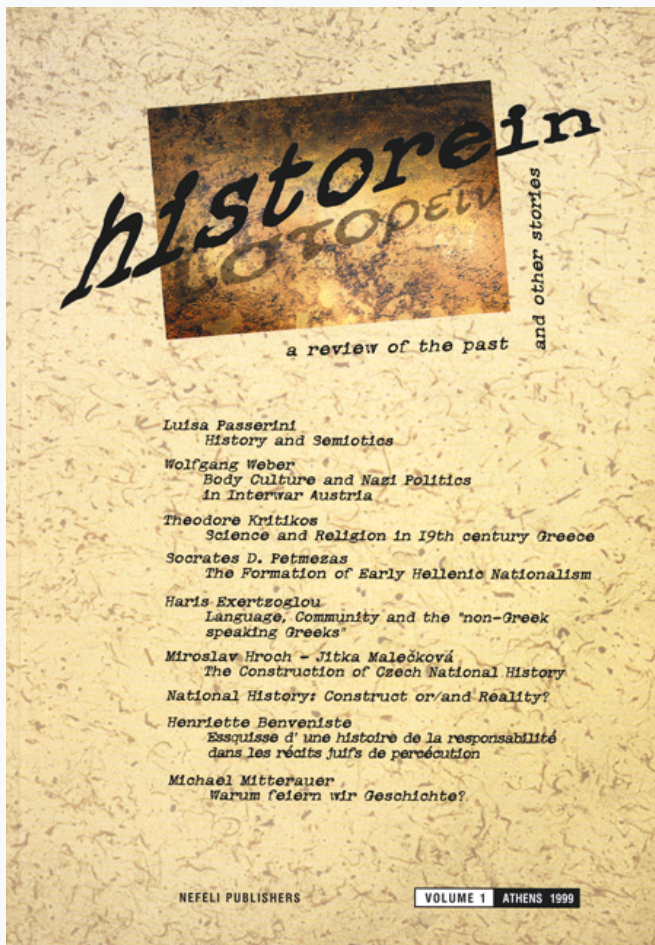


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### Supranationality, Postmodernism and Construction of Identity: Comments on the Formation and Institution of European Studies.

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## DEBATE

*is a special section devoted to the exchange of ideas and thoughts and to the development of arguments*

*concerning a specific topic currently of interest (or even controversy) in the wider domain of social sciences. "European Studies" stands as our first topic; all interested are invited to comment on the first two contributions or make their own points with reference to the theme.*

# *Supranationality, postmodernism and construction of identity: Comments on the formation and institution of European studies*

**Yiorgos Kokkinos**

In recent years we have witnessed the process of the formation and academic institution of the new cognitive field of European studies. It is clear that in the case in question the political state of affairs plays a crucial role. The political expediency linked to the processes of expansion and further deepening of the European Union functions as a foundation for the creation of a new field of scientific interest, oriented to the reconstruction of the lineage of the European idea. It also aims to shift the problematic of European social sciences and cultural studies from the context and the centralised, homogenised and entrenched value system of the nation-state of the modern era (i.e. from the French Revolution onwards), to that of universality, cosmopolitanism and the ethics of difference, which form the discourse of the global society of late capitalism.

The latter is characterised by the globalisation of capital and communication systems, the increasing complexity of the international system, the increased intertwining and interdependence of state sovereignties, the emergence of supranational political and economic organisations, the treatment of alterities or of the regional and local element as "tiles" in the world mosaic. Finally, the mass consolidation of values and models of action, which constitute specific characteristics of the modern hedonistic and individualistic consumer culture; all factors which organise the deconstructing and decentralised discourse of postmodern theories.

In this new context, the eurocentric approach of globalisation, multiculturalism, supranationality and the adoption of universal

canonical principles emerge as the organisational basis and the founding principles of European studies. In this context, the emphasis on the uniqueness and the authenticity of specific cultural identities is viewed as an alternative to the dominant uniformity of the Western world. This practice on the one hand forms, on the basis of a cosmopolitan democracy, a type of a "free market of identities", and on the other hand fosters the culture of intellectual nomadism, which, however, is not in a position to dispense with traditional class or ethnocultural discriminations. In practice, it leads sometimes to cultural entrenchment and to the self-definition of particularities (hardening of cultural boundaries, separatist movements) and sometimes to a regression to the hard core of ethnic and religious myths (fundamentalism) through the horizontal rallying of the members of the ethnic, minority or cultural group and the illusory transcendence of the socio-ideological determinants which construct it, as well as of the relevant antagonisms which permeate it.

In this context, European studies function clearly now both as a mechanism for the formation of the European identity and as a testing field for the demonstration of interhistorical European cultural supremacy and domination. They construct a Eurocentric lineage which lends historical weight to the political decisions of the European directorate, and take on the role of the necessary know-how for the institutional building of the European Union, being involved in the whole spectrum of strategies for European integration. Indirectly, however, they also contain a critical and possibly emancipatory dimension, as they also have the potential to emerge as a mechanism of collective self-knowledge of European societies, as well as a vehicle for the acceleration and radicalisation of political and social integration.

The basic characteristic of this new cognitive field is its complex and multi-levelled character. Even though the issue has various starting points, for instance history, law, political science, economics, sociology, cultural and environmental studies, it nevertheless ends up in a functional interlinking of interdisciplinary studies and the emergence of multi-levelled and holistic interpretive schemata.

However, the Greek academic framework continues to remain inflexible to approaches of a similar breadth, and does not allow recourse to the logic of interdisciplinarity. In particular, Greek experts systematically ignore the historical dimension and the problematic of cultural studies, a fact which results in their contributions being characterised by instrumentalism and their content being almost exclusively institutional. On the other hand, the dominant ethnocentric character of Greek historiography and to a degree its temporal and spatial sealing-off from the other social sciences, inhibits every attempt at a more all-embracing viewing of the past of European societies as well as of their historical dynamic.

### *Theories of the awakening and construction of the European identity*

In every attempt to approach the idea of European unification, as well as the causes, intentions and the crucial circumstances which led to its realisation, the historian wavers between two dominant interpretive schemata, which are intersected by the opposing political strategies of

federalisation and of the extensive collaboration among sovereign nation-states.

The first, that of theories which are formed on the organisational principle of the notion of construction, from which arises a secondary canonical character, is structured around the central idea that the European cultural identity, and by extension the institutional formation of European unity, are in reality intellectual and political constructs which simulate the process of creation of the modern nation-states and aim at the reduction of the European economic and political community to a unified multiethnic and multicultural state formation with a historical dynamic. In this context, there is criticism of the "myth" of a single and compact European identity, on the following grounds: 1) The cultural heterogeneity and multiformity of the European continent is a fact, and constitutes the specific characteristic of the European world. Nevertheless, ethnic-religious and linguistic particularities now constitute only one of the two poles of the "dual identity" of the European citizen. 2) All attempts at unification of the European states have until now been of a compulsory character, have been imbued by veiled nationalist strategies and have aimed at the construction of a European identity from above. 3) These attempts pointed on every occasion, as an opposing trend to European unification, to the cultural entrenchment of ethnic-religious groups and the confinement of the European peoples to the hard core of their ethnic ideology and tradition, in the name of their cultural particularity, their political autonomy and, lately, of the postmodernist idea of multiculturalism. 4) European integration should not be treated as an objective necessity or as a historical teleology, but as the consequence of the political will and the desire for collective self-determination of the European peoples. 5) Provided that European particularity is not founded on cultural unity or on the dialectical synthesis of the cultural divergence of the European peoples, but, in contrast, on the historical, social and more generally on the cultural diversity of the European continent, this diversity should be strengthened and widened in the direction of respect for cultural particularity, but at the same time for cultural multiformity, as a partial manifestation of universality. At the same time, however, respect for cultural particularity should not seal off cultural identities and cultures, preventing interactive communication, mutual understanding and the osmosis of value systems and cultural practices in the canonical framework of an all-embracing universality. Finally, 6) the formation of the political community of the European Union as a supranational organisation must necessarily have as a precondition the establishment of a minimum consensus as its basis, guaranteed through the direct granting and safeguarding of a broad range of political and social rights. This directness at this point distances the schema of construction from the model of reference of the nation-state, in the context of which the specific quality of the citizen did not constitute a founding condition, but a secondary process of gradual and selective incorporation.

On the other hand, taking for granted the existence of a common European cultural identity, clearly distinct from what is in every case conceived as cultural otherness, and approaching Europe as an historical entity, as "a community of culture and history", which is forced by historical necessity to play out its assigned historical role, the second interpretive schema has,

we would say, a functional character, as it connects an essentialist approach of the European world with the possibility of its emergence in the international system as a single, unified power. Thus it confronts the processes of economic convergence and of political unification of the European states, as well as the possibility of their federalisation or confederalisation as the teleologically determined conclusion of a range of long, discontinuous, but also ever accelerating historical processes, articulated in four specific phases. The first phase is centuries-long and is characterised by the historical consciousness of the relative geographical, racial and cultural unity of mainly the Western European nations. Historically, this consciousness takes the form of the "self-substantialisation" and overestimation of the West against the supposedly ontologically inferior and historically backward "Other". The role of the "Other" was played successively by the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs, the Turks, the American Indians, the Russians, the Balkan peoples, the peoples of China and the Far East, the African blacks, etc. The second phase runs from the end of the First World War until the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957. In this phase, the awareness of the tragic consequences of the two World wars, as well as the progressive reduction of the international role of Europe, brought to the political stage the first organised attempts at collaboration between the European states. The third phase begins with the signing of the treaty establishing the European Economic Community (the Treaty of Rome, March 25th 1957) and ends with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty on February 7th 1992, qualitatively recasting the European Community as the European Union and forming the single European market. The characteristic feature of this third phase is the intensive activation of the processes of economic unification and confederal political organisation. Finally, the fourth phase, which has as its essential starting point the Intergovernmental Conference, looks to the future, has wide expectations, is linked with the realisation of the ideal of political unification, but also endorses political practices centered around the discourse of postmodernism. In this context the realisation of the ideal of political unification is treated as a subsequence of the process of supranational integration, which is constituted on the one hand in the surrender of the sovereign rights of the nation-state to the supranational or intergovernmental decision-making centres of the European Union, and on the other hand in the replacement of the code of values of the nation-state by the newly-created multicultural code of Europeanness.

However, neither in the context of the first nor in the context of the second interpretive schema is it possible to hide the fact that in the economic and the potential political unification of the European states the awareness of the diminution of the geopolitical and economic importance of Europe after the end of the Second World War weighed heavily. Equally, it is not possible to ignore the plans of the Americans for a strategic and economic unification of Western Europe as a single and unified front of confrontation with the Soviet bloc in the historical context of the Cold War; or the progressive globalisation of economic activity, which leads to the interdependence of national economies, the transcendence of national borders, but also, at the same time, to the internal homogenisation and external delimitation of the politico-economic formation of the European Union.

On the other hand, we are bound to acknowledge, as the historian Gunnar Hering points out, that in the emergence of the ideal of European political unification an important contribution was made by the tradition which certain "schemata of political collaboration" created in Europe from as early as the Middle Ages. These, in order of historical appearance, were the world Christian monarchy, the arbitrating mechanism controlled by the popes, the mechanistic schema of the balance of powers, the regional union of dynastic states, the formation of international directorates, such as the Holy Alliance (1815), with the aim of the formation of a pan-European system of security, and, finally, the practice of international conferences during the course of the 19th and 20th centuries (Hering counts nineteen conferences of this nature, from 1831/32 until 1913).

For these reasons we believe it is necessary to approach and place within its historical context the panorama of ideas referring to European identity, as well as the institutions which pave the way, we would say, for the economic and political unity of the Western European states in the *longue durée*, from the formation of the empire of Charlemagne to the present. In this case, if we take as a criterion the density of the political and intellectual actions taken in the name of the collaboration of the European states and of the common European cultural identity, we are bound to acknowledge that the interest of the historian must necessarily keep up with the accelerating pace of these actions, from the middle of the 19th to the end of the 20th century. This means that if the idea of a United Europe functioned as the conservative utopian alternative to the idea of world revolution in the modern era, the interest in it must, on the contrary, constitute today the arena for the forging of an open, democratic, emancipated and multicultural society of citizens. In this perspective, European studies must free themselves from the embrace of the dominant discourse which they serve, checking their conceptual tools, consolidating their internal cohesion, but at the same time also testing the effectiveness of the cognitive practices inherent in them. Simultaneously, however, they must be transformed into a channel of dialogue between what is and what should be, submitting reality to the control of the regulatory principles and of the values that the scientific reconstruction and interpretation produces and uses as critical tools. This control will reveal the inherent contradictions and asymmetries of reality and will indicate the methods and the limits of its reshaping or transcendence.

# *Academic inputs and outputs of European integration*

**Vassilis Pasmazoglou**

The present text comes partly as a response to the contribution of G. Kokkinos on European studies and seeks to broaden and diversify the discussion on the issue. Regarding specific points raised by Kokkinos on the dominance, within a semi-hierarchical multicultural framework, of the "Northwest European" cultural pattern, it seems to me that this is only too natural given that: a) it is from these Northwest European countries that the whole venture of European integration was initiated and proved to be, at least up to now, a success story; b) in any case, and from a longer perspective going back not only decades but even centuries, the terms of the debate on economy and society for both "Northwestern" and peripheral European nations were set in the former and were imported, so to speak, into the latter (this applies to liberal, radical, marxist and even, recently, so-called neoliberal ideas); c) in the post-war era, peripheral European countries,

both South and East, were plagued by a combination of lagging socio-economic development and authoritarian political systems which made large sections of the population look in the direction of the EC (i.e. Northwest Europe) as a model to be adopted for the improvement of their lot. These considerations go a long way to explaining the almost natural way through which the dominance Kokkinos refers to has been established. This being said, let me diversify the discussion on the academic impact of European integration.

The last decades have witnessed a proliferation of academic activities in the field of European studies, including teaching, research, and publications. This new phenomenon can be seen as a result of two independent developments which have coincided: a. the progress of European integration since the late 1950s and b. the tremendous increase in the number of universities, students, staff and social science curricula, which has taken place more or less in the same period. European studies is itself a product of history: given the fact that four decades have elapsed since the signing of the Treaty of Rome, we now have enough material to analyse this sui generis interaction between European integration and "its" academic community.

It seems useful, from the outset, to make a distinction between two different, albeit interrelated, aspects: a) the study of European integration per se and b) European studies in general. As opposed to G. Kokkinos' contribution to this journal, the present text will concentrate chiefly on the former aspect.

Over the last decades, the study of the

European Community (EC) or Union (EU) has gradually permeated such fields as, for instance, economics, political sciences, legal studies and international relations. Given the complexity and diversity of European integration, this has led to an interdisciplinary approach, which brings together and combines – albeit with different dosages and emphases – these various academic fields. In other words, we have a historical phenomenon which, because of its importance and uniqueness, gradually becomes an area of study, and furthermore, from a certain point onwards, fosters this study. Indicatively, in the period 1990-1997 the EC/EU has financed, through the Jean Monnet Program alone, more than 1,500 European courses, modules, chairs or research projects in the 15 member states. The academic fields involved have been law (493), economics (420), political sciences (310), and history (130), the remaining few being multidisciplinary projects. This is, of course, only part of the story and corresponds to the most conspicuous aspect of the tremendous push, by the Brussels quasi-statal authorities, to promote research and teaching in this new field of "Eurology". There are also other projects and means through which the academic interest in European integration has been facilitated and furthered by the Brussels authorities. Indicatively enough, the EC/EU Commission has itself started compiling information on European research and courses. According to the 1996 "Nouvelles Universitaires Européennes" and its supplement, there are about 150 post-graduate European studies degrees offered in EU member states' universities. Furthermore, the "Euristote" database, produced by the Catholic University of Louvain at the request of the EC Commission, contains more than 15,000 research projects and names approximately 6,000 professors and researchers on European integration in 420 universities throughout the world. Their work concerns primarily the fields of law, economics, political science and history, but also sociology, geography, agronomy, demography and environmental sciences. Finally, whereas in the early 1960s there were less than half a dozen academic journals specialising in European studies - e.g. the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (UK), *Common Market Law Review* (NL), *Revue du Marché Commun* (F) - over the last decades there has been a proliferation of such publications.

Even if there had been no material and moral support from the Brussels authorities, the academic community would surely have pursued "Eurological" activities, on the one hand because of the interesting and challenging questions the EC/EU provides and, on the other, because of the creation of a particular "niche" in the labour market: i.e. the increased demand, both in the Brussels and in the national or even regional administrations, but also by firms, professional organisations, pressure groups and mass media, for specialists in what the EC/EU is all about. Studying Europe has, at some point, provided interesting and lucrative job prospects, but nowadays, the proliferation of such degrees and graduates seems to have put an end to this bonanza.

The above constitute a so-to-speak direct academic offspring of European integration. European studies at large, in the sense of a broad, multicultural, non-nation-state-centered approach to the society and history of various countries (or European "regions") is a different, although

related, development. It may be labelled an indirect academic result of European integration, in the sense that it has partly emerged out of an ideological need to construct a common European identity, pretty much along the lines of the construction, in the 18th and especially the 19th century, of modern national identities. The Brussels authorities have surely contributed to it in various ways. A small part of the aforementioned J. Monnet actions (in particular the ones linked with history departments) can be considered conducive to a "European" historical perspective and to a common "European" prism through which to see events such as the two World Wars which, in retrospect, may well end up being labelled as "civil" wars - assimilating themselves to the American model. This indirect spill-over effect of European integration is much less "focused" and practical (in the sense of providing specific job prospects) and functions more in the realm of culture/ideology. As opposed to "Eurology", which has resulted in a quite uniform academic community throughout Europe (and even the US), as manifested by the various branches of the ECSA (European Community Study Association), European studies in this latter sense varies considerably from one country to another. It seems to prevail particularly in the Anglosaxon academic world but is much less developed in continental Europe and almost totally absent in peripheral countries such as Greece.

The above typology seems to be a fair account of the academic results or "outputs" of European integration to the present day. Such fields of study would have been unthinkable forty years ago, either simply because the research object was just absent (there was no EEC-EC-EU) or because this specific "European" way of seeing was rather irrelevant and marginal to academic policy-makers. As regards the other part of the equation, the obvious question which arises is: to what extent and in what ways has the academic community affected the process of constructing Europe? This is, expectedly, a vast and intricate question. But given its importance, I will try to provide some tentative lines of response.

As far as European studies is concerned, its scope and nature is such that the only thing we could say is that, in the long run, by contributing to a broader knowledge and understanding of various European identities, by molding mentalities, it may well be a small reinforcing factor of the "deepening" of European integration. But this is bound to depend largely on the dissemination of such ideas to the society at large, i.e. to the linkages of this subset of academia with the media. This familiarisation process need not be synchronised with developments such as the enlargement of the EU to Central-Eastern Europe, or the creation of a common currency. The relative motions and inertias of the various levels (economic, political, institutional) are by no means the same with biological time and changes in mentality from one generation to the next. And, of course, there are many counteractive forces at work; for instance, at present, the acute social problems in Europe are conducive to a certain "Europhobia" which is a concrete, understandable and politically exploitable manifestation of a general fear of change, of insecurity and xenophobia.

As regards the effect of the *strictu sensu* studies of European integration on major policies and developments of the EC/EU, they seem to have been rather marginal. Although there has been a

certain physical proximity, in the sense of academics recycling themselves in the Brussels machinery and officials maintaining links with academic institutions, it is fair to say that the major initiatives and changes, the so-to-speak "deepening and widening" of the EC/EU have been politically motivated and determined. It was not the economic literature on the welfare effects of free trade and on customs unions which provided the impetus for the Treaty of Rome or the Single Market project; furthermore, as regards the Maastricht Treaty, the economic theory on "optimal currency areas" has been of little positive predictive value on the future effects of the "euro". The whole process of European integration has been primarily politically determined, with major economic actors – such as the European Round Table of Industrialists – also participating in the decision-making process, with small and medium lobbyists having some say, and with the specialised academic community following closely in the quest for new research material – or even terminology (e.g., the key word "cohesion", coined within the Brussels bureaucracy, has made its way into academic writings). At some points in time, academia was called upon *ex post* to provide an analysis/legitimation of major decisions which had already been taken. A characteristic case is the voluminous Cecchini report on the "Costs of Non-Europe" which attempted to analyse and quantify the economic benefits of the single market venture "1992". Finally, even major theoretical academic debates on European integration have by no means been politically neutral; for example, intergovernmentalists adopt a "realist" approach and consider European integration as a series of successive bargains between nation states, whereas neo-institutionalists emphasise the supranational nature of the Brussels quasi-statal edifice. Behind these two academic schools of thought one can easily discern divergent ideological-political patterns of what the EC/EU not only was or is, but ought to be/become.

Which leads us to a more general remark. The study of European integration is in a way a specific branch of social sciences in general. "Eurologists" affect European developments pretty much to the same extent that academic economists, sociologists or political scientists contribute to the solution of economic, social or political problems, i.e. only marginally. Furthermore, this area of study exhibits certain interesting particularities/specificities: a large part of Eurological production thrives in the "gray area" between academia and journalism, simply because its novelty reflects more the new developments in the EC/EU than a new approach. On the other hand, partly as a reaction to this "journalistic" aspect, there has been some high mathematical modelling of the European integration process with dubious practical political significance. However, a new and potentially rewarding research area could be a historical examination of how, over the last decades, "Europe" has entered the media vocabulary, has infiltrated company archives, and has increasingly permeated political discourse. Such research may also include the gradual construction of the discipline of European studies itself. One would expect that the thematic shifts have reflected, occasionally with interesting time lags, the change in the EC/EU itself from just a customs union in the late 1960s, where trade liberalisation issues dominated, to something more, leading in the late 1980s to "cohesion" matters and, in the late 1990s, to monetary integration issues. Such study may also focus on the Euroeschatology

which, at various points in time, has developed chiefly in the mass media but also in academic circles, on matters such as "1992" and, nowadays the single currency: as if European integration, in its constant need for momentum and fear of stagnation—exemplified by the "bicycle paradigm"—has always needed some kind of quasi-apocalyptic deadlines.

In conclusion, I hope that the above points will contribute to the debate on the nature of European studies, in its various manifestations, and that they might constitute a "meta-Eurological" research agenda: a historical and epistemological approach to this academic field can both enrich it and contribute to its better self-knowledge.