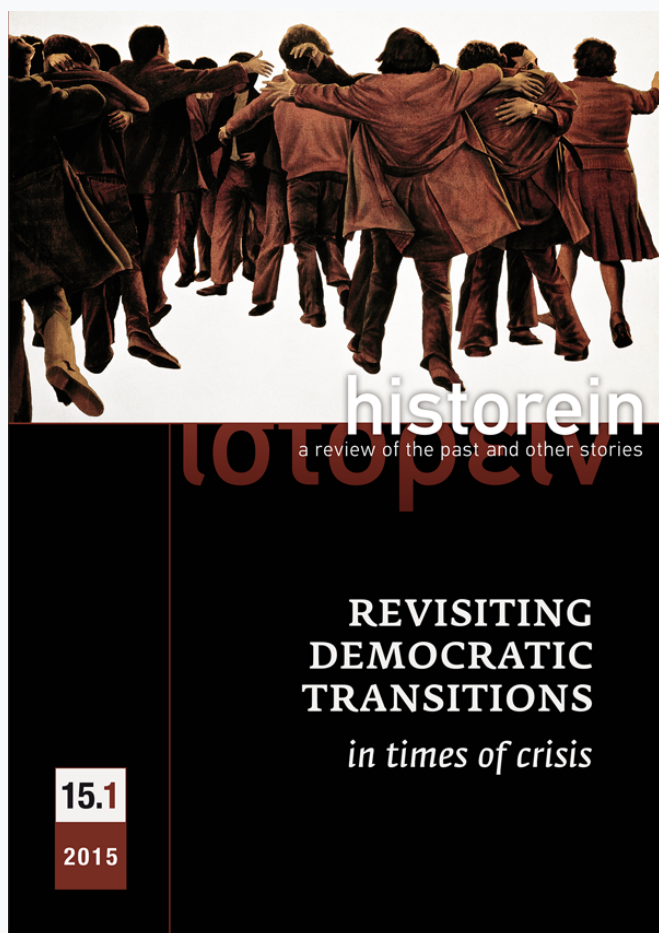


Historein

Vol 15, No 1 (2015)

Revisiting Democratic Transitions in Times of Crisis



Review of Ioannis D. Evrigenis' Αντίπαλον δέος: Έξωθεν φόβος και συλλογική δράση [Fear of Enemies and Collective Action]

Georgios Steiris

doi: [10.12681/historein.313](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.313)

Copyright © 2015, Georgios Steiris



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Steiris, G. (2015). Review of Ioannis D. Evrigenis' Αντίπαλον δέος: Έξωθεν φόβος και συλλογική δράση [Fear of Enemies and Collective Action]. *Historein*, 15(1), 177–179. <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.313>

Ioannis D. Evrigenis

*Αντίπαλον δέος: Ἐξῶθεν φόβος και
συλλογική δράση*

**[*Fear of Enemies and Collective
Action*]**

**Iraklio: Crete University Press,
2014. 448 pp.**

Georgios Steiris

University of Athens

In this monograph, translated from the original English edition by Athanasios Katsikeros,¹ Ioannis Evrigenis discusses the impact of negative association in political theory in a study that covers the period from Greek antiquity to the twentieth century. According to the writer, political and social groups are formed in the face of a common external threat, a process that permits people to shape their political identities. In addition, fear of the enemy is a strong collective bond that preserves the unity within political groups in times of crisis.

In the first chapter of the book, Evrigenis attempts to define a negative association that emphasises the role of fear, which is directed towards internal and external enemies: it is the contemporary monster of xenophobia. Evrigenis bases his analysis on the arguments of political thinkers from ancient Greece to the twentieth century: over eight chapters, he discusses Thucydides and Aristotle, Thucydides and Sallust, Machiavelli, Bodin, Hobbes, Rousseau, Schmitt and Morgenthau. It is worth noting that one of the main advantages of Evrigenis' book is that he respects the authors he comments on. He does not attempt to present himself as being wiser or more important than them, as several modern scholars do. This is the reason why Brent Steele, in

his review, states that Evrigenis' approach is conventional.² Evrigenis avoids drawing conclusions or to make suppositions that are not well documented in the texts.

In the second chapter, Evrigenis analyses the ways Thucydides and Aristotle discuss *metus hostilis* and its consequences in the formation and preservation of political associations. Besides classical thinkers, Evrigenis also focuses on Machiavelli, who reappraised Roman political theory and created new paths, new modes and orders, as Mansfield supported several decades ago.³ Despite recent works that challenge Machiavelli's originality and novelty,⁴ Evrigenis defends Machiavelli's new and interesting aspects on state life. The fear of the enemy, according to Machiavelli, not only strengthens common bonds; it is a means for the recognition of an identity, which is crucial for a modern state. Machiavelli scrutinises fear, a permanent and measurable feature, since the psychological element is crucial for his proto-empirical political theory. The Florentine political thinker did not simply reproduce the Roman views on *metus hostilis*; instead, he expanded its practical significance not only in periods of crisis, but in everyday life.

As would be expected, Evrigenis dedicates the next chapter to anti-Machiavellians, namely Gentillet, Bodin and Botero. According to Evrigenis, they were the first authors in the modern era that reacted against Machiavelli, while they simultaneously appreciated his core argument that fear of an external enemy and war preparations safeguard the state and moralise citizens. Evrigenis brilliantly proves his claim that anti-Machiavellians agree with Machiavelli's constitutive positions concerning war and external enemies, since these two fields are not appropriate for ethics. Machiavelli realises that the main issue is not the suppression of violence; rather, it is the absence of violence

or a threat that has destructive consequences for a political association. The preservation of the state is the supreme value.

After Machiavelli and the anti-Machiavellians, Evrigenis moves to Hobbes, his favourite political philosopher. It is obvious that the book is based on Hobbes' insights. Evrigenis supports the idea that Hobbes relied on Machiavelli and, at the same time, moved a step forward: he added the natural state of human life to the picture. Moreover, he held that other people and death are of equal importance for the formation of identity, as well as the fear of an enemy. The state of nature draws Evrigenis' attention. Despite commonly held views,⁵ he proves that most modern scholars have misinterpreted Hobbes' view on the state of nature since they limit its significance and underrate the importance of fear and war. As a result, Machiavelli and Hobbes are both deemed at fault in the eyes of public opinion for the same reason: people refrain from carefully reading their works. For example, Hobbes sincerely believed that fear has beneficial consequences since it forces people to abandon the state of nature and seek allies. This is the first step towards the formation of stable and lasting political associations because people should understand in practice the benefits of their participation in a sovereign state. Evrigenis proposes that, after the establishment of the state, the sovereign is the new enemy that unites the people. The state of nature is not the same for people and nations. People reach freedom by way of fear in the same way as stable political associations safeguard human freedom.

In the sixth chapter, Evrigenis discusses Hobbes' reception, mainly in nineteenth-century Germany. The importance of negative sentiments was recognised after the publication of Hobbes' works. Evrigenis presents Rous-

seau's arguments against Hobbes over the role of fear in order to prove that the French philosopher, one of Hobbes' harsher naysayers, failed to exclude fear from his political theory, especially when he discussed the state of nature. Rousseau questioned even cosmopolitanism, as he claimed that the so-called cosmopolitans declare that they love all people so as to have the right to love nobody. In a rather interesting way, Evrigenis comments on Saint-Pierre's and Rousseau's views on the project of a unified Europe. Despite Rousseau's recognition and importance, Kant preferred Hobbes' analysis of human nature and the state of nature. He acknowledged that while men seek peace, nature knows better and chooses conflict, since the latter leads men to be creative. Kant differentiated himself from Hobbes on the role of the state, supporting the idea that only large political associations – larger than the state – would be effective in promoting human happiness. Hegel disapproved Kant's position and argued in favour of the nation-state on the basis of fear and collective action. The existence of large, collective, political associations does not diminish the possibility of the creation of a new external enemy, which is crucial for its formation. According to Hegel, only the state is individual and contributes to the achievement of self-consciousness.

The final chapter of the book is dedicated to Schmitt and Morgenthau, who reappraised all the previous scholarly tradition concerning fear and collective action. Evrigenis recounts the way Hobbes' views on fear won him back his popularity in the English-speaking world during the twentieth century through Schmitt's and Morgenthau's works. According to Schmitt, it is impossible to study politics properly without Hobbes. The state is the best situation for a nation. Schmitt's analysis of irregular and extraordinary situations presup-

poses Hobbes as a precursor of the view that “*autoritas, non veritas facit legem*”. Schmitt shared Hobbes’ view that enemies contribute to the formation of identities. Apart from his interest in Schmitt, Evrigenis seems to be fascinated by Morgenthau’s analogy of the politician and the artist: a politician should be like Machiavelli and not an idealist like Don Quixote. Politics is the attempt to choose the lesser evil from several evil options.

Evrigenis concludes that, despite their ethical or political principles, humans are obliged to accept the importance of negative association. He points out that all the political thinkers he commented on and the vast majority of politicians tend to believe that they face unprecedented circumstances that render negative association absolutely necessary. According to Evrigenis, fear relies equally on reason and passions. As a result, it is the ideal starting point for the study of human actions. Moreover, he shares the Platonic view that there can be no identity without difference.

Evrigenis successfully traces the roots of negative association and the role of fear in the formation of individual and group identity. The book reveals new insights in texts that are well-known to a rather large audience, which goes beyond specialists and scholars. It is worth noticing that the role of fear and conflict has not been very well appreciated in recent scholarship and Evrigenis’ book fills a lacuna in this respect. Although he contextualises the historical conditions in which each thinker wrote, his perspective is timeless and universal. Evrigenis’ analysis is broad, original and careful. As I have already mentioned, the main advantage of the book is that it treats the texts with due respect and bases its conclusions on thorough examination and textual analysis. Besides primary sources, the secondary literature is extensive and up to date.

The Greek edition is of excellent quality and well-presented. Athanasios Katsikeros’ translation helps the reader to enjoy the book, though several orthographical and syntactic mistakes (for example, see 137, 159, 322, 329) could have been avoided. The book is very useful for those interested in international relations, political philosophy and theory, political science and the history of ideas.

NOTES

- 1 Ioannis Evrigenis’ monograph was originally published in English as *Fear of Enemies and Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). The Greek translation is the work of Athanasios Katsikeros.
- 2 Brent J. Steele, “21st Century Realism: The Past Is in Our Present,” *International Studies Review* 11/2 (2009): 352–357, here 353.
- 3 Harvey Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders: A Study of the Discourses on Livy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
- 4 Erica Benner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
- 5 Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).