

The Study of Regional Integration:

Reflections on the Joy and Anguish of Pretheorizing

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I. WHY STUDY REGIONAL INTEGRATION?

WHY have we been studying something we call "regional integration" for about fifteen years? We were stimulated by two otherwise unrelated trends: the flowering in the United States of systematic social science and the blooming in Europe of political efforts to build a united continent, to "integrate" Western Europe at least.¹ But the story of integration encompassed a mixed bag of heroes ranging from such regional "integrators" as Napoleon Bonaparte and Simón Bolívar to nation-building statesmen such as Otto von Bismarck and Camillo Cavour. Some saw even in Adolf Hitler and Hideki Tojo certain characteristics of the political actor who seeks to integrate nations into a regional unit. Are we then studying *any* kind of political unification?

Often one gets the impression that the study of regional integration is the same as the study of regional cooperation, of regional organizations, of regional systems and subsystems, or of regionalism. All these terms are widely used. They compound the general uncertainty of whether regional conquerors and nation builders are also actors on the stage of regional integration. To delimit the field, therefore, it must be stressed that the study of regional inte-

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¹ I consider the pioneering work in this field to be Karl W. Deutsch's *Political Community at the International Level: Problems of Definition and Measurement* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1954). Deutsch raised all the major questions and introduced many of the concepts that still preoccupy and guide the research effort.