

## dianoesis

Vol 13 (2022)

Thomas Hobbes: Individualism, Freedom, Sovereignty



### The World Crises in Hegel's Dialectic Thinking & the Current Contradictions Confronted Europe

*Georgios Skoulas, Despoina Skoula*

doi: [10.12681/dia.37787](https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.37787)

#### To cite this article:

Skoulas, G., & Skoula, D. (2024). The World Crises in Hegel's Dialectic Thinking & the Current Contradictions Confronted Europe. *Dianoesis*, 13, 141–154. <https://doi.org/10.12681/dia.37787>

## The World Crises in Hegel's Dialectic Thinking & the Current Contradictions Confronted Europe

Georgios E. Skoulas,  
*Professor of Political Theory*  
*University of Macedonia-Greece,*  
gskoulas@uom.edu.gr

Despoina Skoula,  
*Ph.D. in Constitutional Law,*  
*Democritus University of Thrace*  
debbieskoula@yahoo.gr

**Abstract:** The research objective of this paper emanates from a reasonable anxiety regarding the direction of things in the present world scene. For that, the Hegelian notion of the world crises is necessary to be traced in order to comprehend better the course of world economy and the contradictions that the EU is confronted with today. The main interest is focused on: the shaped order of the world, the political actions and strategies that are implemented by the dominant forces of the planet, the prospects and objectives that emerged in the European Union. This way, the political theory of neo-liberalism is traced in order to compare the results of the political actions which facilitated the increasing tendencies of the globalization. Yet, the prospects and possible developments of the European Union are studied carefully, while the latter is found today in the direction and stage of its endeavors of political integration. This attempt is made more or less to strong unification of EU, because with one united Europe it is possible to liberate itself from the

tenet of neo-liberalism. It means, that EU could possibly line up one human, just and democratic alternative solution to the anarchist capitalism of the hegemonic forces of the West as well as to the authoritarian Asiatic capitalism. The research then, is to highlight the elements that compose the deepening for the real political unification of the European Union, without overseeing the obstacles that appear in that venture. Emphasis is given to the international economic system and to the neo-liberalist ideological doctrine which restricts the dynamic of the political integration.

**Keywords:** world crisis, dialectic, globalization, contradictions, positivism, hegemony, neo-liberalism, political integration of EU.

## 1. Introduction

The objective of this article, is to highlight the notions of Hegel's thinking about the world crises and find out how the current contradictions of Europe can be compared as well as how they can be possibly overcome. Those ideas were made at the rise of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but they still remain today of some importance for his attempt to that reconciliation between the particular and the general. He was the first one to raise the separation of the civil society and state, as the organizing rule of the modern world. The objective of the paper then, has three directions: 1) to analyze the Hegelian notions of the crises by emphasizing the real actors that play the significant role internationally. 2) To trace the course of the world economy in order to analyse the particular factors that had built the present world order, which was imposed after the collapse of the Eastern European countries. 3) To focus on the significance of the European countries' unification in the form of integration at the present time in order to see how it overcomes the crisis.

This examination is necessary because at the rise of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it appears that it is not abandoning us not only the threat of the war but the war itself. This constant conflict seems that it doesn't have an end even though the wall of hate, which had prescribed as the end of history, has been demolished, since the history itself interpreted as a constant

war collision. The conflicts that they were taking place for three and so decades, in Middle East, in Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon and in Syria are clear evidence. The world today is terrified and stands dazed front of the spectacle offered by the great democratic societies, where in the name of democracy and liberty they assault and exterminate others only for the safety and the expansion of their power.

The taking place conditions in the world scene that are reflected in the relations among countries today, those relations are in fact *relations of domination*. While they have past already three different systems in the international field, as the experts suggest, does not appear any improvement. The powerful force that leads the world today in the fourth world system as a supreme force is a well known fact and it is not other than the U.S.A. The unknown fact however, is that the years since 1989 to the present there has prevailed one new order in the world scene, which leads to an immorality due to the complete redemption of basic meanings and rules of the international law. The international Organizations which were established previously, as a necessity for the administration of the crises of the world and so avoid the various conflicts mainly at the century which the international balances were disturbed were not successful.

Thus, in that international system after 1989 in which the U.S.A undertook the hegemony of the planet, the formed relations were so as to lay their foundations upon the wrong terms. These terms are with one dimensional view only in the international firmament, where according to the desires of the powerful they impose and achieve the maintenance of the world balance. The ever known language is that which is based on the economic power, on the technological and armament's superiority in which there is no place for concepts of democracy or equity. The states remain as the elements of the international system by maintaining the objective of the maximization of the benefits of each one. But, when they are not on the top of the pyramid, they accept as much as their weakness allows them. That of course leads to

an unresolved constant crisis. Let's reflect back on history for now to see how crises were treated by Hegel.

## 2. Hegelian Notions of Crises

Hegel was the first philosopher, according to Habermas, who anticipated his own epoch as an age of modernity. Although this epoch is different from previous historical stages he raised it to a **crisis** due to that kind of difference. This difference is based on the fact that the modern age is a **stage of transition** to a new epoch.<sup>1</sup>He discovers the subjectivity as the basic principle of the modern times while the concept of reconciliatory force of one **reason** which cannot be produced from the subjectivity without rupture is elaborated. When Hegel examines the splitting that is caused by thought there is stressed the authoritarian side of self-consciousness.

So, the modern aspects of the positive reveal the principle of the subjectivity as a principle of domination. The positivism of rationality characterizes the impasse of the epoch and in that impasse the individual is either transformed to an object which is oppressed or transforms the nature to an object that oppresses it. In the authoritarian incarnations of the subjective *reason* he arrays against the reconciliatory force a subjectivity which appears with the name of life.<sup>2</sup>But, he could not really draw off the element of reconciliation, which is the resettlement of the broken totality from the self-consciousness of the known subject toward itself. In order to reach a reconciliation of the destructive modernity it presupposes one moral entity that is not yet grown up on the ground of the modern era but it is borrowed from other epochs.

The Hegelian notions of history, dialectic and revolution are based on his logic of the individuals, state and social change. First, he did not attribute much sense on the

---

<sup>1</sup> Habermas J. *The Philosophical Reason of Modernity*, Publ. Alexandria, Athens, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 49.

intention of the individuals regarding their ability to demolish things as a result of a revolution or to reconstruct the society as a target of that change. For Hegel, the faceless forces that are interwoven with society regulate the destiny of the individuals. His great estimation was the nation state as the characteristic of the political philosophy. In the interpretation on history, he thought, that the nation rather than the individual or a group of individuals constituted the considerable unit and the objective of the philosophy of history, which through the dialectic is indicated the achievements of each nation as an element of the evolutionary civilization.<sup>3</sup> The spirit of nation that works within the minds of individuals but independent of their will and intentions he regarded as the real creator of arts and law of morality and religion. For that the history of civilization is a succession of national civilizations, where each nation contributes to the overall human achievement. In the nation state the inherent impulse of nation to create, acquires consciousness in itself which reaches to a rational expression.<sup>4</sup> The state then, is the mastermind and the purpose of the national development. It includes all the creations of the nation that have a moral and spiritual significance for the civilization.

So, in the political philosophy, two elements of primary importance existed for Hegel: the first is, the dialectic as a capable method to lead to new conclusions; and the second, the theory of nation state as an embodiment of the political philosophy. Both were inseparable for him, because the dialectical mind was the guarantee of the predominance of the nation state, so as to support his conclusions. He sees the social totality as divided into three categories or moments as he calls them: a) Family, b) civil society, and c) state. What exists in the first is the idea of collectivity. In the second all the private interests of the individuals who each persuades and he describes it as a morality that is lost in its limbs. While the third it is perceived as 'an ethical entity or

---

<sup>3</sup> Sabine G. H. *The History of Political Theories*, Publ. Atlantis, Athens, pp. 674-675.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 675.

community where rules one basic characteristic which is the mutual sympathy or one general altruism'.<sup>5</sup>

The business deals of the market are described as a neutral field for the strategic persuasion of the private interests which thus build a system of dependency. The state then is conceived as the ethical part above all, which is the only rational and capable administrator with its civil servants to manage and regulate opposed private interests among citizens and classes of society. He foresees the strong mechanisms of the state as the necessary instruments not only of removing any obstacles to make the economic competition possible but to transform the particular to universal. The state for him should export this antagonism to the international level with other states, the power of which could be constituted from the full authority and control that one state has exercised domestically on its subjects.

In the modern time all men are free and by serving the state they can reach at an ideal integration of themselves. Due to the fact that the integration or unification takes place not by men's free will but by the state itself forcibly, the identities must be false. In that case, the search of a non viable identity, the need of a different from the positive unification which is fixed in the relations of power authority is confirmed through the experience of crisis. In that way Hegel was the first to indicate the modernity itself as a problem. But unfortunately Hegel could not resolve the problem of self-confirmation of modernity.

### 3. The E.U. & the International Contradictions

In the international edifice today, appears one new phenomenon which disturbs the world balances dramatically. That is one market without boards, the so-called **globalization**. This term refers to the international economy without boards which the economic nationalism has been

---

<sup>5</sup> Skoulas G. *Introduction to Political Philosophy and Theory, Currents of Thought & Thinkers of Modernity*, Publications Gutenberg, Athens 2011, p. 325.

obliterated and the production has been globalized. The production has been expanded to the degree which the big corporations are transformed into non government entities where they are involved in one unique internal distribution of labor which covers many countries.<sup>6</sup>

On another view, the globalization meant markets where with the concept of the open borders for the free transport of capital and goods have been globalized, but the states remain to share the power authority with the multinational corporations. In such a system, however, the role of the state is very much restricted for intervention in order to plan the development and the function of the market. Thus, the political impact if it is not absent it is very weak. Economists suggest that the business corporations in that way operate in the rationale of the direct profit which doesn't go along with the long term development that a government of one state would have planned.<sup>7</sup>

The open borders for markets with no limits, was simply for the reduction of state's inspections upon them. That opening was institutionalized with regulations which were including a set of measures. These measures were taken in political level for the promotion of the globalization but did not benefit the many. Those measures are the basic policies of one new doctrine of political theory and practice, that of **new-liberalism** which is responsible for the current course the economy has taken internationally. It began the decade of 1980s in the United States of America, in England and in other places later, from the economic elites of those states. This way the economic power authority transfers from the level of state to the globalized field and from the public sector to the private one. Those elites of capital are the winning new masters of the world. It means that those who are benefited by such international situation are the few of this planet while the many, the environment and the labor is the great ill.

---

<sup>6</sup> Fotopoulos P. *Globalization, Left and Democracy*, Athens, Pub. Hellenic Letters, 2002, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Passet R. *The New liberalist Deception*, Thessaloniki 2006, Pub. Epikentro, p. 141.



In such an international environment as the above, the European Union of the 27 member states is called to play a significant role, where it depends on its strength and dynamic the Union itself can influence and perhaps will transform it. But, the question that arises here is, does this strength or dynamic of the E.U. exist in the form of a content and objectives towards a different course other than that which it has been inscribed on the last international system? If yes then it might be happen.

But what is E.U. practically? Is it group of different countries that have an economic interest for organizing themselves, but they also tend to the political unification in order to come to play a role in the international scene? The notion of the European political integration consequently is related to the following: a) with the form and the degree of its unification and b) with the international environment by any form of evolution it happens to have. It is related thus with the mode that the international community is evolved, if it tends or not towards one integration, as with which form that integration is feasible since there doesn't exist one international government.

The creation of the European Union is regarded achievement of the aftermath era; it appears as a rational experiment for the development of conditions of peaceful co-existence and cohabitation of its people. It started in 1951 as a Community which evolved to the E.U. of 27 member-states today. It passed from the Community of six to the one of ten, to the Community of 12 and to the E.U. of 15, to the historical one of 25 and finally to the E.U. of 27 member-states of the European family while a number of countries remain as candidates to expect their accession today. The one agreement thus succeeds the other until 1992, where it is signed the agreement for the European Union, so with that agreement the EU itself could promote the balanced and the constant economic progress. The aims were: 1) to verify its identity in the international scene. 2) To encourage the protection of the rights of the citizens. 3) To maintain the communal vested right.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Political Dimension of European Union op. cit. pp. 117-166.*

#### 4. Theoretical Approaches of the Integration

a) As the theoreticians suggest to us, the first stage of the integration was clearly economic. That is, a stage of custom unification with a common foreign tariff that anticipated about one decade evolutionary process. The second stage had as an objective the larger unification with an enactment of one Common Agricultural Policy, the free removal of workers and capital, the harmonization of common policy and legislature for the health and security and a monetary unification with common currency and central bank. The course of the Union though, changed radically after the collapse of the eastern European countries.

This change is recorded with the reunion of Germany and the appearance of many regions and countries in the continent that expressed the desire to accession in the E.U. The beginning of the second stage is since the universality of the objectives and the content of the uniting process which were legislated and fortified. The objectives of the universal content were put with symbolic character the realization of which would lead to the integration of the uniting process.<sup>9</sup> In this stage of the venture is where that the euro-pessimism transforms to euro-optimism. It refers to the unification of a group of states that forms a large family of E.U. by taking the bar from the national-state in the aftermath age.

b) From one theoretical approach to the other as: functionalist, new-functionalist and federalist, anxious academics study the possible versions for the suitability which could these theories have in reality. That is, if with their implementation the approaches of the scientists as: Mitrany, Haas, etc. could lead to the complete unification and to an effective function of the Union or not.<sup>10</sup> The **functionalist approach** had adopted the aim for the world

---

<sup>9</sup> Ioakimides P. K. *The State and the European Integration*, Publ. Themelio, Athens, 1994, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ioakimides P. K. *The State and the European Integration: Seeking one New Aristotelian Approach in the Process of the Political Integration*, Publ. Themelio, Athens, 1994, pp. 19-30.

welfare, which through that it can be achieved the assurance of peace and the avoidance of war.

That is, with the maximization of the prosperity, the construction of the institutions is increasing in quantity that leads finally to the creation of an entity beyond the level of the nation state. With the **new-functionalist approach** it is the process which organized interest groups, elites and political parties participate in the unification. With such participation of individual citizens, groups and parties where the central institutions respond to the pressures and expectations it would lead to promote the process of unification in the form of a widening rationale of integration.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the integration is defined as a “process through which the individuals who act politically in different national frameworks are convinced to shift their loyalty and political activities into one centre, the institutions of which could have authority upon the pre-existed nation states”.<sup>12</sup> This approach then, indicates the process which the political representatives of various countries carry their thoughts and hopes to one instrument beyond the member-states of the Union. The **federalist approach** tends to the formation of one federalist government which would co-ordinate the central with the peripheral authorities that act upon in various and specific sections of activity.<sup>13</sup>

In other words, the solution to various disputes and social conflicts is obtained only with the existence and presence of institution which could have adequate power authorities. However, it is impossible for the EU to become ever one large state as it was imagined by the federalist approach, equivalent to the nation-state. The E.U. cannot follow the model of one federalist state in a dimension of a continent as the U.S.A. or Canada. On the contrary, the Union shows the image of one new morpheme or an entity in which wouldn't

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p.23.

<sup>12</sup> Haas E.B. *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950-1957*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1968, p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> Mackay R.W.G. *towards a United States of Europe*, Hutchinson, London 1969, p. 81.

be in effect the conventional constitutional counts as those which derive from the institutions of the nation state.

Therefore, it seems that there is not yet an independent legislative, functional executive body to which it could be accountable to the democratic elected representatives. Most of the authorities of the E.U. derive from the agreements of the member-states since the legislature of the Union in a great extent is based on the elaboration and embodiment of common suggestions and initiatives on the level of the executive power of those countries for the implementation of the common policy. While it is a political entity, without been identical to the nation state, the Union has managed to replace the member states in several grounds of government mainly after the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 by having significant legislative and executive functions. These attempts and developments of the union strengthen the necessity for the integration in a way to reach the **sphere of politics**, so as the E.U. to have the possibility to affect the international environment.

However, the ideological identity of that European family, as it has been manifested in the course of its evolution politically and economically in the late modernity after 1989, is interdependent with the new doctrine the so called **new-liberalism**. The image of the new-liberalism is simply the significant shrinkage of the public sector, by expanding at the same time the range of the private sector as a steady position and strategy of conservatism. The objective of this doctrine that appeared in the last two decades of the past century was the reinforcement of the power of the private capital to obliterate the necessary social inspection over the markets.

The basic policies which had been implemented from the leading countries to that doctrine were: a) the liberation of the markets of capital in confirming the possibility of tax-dodging so as to be eroded the base of tax exemption that is required for the financial support of the welfare state; b) The liberation of the markets of commodities and the privatization of the public firms and lastly the reduction of welfare state and the redistribution of the tax weight to benefit the groups with high income. The **globalization** of

that economy and the new liberal policies coincided with significant technological changes which marked the transfer of the market economy to the post-industrial phase. That tendency wiped out every obstacle which existed before in every nation state for the private capital to be moving free and be activated, organized and accumulated internationally.

The globalization consequently is an outcome of the political practices of new liberalism that creates great inequality between the capital and labor with a result of benefiting the few instead of the many. One such conception of the last decades of the twentieth century was the coupled of classical liberalism and the new conservative ideology. That is, with the complete liberation of the trade and the non-intervention state as a fold and conception that had prevailed in the classical liberalism from the one hand and with the aggressiveness against the welfare-state and the public sector on the other, is an assault to the collectivity. That is a tendency which has and raises the new conservative political practice.

## 5. Conclusion

If the EU developed an edifice that is constituted from different countries, languages and cultures by maintaining their particular characteristics and their self-sufficiency, it must start its political integration today. It should get rid of the **ideological doctrine of new liberalism** as the main contradiction, which has confronted E.U. It must cease to be prison to that ideology, because it does not lead to the social justice, progress and prosperity of its peoples. In order to do that change it requires a lot of work with active citizens who would have constant vigilance and supervision for that Europe of peoples as human beings.

The economically and politically united Europe, is indispensable in order to press the capitalism of the great and hegemonic powers, to be less authoritarian and unjust. Only the united Europe in both fields, economic and political, can overcome its crises and may play significant role

internationally. This united entity, not as an antagonistic pole to U.S.A., may lead the international system from the hegemonic model which is maintained today to the more just socially and more democratic direction politically.

### Bibliography

- Etzioni A. *Political Unification: A Cooperative Study of Leaders and Forces*, N.Y: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
- Haas E. *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950-1957*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968.
- Haas E. *Beyond the Nations State*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1964.
- Harrison R.J. *Europe in Question*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974.
- Lindberg L. *Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1963.
- Mackay R.W.G. *Towards a United States of Europe*, London: Hutchinson, 1969.
- Mitrany D. A. *Working Peace System*, Quadrangle Books, Chicago, 1966.
- Keohane R. O. – Hoffmann St. *The New European Community Decision Making and Institutional Change*, Westview Press, Oxford, 1991.
- Passet R. *New-Liberalist Deception*, Publ. Epikentro Thessaloniki, 2006.
- Ioakimides P.K. *The City-State & the European Integration*, Publ. Themelio, Athens, 1994.
- Skoulas G. *Society & Political Theory: Critical Political Analysis of the Modern World*, University of Macedonia Press, Thessaloniki, 2007.
- Skoulas G. *Introduction to Political Philosophy and Theory, Currents of Thought & Thinkers of Modernity*, Publications Gutenberg, Athens 2011
- Stephanou K. *Institutional Reform of European Union*, Publ. Papazisis, 1996.



