is no guarantor for liberal nationalism, not even in the EU. On the contrary, the EU's growing 'liberal intrusiveness' (Börzel & Zürn, 2021) fuels contestations that advance alternative, authoritarian and racist varieties of nationalism in Europe. The paper concludes by discussing why Europe remains the only

region in which liberal nationalism transformed into some form of cosmopolitan internationalism.

European integration and regionalism

European integration is often considered unique because, empirically, it constitutes the strongest form of regionalism understood as state-led formal institution-building at the regional level (Börzel & Risse, 2016, p. 7). The EU has by far the broadest *policy scope* among existing regional organisations. There is hardly an area of public policy the EU has not acted upon. The member states have granted the EU authority even in such sensitive areas as foreign policy, internal and external security, and the protection of citizen rights. The *authority* the EU holds over these policies varies, but, overall, is equally unrivaled. EU institutions have the power to adopt collectively binding decisions (legislative authority) and to implement them (executive authority), as well as the autonomy to settle disputes (adjudicative authority). Unlike in the case of international cooperation or intergovernmentalism, supranational integration or supranationalism involve not only the joint exercise of national sovereignty in regional institutions, but its pooling and delegation.[1] In pooling their sovereignty, individual states give up the right to veto particular decisions (e.g., by majority voting, co-legislation). By delegating their sovereignty, states grant supranational institutions the authority to take decisions without requiring their consent (e.g., independent regulatory agencies, courts).

In the EU, majority voting in the Council has not only become the rule; member state governments share legislative authority with the European Parliament on many policies. Likewise, they have granted legislative and executive authority to the European Commission, the European Central Bank and EU agencies. Finally, the Court of the European Union obtained the ultimate judicial authority to settle disputes about the validity of EU law.

To evaluate whether European regionalism is unique, Figure 1 uses the Measure of International Authority (MIA) of Hooghe et al. to compare the authority and the policy scope of the EU with 29 other regional organisations (ROs) in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia (cf. Hooghe et al., 2019). The y-axis takes the average of pooling and delegation to estimate the authority exercised by the 30 regional organisations. The x-axis describes the scope of policies for which they are responsible.[2] The measurement is highly aggregate but corroborates the high supranationalism of EU regionalism. The EU enjoys the deepest level of supranational authority in the broadest scope of policies.[3]

European regionalism and liberalism

The EU not only constitutes the most supranational but also the most liberal form of regionalism. Lake et al. distinguish three dimensions along which

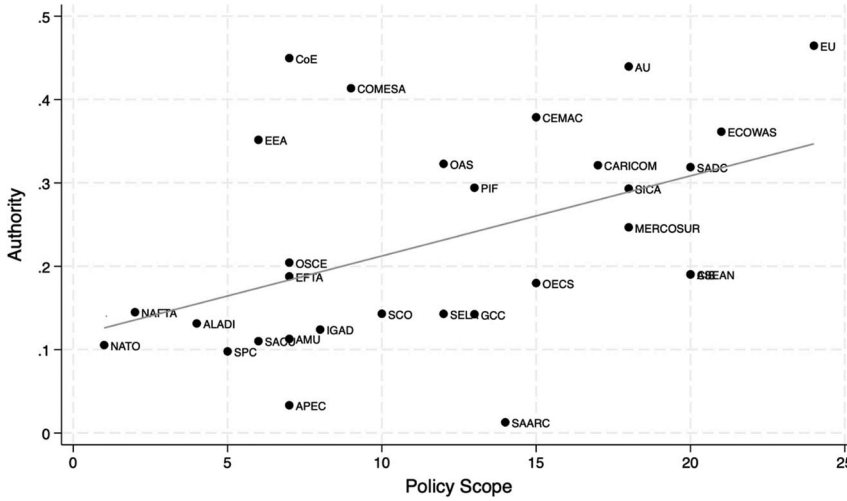

Figure 1. Strength of EU regionalism compared.

liberalism was institutionalised at the international level after the Second World War: (1) liberal internationalism also referred to as rule-based multilateralism, (2) economic liberalism and (3) political liberalism (cf. Lake et al., 2021b). The three dimensions lie at the core around which European regionalism evolved (cf. Börzel & Risse, 2020). First, regional institution-building has been the strategy for securing peace and reconciliation in Europe. The pooling of national sovereignty in, and its delegation to regional institutions are a strong form of rule-based multilateralism to tame nationalism and foster the peaceful resolution of international conflict. Second, economic liberalism takes the form of a single market that shall ensure wealth and prosperity by generating economic growth and employment. Third, political liberalism was enshrined in regional institutions to anchor human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the member states, particularly in post-fascist Germany and Italy, and later in post-authoritarian Greece, Portugal, and Spain, when they joined in the mid-1980s.[4]

The liberal European experiment was replicated – or completed when 10 former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, respectively (Vachudova, 2005). Protecting and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law to secure peace and prosperity in Europe and beyond remains the rationale of many EU internal and external policies. The EU is a liberal model for regionalism which has been emulated by other regional organisations (Börzel & Risse, 2015; Börzel & van Hüllen, 2015). Its 'liberal intrusiveness', in terms of its commitment to liberal values and its authority to promote and protect them, has remained unmatched among international organisations, regional or otherwise (cf.

Börzel & Zürn, 2021). Unlike the African Union (AU) or ECOWAS, the EU lacks a democracy clause authorising the restoration of democracy in a member state by the use of force. Yet, Article 7 TEU provides for the suspension of membership rights if any of the EU's 'fundamental values' are breached. In addition to democracy, these values comprise the respect for human dignity, freedom, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (Article 2 TEU).

Many have criticised the EU and its member states for being unable or unwilling to comply with and enforce its fundamental values (Kelemen & Blauberger, 2017; Oliver & Stefanelli, 2016; Sedelmeier, 2017). There is a decoupling between liberal commitment and illiberal practices in the EU and its member states; liberal regionalism is no guarantor for liberal nationalism. Yet, the question remains why member states have granted the EU supranational authority to promote and protect liberal principles, such as free markets, the rule of law, and democracy, in the first place. More generally, what is the link between regionalism and liberalism?

Clearly, European states have not been the only ones to pursue free trade and protect democracy by building and joining regional organisations (Börzel & van Hüllen, 2015; Haftel, 2012; Pevehouse, 2005). Yet, others rarely do so by designing supranational regional institutions. Integration theories that seek to explain why European states have been pooling and delegating their sovereignty on an increasing scope of policies, while states in other regions have not, point to a common scope condition: liberal democracy.

Neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism and multilevel governance privilege different drivers of regional integration. Yet, they share what in IR is referred to as a liberal (*sic*), two-level approach, which takes the preferences of domestic actors for international cooperation as the starting point (Panke & Risse, 2007). The main contention between them is about the extent to which states are (still) the masters of a process, in which they increasingly pool and delegate their sovereignty through reforming the EU treaties and adopting and enforcing EU laws. Liberal intergovernmentalism maintains that state governments act as the main gate-keepers for domestic interests to access regional institutions and that regional institutions are their agents (Moravcsik, 1991; Moravcsik, 1998). Neofunctionalism and multi-level governance, in contrast, consider the alliances, which domestic interest groups build with supranational actors (particularly the European Commission and the Court of the European Union) circumventing their governments, as the main drivers of regional institution-building (Haas, 1958; Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Sandholtz & Stone Sweet, 1998).

Either way, privileging preferences of domestic and transnational actors that generate the demand for regionalism as explanatory factors, explicitly or implicitly, presupposes liberal democracy and advanced market economy as context conditions for regionalism to unfold. 'The liberal

character of the participants' identities and institutions makes possible the supranational integration process' (Haas, 1997, p. 342). Societal interests are unlikely to form and (trans-)nationally mobilise in favour of regionalism in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian countries with low levels of socio-economic development and/or low levels of economic and social transactions (Haas, 1961; Haas & Schmitter, 1964).

Figure 2 maps the authority of 29 regional organisations against the democratic density of their membership.[5] There seems to be no direct relationship between the average liberal democratic quality of the member states of a RO and its average of pooling and delegation. The African Union is the third strongest RO after the EU and the Council of Europe with a much lower democratic density. NATO, in contrast, scores high on democratic density but rather low on authority. The relationship between regional policy scope and liberal democracy at the domestic level is equally weak. Six of the eight most democratic ROs have only limited policy responsibilities (CoE, NATO, NAFTA, EFTA, EEA; SPC). In other words, liberal democracy is a poor predictor of supranational regionalism.

Controlling for the level of socio-economic development does not improve the fit. Some of the richer democratic states are more willing to pool and delegate their sovereignty at the regional level in a broader scope of policies (EU) than others (NATO, EFTA, EEA). This is also the case for poorer and less democratic states as the higher authority of AU or ECOWAS in comparison to the lower of IGAD or SAARC indicates.

Let's revisit the argument why liberal democracies should be more willing to pool and delegate sovereignty on a larger scope of policies. The

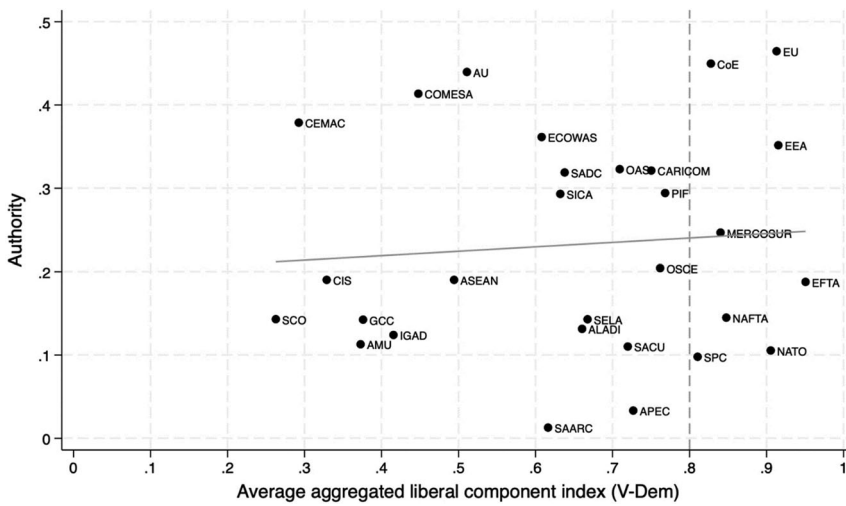

Figure 2. Authority and democratic density of ROs.

functionalist logic EBH applied in his theorising about European integration presupposes that supranational regionalism is more effective in addressing domestic welfare concerns than intergovernmentalism. The pressure of domestic constituencies makes democratically elected governments forgo their ability to autonomously pursue national interests and resolve their conflicts of interests by giving more power to regional institutions. European citizens accept EU decisions and support supranational regionalism because of the EU's effectiveness in ensuring prosperity and peace. After the end of the Cold War, however, this 'permissive consensus' (Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970) ended when public support for supranational regionalism started to decline. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 deepened the EU's supranational authority and broadened its scope. Majority voting in the Council was extended and the legislative power of the European parliament strengthened. Economic liberalism was deepened by setting the member states on course towards an economic and monetary union. While security and defence policy has remained predominantly intergovernmental, the member states agreed to pool and delegate their sovereignty in core areas of political liberalism, including asylum and migration policy but also fundamental principles, such as the rule of law. This pooling and delegation of national sovereignty resulted in a growing contestation of the EU's supranational institutions (see below). Yet, despite the growing Euroscepticism and the rise of nationalist populism, member states have continued to vest the EU with new powers, including in sensitive areas, such as fiscal and welfare state policy.

The literature on democratic peace provides a useful starting point for understanding why democracies continue to engage in strong regionalism despite declining public support and growing political opposition. Its social constructivist strand explains why democracies go to war but rarely fight each other. They share certain norms that constitute the collective identity of domestic actors shaping their motivations, perceptions and practices (Risse-Kappen, 1995). Democratic systems externalise these norms of consensus-building and non-violent conflict resolution in their foreign policy. The mutual expectation of peacefulness grounded in shared democratic norms and values allows for the building of stable peace orders, to which Deutsch and others have referred as security communities (Adler & Barnett, 1998; Deutsch et al., 1957). Why some security communities (e.g., NATO) have remained pluralist while the EU headed towards amalgamation from its very beginnings, is less clear. The transactionalist approach of Karl Deutsch points to interdependence created by the growing intensity of transnational exchanges and transactions as the fundamental cause of integration. Yet, these exchanges and transactions are stimulated and facilitated by the very (supranational) institutions they are to bring about. Interdependence creates the demand for (further) integration but does not necessarily guarantee its supply. In fact, if 'weaponized' (Farrell &

Newman, 2019), interdependence leads to conflict, and possibly disintegration, rather than integration.

Rather than relying on the functionalist logic of anticipated effects (for a critique of this 'functionalist fallacy' see Müller, 1994), the next section explores to what extent EBH's work on liberal nationalism can help us understand how democratic norms and values promote peaceful relations among democracies and foster what he dubbed 'upgrading of the common interest' by political elites (Haas, 1961, p. 367). The forgoing of narrow national self-interests ('my country first') in favour of realising collective gains and solving common problems lies at the heart of supranationalism. The mode of conflict resolution and the powers of supranational institutions are causally linked: '[P]arties succeeded in redefining their conflict so as to work out a solution at a higher level, which almost invariably implies the expansion of the mandate or task (…)' (Haas, 1961, p. 368). The causal link between the two is that 'the up-grading of the parties' common interests relies heavily on the services of an institutionalized mediator (…) with an autonomous range of powers' (Haas, 1961).

Nationalism and liberalism

Nationalism and liberalism tend to be treated as contradicting models for organising societies. The rise of fascism in the early twentieth century, two ensuing world wars and the genocide of European Jews made nationalism – next to socialism – the main antagonist of liberalism. The nationalist backlash against globalisation by authoritarian populism at the turn of the millennium has reinforced the perception of nationalism as anti-liberal or illiberal (Norris & Inglehart, 2019). The nation as an affective community provides a sense of belonging in an increasingly globalised world with its cosmopolitanism and hyper-individualism (de Wilde et al., 2019). Moreover, the combination of national identity and national sovereignty offers a defence against, if not an alternative to liberalism and its ideas of an open society built around individual freedom. The battle cry of the Brexiteers 'take back control' echoed Victor Orbán's call upon Hungarians 'to stand up again for our Hungarian identity, for our Christian identity, protect our families and communities, and also protect our freedom' against the 'stronghold of new internationalism (…) in Brussels'.[6]

While nationalism has been exploited for authoritarian, chauvinistic, racist and xenophobic purposes, it is not necessarily incompatible with liberalism (cf. Dzur, 2002; Miller, 1995; Tamir, 1993; for a skeptical view see e.g., Kelly, 2015). Liberalism is usually equated with individual self-determination, while nationalism is an expression of collective self-determination. Yet, this does not necessarily imply an antagonistic relationship between the two. Individual self-determination in the sense of liberty, individual autonomy or freedom, certainly constitutes a core component of liberalism without which one cannot even start describing what 'liberal' means. Yet, individual

self-determination does not have to constitute the *only* core principles from which all other liberal principles are derived. The history of liberal thinking and liberal practices shows that both individual and collective self-determination have been discussed as core principles of liberalism from the very beginning and that the tension between the two can be reconciled (Rosenblatt, 2018; cf. Börzel & Risse, 2023).

Nationalism is about a national community exercising its right to collective self-determination to become an independent state. It defines the loyalty individuals owe to the national community as superior to their loyalty towards other groups based on religion, kinship, or political ideology. This does not, however, completely subordinate the liberty of individuals to the nation. While there is a tension between individual and collective self-determination, neither liberalism nor nationalism solve this tension by placing one above the other. This is why liberalism and nationalism could align in the nineteenth century (cf. Haas, 1997; Tamir, 2019), and why the nation state not only became the dominant reference for the people's right of collective self-determination (Fisch, 2015), but the prime enactment of collective self-determination in liberalism (cf. Börzel & Risse, 2020). Core liberal principles, such as individual rights and freedoms and the rule of law, shall tame the Leviathan, constraining the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force to ensure the effective provision of common goods. At the same time, nation states gain their legitimacy by guaranteeing individual rights and freedoms, and limiting them, where individual activities have undesirable effects (e.g., negative externalities, such as environmental pollution).

EBH starts from the proposition that '[n]ationalism may come embedded in liberalism or in totalitarianism' (Haas, 2000: viii; 25-30). He solves the tension between liberalism and nationalism in two ways. First, he treats collective self-determination not as a natural right but as 'purely instrumentally by allowing actors to decide whether they are better off with more or less [national] sovereignty (…), by allowing an affected population to decide by democratic means whether it wishes to exercise it' (Haas, 2000, p. 453). Second, he associates liberalism with process rather than substance (see below).

Nationalism only becomes the antagonist to liberalism, if the former is reduced to an extreme version of collective self-determination while the latter is understood as the sole expression of individual self-determination. Yet, nationalism comes in different varieties – of which some are more compatible with liberalism than others (Brown, 1999).

Liberal nationalism and regionalism

EBH distinguished in modern history two liberal and two non- or illiberal varieties of nationalism (Haas, 1997: chapter 2). Liberal nationalism can be either revolutionary (Jacobin) or reformist (Whig). Illiberal nationalism, or

integralism as Haas called it, can entail the totalitarian rule of class (Leninist) or race (racist). One could argue that what renders Leninist and racist nationalism illiberal is the denial of moral equality of both, nations and individuals (see above). The right of collective self-determination of other nations is not respected nor are the rights of groups and individuals within one's own nation.

This is not the place to rehearse the debate on good vs. bad nationalism (see e.g., Brown, 1999; Tamir, 2019). This article is interested in what in Haas' understanding makes liberal nationalism more conducive to supranational integration. Here lies a central contribution of EBH to research on regional integration and global governance that has never been timelier amidst the nationalist backlash against global liberalism (Lake et al., 2021a).

In his book *Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress*, EBH turned against the 'dark view of nationalism' (Haas, 1997: vii). Nationalism is a key component of modernity. It provides a collective identity experienced as mutual understanding among strangers who wish to practice collective self-determination. Nationalism is a principle for organising human collectivities with a rationalising formula for integrating diverse people into a state in order to improve their human condition (Haas, 1997, pp. 18–23). While nationalism can imply aggression, ethnocentrism, ethnic cleansing and genocide, there are liberal varieties that do not share these negative attributes.

Historically, the nation state proved to be a 'more effective guarantor of human happiness' than other types of political order since it combines 'decision making that used consensual knowledge with a populist collective identity' (Haas, 1997, p. 18). Rationalisation by collective learning allows modern societies to achieve human progress. The making of political decisions based on scientific reasoning, i.e., the application of tested knowledge to the solution of collective problems, defines modernity. Nationalism as a modern ideology facilitates collective learning due to shared beliefs and meanings (Haas, 1997, p. 17). Increased secular rationality brought the transformation of the state into a nation state.

Liberal nationalism is rational, self-reflexive, and inclusive; it favours reason and progress and has a greater affinity to consensual knowledge (Haas, 1997, pp. 19–20). EBH argues that scientific knowledge, which is attained through systematic and critical inquiry, is particularly likely to produce progress if it is consensual, 'if the relevant community of actors agrees, however, temporarily, on constructs of cause and effect and the choice of appropriate means to attain stipulated ends'. (Haas, 1997, p. 4). His argument that liberal nationalism fosters collective learning based on consensual knowledge more than any other variety is based on his distinct understanding of liberalism.

EBH defined liberalism as 'a certain procedure for the making of collective decisions, not with a distinct moral substance' (Haas, 1997, p. 19). 'The evolution of contested values into shared values cannot begin with the unilateral

assertion of the superiority of a single one' (Haas, 1997, p. 20). His minimal definition of liberalism requires 'decision-making procedures that provide for the representation of all major social and economic interests and ideologies and allow almost unrestricted discussion. It uses voting procedures that prevent the tyranny of majorities and minorities; it commits itself to no single substantive formula of justice, rights, or expectations' (Haas, 2000, p. 26). 'Liberalism-as-process' (Haas, 2000, p. 25), thereby, provides the intellectual and institutional context for open-ended, inclusive social learning that produces the consensual knowledge for scientific problem-solving that drives human progress.

One could argue that EBH's procedural understanding of liberalism presupposes some liberal substance in the form of liberal principles, such as pluralism, rule of law including individual freedoms and minority rights. I think his uneasiness with other liberal traditions is related to what he sees as the substantive definition of 'a particular conception of justice' (Haas, 2000, p. 26, fn. 14) as well as the belief in specific substantive values such as 'maximum freedom for the individual, high standards of living guaranteed by government intervention, and peace based on democracy' (Haas, 2000, p. 420). He does 'not share many of these beliefs' and does not wish to make 'these beliefs the definers of [his] study' of liberal nationalism (Haas, 2000). The reason why EBH associates himself 'with the endorsement of the moral superiority of liberal nationalism worked out by Yael Tamir' may lie in her critique of liberal theories of justice for including elements of national membership (Tamir, 1993, p. 10).[7] To him, liberal nationalism is morally superior because it refrains from prescribing a morally superior model for organising societies but makes people free to choose (by democratic means) according to which model they want to organise themselves.

EBH understanding of liberalism may not be exclusively procedural. Yet, he invokes its procedural quality to distinguish liberal nationalism from other nationalist ideologies he seeks to treat with respect (Haas, 2000, p. 420, fn. 13). Rather than emphasising tolerance and respect of diversity, it is the greater capacity for open-ended inclusive social learning that makes liberal nationalism for EBH the most progressive variety of nationalism and the most effective rationalisation formula (Haas, 1997, p. 21). '[R]eason, in the form of science, increasingly informs collective decisions. When actors choose on the basis of scientific reasoning, (…) they usher in more and more progress. This happens more consistently when the political context involves popular participation or the institution of the nation-state' (Haas, 1997, p. 323).

Liberal nationalism has also the highest potential for transforming itself into some form of cosmopolitan internationalism through transnationalising the secular rationality, which once brought about the nation state. 'Eventually, political cognition based on reason comes to the conclusion that the

nation state may be unable to fuel the train of progress. At that point, reason leads actors to entertain transnational political formula to solve their problems' (Haas, 1997, p. 323). EBH hypothesises that the growing disappointment with the performance of the nation state will result in 'the growth of international rule-governed life' (Haas, 1997, p. 23). The disappointment is fuelled by the failure of the nation state to prevent military war, fight environmental pollution, and tackle other global challenges, such as migration (Haas, 1997, p. 18). Moreover, the nation state itself becomes the problem, 'because solutions put in place in one country cannot work unless all others also afflicted apply the same solution' (Haas, 1997, p. 19). Once the nation state is no longer the 'more effective guarantor of human happiness, a better problem solver' (Haas, 1997, p. 18), EBH argues that human progress requires the transnational sharing of meanings. And 'only the kind of nationalism we call 'liberal' is consistent with the progressive transnational sharing of meanings' (Haas, 1997, p. 19). Countries that adopted liberal nationalism to attain their nation-statehood are faster learners. They learned the 'lesson that national action does not suffice to ensure progress' early by establishing strong supranational institutions at the regional level; at the global level, supranational institution-building failed because other varieties of nationalism that had emerged in new nations are not ready to pool and delegate sovereignty (Haas, 2000, p. 430).

The return of liberal nationalism in Europe after the Second World War turned European integration into a crucial case for the transnationalisation of secular rationality based on inclusive collective learning. Haas' hypothesis provides a compelling account of the history of European integration. The Second World War had shattered beliefs in a world of sovereign states as a harbinger of peace and prosperity among nations. Due to the suffering and destruction, European elites examined and reinterpreted the past of the nation state (Haas, 1997, p. 343). EBH did not test his hypothesis by systematically linking this learning process to the emergence of supranationalism in Europe. The causal reconstruction would have to show empirically how Belgian, Dutch, French, German, Italian, and Luxembourgish elites had learned that exclusive territorial jurisdictions mobilising populist identities in the name of collective self-determination could lead to the opposite of effectively safe-guarding human happiness; how they came to understand that advanced interdependence, together with transboundary problems, such as environmental pollution, had to be managed through multinational institutions, 'rendering the nation state obsolete for some purposes' (Haas, 1997, p. 60); how the disappointment with the performance of the nation state, on the one hand, and liberal rules and procedures enabling open-ended, inclusive social learning, on the other, facilitated the transnationalisation of secular rationality; how ultimately, the consensual knowledge that the nation state is no longer sufficient to ensure prosperity, peace and freedom

induced European democracies to upgrade their common interests by pooling and delegating their sovereignty in regional institutions.

Such a causal reconstruction is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, as we have seen in the previous section, liberal democracies vary in the degree to which they pool and delegate their sovereignty in regional organisations. As do autocracies. Regional organisations with a stronger democratic membership do not necessarily have more liberal authority either. Not all democracies seek to join or design liberal regional organisations. Nor do non-democracies necessarily shy away from them.

This is not to say that liberal nationalism has had no role to play in European integration. But it does not seem to be a precondition for either supranational or liberal regionalism. Conversely, liberal regionalism is no guarantor for liberal nationalism, not even in the EU. The EU has been facing democratic regression in several member states. Moreover, the combination of supranational and liberal regionalism has made the EU a primary target of contestations by actors that advance alternative, authoritarian and racist varieties of nationalism in Europe and beyond. The remainder of the paper explores to what extent these contestations are related to a change from a more procedural towards a more substantive variety of supranational liberalism.

Liberal and supranational regionalism and its non-liberal contestation

The end of the Second World War saw the return of liberal nationalism in Europe, which facilitated the building of a European Community, in which member states from the very beginning have pooled and delegated sovereignty. From its inception, the EU has been anchored in liberal values. Democracy and human rights have always played a role in the practices of European integration. Yet, as a 'club of democracies', the European Community had not developed any instruments dedicated to the promotion and protection of liberal values and norms in the member states (cf. van Hüllen & Börzel, 2015). The Single European Act in 1986 obliged the member states 'to promote democracy on the basis of the fundamental rights recognised in the constitutions and laws of the Member States' (preamble, third paragraph). The commitment to democracy and fundamental rights became legally binding only with the EU's founding Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Till then, European integration, arguably, conformed more to procedural rather than substantive liberalism.

The end of the Cold War provided a boost for liberalism, both at the domestic and the regional level. Socialism as the only remaining alternative to liberalism, after fascism had been defeated in 1945, was discredited by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The rise of China had only started and

seemed to be driven by its careful opening towards economic liberalism. The demise of the Soviet Union saw a third wave of democratisation (Huntington, 1991). The EU responded to these changes by strengthening both its supranationalism and its liberalism. The completion of the Single European Market supplemented the free movement of goods with liberalising services, labour, and capital, the internal market's 'four freedoms' (cf. Moravcsik, 1998: Ch. 6). With the introduction of the Euro as a single currency, member states granted the EU full authority over monetary policy, which has severely curbed their sovereignty to embed economic liberalism in welfare state policies (e.g., Schmidt & Thatcher, 2013). In the realm of internal security, the EU acquired far-reaching decision-making powers, too, including migration and asylum (Zaun, 2017). States wishing to become a member of the EU were not only obliged to adopt the entire body of EU law before joining. They also had to demonstrate that their institutions were able to uphold the free market, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights (the 'Copenhagen criteria' of 1993). The impeding accession of new and potentially unstable democracies had made the EU adopt formal provisions to protect liberal principles. To lock-in liberal changes in post-socialist member states, the EU created specific post-accession instruments to monitor and enforce compliance. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 not only enshrined the Copenhagen criteria as formal membership conditions. Article 7 also introduced a safeguard clause establishing a sanctioning mechanism in case member states failed to respect the Union's basic liberal principles listed in Article 2. In 2001, the Nice Treaty revisions established a prevention mechanism to Article 7, enabling the EU to act already on 'a clear risk of serious breach'.

The strengthening of the EU's supranational regionalism and its transformation into a more substantive kind of liberalism resulted in its increasing politicisation (cf. Hooghe & Marks, 2009; Kriesi, 2016; Schimmelfennig et al., 2015) by right and left-wing populist forces. They have been united in their opposition against the pooling and delegation of national sovereignty at the EU level forcing states to open their borders to foreign trade, capital and migrants and circumscribing the capacities of (elected) governments to redistribute wealth and protect national culture. Moreover, authoritarian populist parties increasingly express and mobilise civilisational, religious, and ethnonationalist claims to dismiss diverse lifestyles (gender relations, multiculturalism, LGBTQIAP+) as 'unhealthy'. They promise to restore both popular sovereignty and national identity by states 'taking back control' and offering a sense of belonging and solidarity in a community as a 'satisfying alternative to the burdens of individual responsibility' (Galston, 2018, p. 18). By pitching collective self-determination against individual self-determination, nationalism and liberalism are turned into antagonists.

The backlash by non- and illiberal nationalist forces has been fueled by the multiple crises of the EU (Webber, 2019). Its liberal supranationalism

has failed to lock-in liberal democracy in some member states. Nor has it been able to tackle mass migration or climate change. And it was a major cause for Great Britain to be the first member state to leave the EU. At the same time, member states resorted to further pooling and delegation to get through the Euro crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather than returning to a more procedural understanding of liberalism, the EU's liberal commitments have become increasingly decoupled from illiberal practices, not only in back-sliding member states but also at the EU's external borders.

It remains to be seen whether the EU will continue on its path towards cosmopolitan internationalism by expanding its supranational institutions and strengthening its liberal principles, or rather relapse into some less supranational and less liberal form of regionalism, or even disintegrate altogether (Auer, 2022; Vollaard, 2018; Webber, 2019). Liberal nationalism as such is no guarantor for the EU to stay on course. Rather, it has become a major source of the contestation of the EU as a model of liberal and supranational regionalism by non-liberal forms of nationalism.

Conclusion

The paper engaged the work of Ernst B. Haas on regionalism, liberalism and nationalism to understand the EU as a form of liberal supranationalism. For EBH, liberal nationalism was the most likely case for the transformation into cosmopolitan internationalism with the help of supranational institutions that would render the nation state increasingly obsolete.

European integration seems to confirm the Haasian hypothesis. The return of liberal nationalism after the Second World War and its boosting after the end of the Cold War provide an explanation for why European integration de-emphasised national borders and member state governments upgraded their common interest in tackling transboundary challenges, such as the liberal transitions of post-socialist and post-conflict countries, environmental pollution, global economic and financial crises, or pandemics. The progressive pooling and delegation of national sovereignty on a broadening scope of policies has turned the EU into a strong form of supranational and liberal regionalism. Moreover, Western Europe has been the only case so far in which liberal nationalism started to transform into a form of cosmopolitan internationalism, where society is rationalised at the international level and the nation state becomes increasingly obsolete as a rationaliser and guarantor of human progress. In other parts of the world, most notably North America, liberal nationalism has resisted such a transformation. It remains to be seen whether Europe will reverse its path amidst nationalist backlash. In any event, liberal nationalism is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for cosmopolitan internationalism to emerge.

EBH might have argued that liberal nationalism with its 'special affinity' to 'supranational institutions' (Haas, 1997, p. 341) has clustered in Western Europe more than anywhere else in the world. Yet, why then do the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Free Trade Area or NATO only show limited levels of pooling and delegation of sovereignty? Another argument resonating with EBH thinking is that states have experienced the Second World War and its consequences differently and, therefore, learned different lessons. The United States liberated Europe from fascism and became the leader of the free world. Other states (re)gained national sovereignty as part of their liberation from colonial rule and foreign domination. In a similar vein, the end of the Cold War returned to Central and Eastern European states the sovereignty they had lost to the Soviet Union after the Second World War.

These differences matter as elites involved in region-building almost always develop identity narratives linking their national experience to the respective regions. These identity narratives need to resonate with citizens in order to generate diffuse support for regional integration (cf. Börzel & Risse, 2020). The founding fathers of the European integration project were united in interpreting the two World Wars and the Holocaust as a common history of destruction which Europeans needed to overcome (Risse, 2010: Chapter 3). For the longest time, this identity construction provided for a permissive consensus on European integration shared by the majority of citizens with Europeanised national identities. South-east Asian elites, in contrast, developed the narrative of the ASEAN way of emphasising diversity to legitimise ASEAN. The ASEAN way exemplifies an identity construction that was explicitly set up against the European experience (as the 'other') of strongly legalised as well as supranational regionalism (for a detailed discourse analysis, see Yukawa, 2018). The emphasis on preserving sovereignty and diversity as well as on informal networking and communication is enshrined in ASEAN institutions. Diversity was also used initially as an argument for tolerating various regime types.

Liberal nationalism may explain why European and Asian elites constructed different narratives to legitimise regionalism. European political leaders were able to invoke identity discourses built around overcoming Europe's nationalist past to move towards an ever-closer union. Haas expected that the loyalties of Europeans would eventually shift to the EU's supranational centre (Haas, 1958, p. 18). Yet, in the 2000s, European integration became more salient and increasingly contested in the member states (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). Populist Eurosceptic forces have been mobilising citizens holding exclusive nationalist identities, which has at times prevented the upgrading of the common interest in response to the euro crisis and the challenges of mass migration. This identity politics maps onto the realignment of political forces alongside a transnational cultural cleavage

which is discernible across Europe as well as other regions (cf. Börzel & Risse, 2020). Scholars have labelled the cleavage differently, but they all refer to some degree of openness, internationalism and cosmopolitanism, at the one end, versus closeness and exclusive nationalism, at the other end (Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Hutter et al., 2016; Zürn & De Wilde, 2016). The two ends map onto Haas' distinction between liberal and other forms of nationalism.

Liberal nationalism may be more inclusive allowing for secondary regional identities, which, in turn, foster the upgrading of the common interest by elites and the permissive consensus for supranational integration. It does not, however, eradicate exclusive national identity constructions. They linger on if only among a minority of citizens and can be mobilised to contest liberal regionalism. EBH might not have foreseen such deep contestations, even though he conceded that 'the link between liberalism and collective learning is far from sturdy' (Haas, 1997, p. 332) and that liberal nation states had yet to learn how to cope with multiculturalism (Haas, 1997, p. 336). His distinction between procedural and substantive liberalism provides a promising starting point for theorising their causes. The shift from a more procedural liberal internationalism to a more substantive supranational liberalism has sharpened the tensions between collective and individual self-determination, between the protection of human rights and the promotion of open borders, on the one hand, and national sovereignty and welfare democracy, on the other. The shift has fueled contestations of Europe's supranational and liberal regionalism by non-liberal nationalist forces undermining the liberal consensus that sustained the European and the international order (Haas, 1997, pp. 342–343). It remains to be seen whether the link between liberal nationalism and cosmopolitan internationalism will weaken or whether cosmopolitanism was 'a liberal delusion' (Mearsheimer, 2018) because ethnonationalism is inherent in humans, and therefore, liberal nationalism will be replaced by a religious, racists, or Marxist alternative.

Notes

1. Forms of regionalism are often placed a long a continuum with international cooperation or intergovernmentalism on one end, and supranational integration or supranationalism at the other. On the distinctions see e.g., Stone Sweet & Sandholtz, 1997; Tsebelis & Garrett, 2001; Börzel & Risse, 2016; Hooghe et al., 2019.
2. *Authority of Integration* is an index composed of the average of the two measures of delegation and pooling for a given year. Delegation is an annual measure of the allocation of authoritative competences to non-state bodies in an IO's decision-making process, it can range from 0 to 1. *Pooling* estimates on an annual basis the extent to which member states of an IO share authority

through collective decision making, it can also rage from 0 to 1. *Policy scope* captures the amount of policy areas which an IO has obtained competences for, it ranges from 1 to 25. Data for these measures are taken for the year 2010 from the *Measure of International Authority* datasets (*MIA-Policy* and *MIA-Authority*), compiled by Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks and collaborators on the authority of international organizations; last access December 29, 2023. The individual values are reported in the annex.

3. The EU would score even higher on authority if one used only delegation instead of the average of pooling and delegation. Unlike delegation, pooling is fairly common among ROs, some of which show even higher levels than the EU (on a far more limited number of policies, though; cf. Hooghe et al., 2019).
4. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights was only declared in 2000 and entered into force in 2009. Likewise, respect of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy became a formal criterion for membership as late as 1993 (see below). Yet, the founding states of the European Communities were all parties to the Council of Europe and European Convention of Human Rights. And the EU had always defined itself as a club of democracies (cf. van Hüllen & Börzel, 2015: XXX).
5. Unlike in Figure 1, only 29 of the 30 ROs could be included as V-Dem does not provide data for the member states of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).
6. Viktor Orbán's 'State of the Nation Address', Budapest, February 10, 2019, available at: https://visegradpost.com/en/2019/02/11/prime-minister-viktor-orbans-state-of-the-nation-address-full-speech/, last access September 5, 2022.
7. At the same time, EBH deems Tamir's understanding of liberalism as the individuals' right to live according to their values and 'to live within the culture of their choice' (Tamir, 1993, p. 8) as too limited (Haas, 2000, p. 420, fn. 13).

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