

introduction: looking from the outside in – how europe is studied abroad

luís de sousa and andrés malamud*

Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, Portugal

E-mails: luis.sousa@ics.ul.pt; amalamud@ics.ul.pt

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

European Studies (ES), the academic field that deals with European issues in general and European integration in particular, is controversial by nature. For some, European integration is but an ideology. Others believe it to be an 'n' of 1 that cannot be compared or imitated. For the majority, European integration is a moving target and an unfinished undertaking, whereas a growing number of academics and pundits speak no longer of integration but governance. Notwithstanding these epistemological and methodological disagreements, top universities in Europe and around the world have put in place departments and programmes devoted to the study of the historical developments, institutions, processes, policies, and challenges of the EU and the politics and interdependence of its member-states. No other regional organization has won such a place of honour in academic curricula. In this symposium, we are interested in scrutinizing how ES have been studied and taught outside Europe. We have collected contributions from distinguished scholars from six significant world areas in order to ensure a balanced geographical spread of our insight to these academic developments: the United States, Russia, China, Australia (and New Zealand), Israel (and the Middle East) and (Southern) Latin America.

Keywords European Studies; European integration; European Union; political science; international relations; area studies

In the past two centuries, Europe was at the centre of the world. Some of the greatest scientific innovations, political ideologies and even unthinkable mass destruction were originated on its soil. After two Europe-born World Wars,

the world's centre stage started to drift away. Apace with the global decline of European powers, however, a new phenomenon emerged: a unique, voluntary process of pooling sovereignty came to be known as European integration. Today,

top universities around the world have departments or programmes devoted to, European Studies (ES) which are related but largely exceed the traditional fields of area studies, comparative politics and international relations as they focus on a new political system: the European Union (EU). There are even professional associations devoted to the understanding of its nature, structure and process, such as the European Union Studies Association (EUSA).¹ No other regional organization in the world has won such a place of honour in academic curricula. This symposium focuses on how current developments in European integration are studied and taught outside of Europe, showing how the economic and demographic decline of the Old Continent has been somehow tempered by innovative ideas and political entrepreneurship.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE EU

With the declaration of the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950, and the subsequent signing of the 1951 Treaty of Paris, Europe's first supranational community was established. Jacques Delors once called the result an 'Unidentified Political Object', the only one of its kind. Today, the EU is more than an international organization but less than a federal state (Wallace 1983). It was this uniqueness that called the attention of political scientists around the world. The commitment of national governments towards the delegation of sovereignty, and the legal and political dynamics of the supranational bodies created henceforth, opened the door to a whole new field of political analysis.

Paradoxically, the birth and development of ES or, more specifically, regional integration studies, did not occur in Europe. During World War II and its aftermath, a number of European academics

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fled to the US and began to look at new ways of making the world system safer for peace and progress. Émigrés like Deutsch *et al* (1957), Ernst Haas (1958), Stanley Hoffmann (1966) and, in Britain, David Mitrany (1943), were at the forefront of this movement.

Europe gave birth to two world systems that failed: the nineteenth century great power *condominium* system had led to World War I, and the collapse of the League of Nations brought World War II. By the end of the latter, European powers had lost their status as guarantors of world peace and stability, and few people held high hopes in international regimes or organizations. It is in this context – of political debate about the future of Europe and the shaping of a new world order by two blocs led by non-West European powers – that the integration process began.

By the early 1960s, regional integration began to gain interest beyond Europe. New regional organizations were being created in other parts of the world. Latin America became a key testing ground: in 1960, the Latin American Free Trade Agreement and the Central American Common Market were established; one decade later, the Andean Pact and the Caribbean Community followed suit, sometimes establishing a network of institutions that included majority voting and binding supranational authorities. Similar endeavours were later attempted in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, although with dim degrees of accomplishment. The root of a new scholarly area, comparative regional integration, was seeded. ES, however, remained matchless.

A series of setbacks, such as the 'empty chair' crisis and the ensuing, so-called Eurosclerosis put to rest many of the initial hopes. It also had repercussions in the way regional integration was studied. Haas's neofunctionalist approach (1958) lost its appeal and intergovernmentalism settled in (Hoffmann 1966; Haas 1971). The European project deepened and expanded insofar as national governments could benefit from it. During the 1970s, Europe was in paralysis and interest in regional integration began to fade. However, the holding of the first European parliamentary elections in 1979, the recovery from the oil crises and the signing of the Single European Act in 1985 gave the EU a new impetus. With the end of the Cold War, the expansion of democracy and the globalization of the market economy, regional integration regained political and academic interest in Europe and abroad. A renewed wave of integration attempts was triggered worldwide and an ensuing swell of research followed soon thereafter (Hettne *et al* 1999; Mattli 1999; Moravcsik 1998; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 1998).

By the early 1990s, the European project had become a complex political system and an appealing market. The EU's growing significance increased the demand for ES in Europe and, especially, abroad. To run or interact with the EU it was necessary to understand the uniqueness of its historical development, institutions, processes, policies, and challenges, and the politics and interdependence of its member-states. Hence, a wide array of courses and programmes about the EU were established in member-state universities: from community law through European languages and culture to EU structure and process proper. In candidate countries, there was a rising demand for ES but there also tended to be low levels of expertise and financial resources to proceed with the necessary curricula reforms. These difficulties notwithstanding,

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many international relations and political science courses in these countries are now offering modules on ES. Besides, student mobility schemes such as the Erasmus programme constitute an attractive option for students from low-income candidate countries to access more advanced university systems where such courses are on offer.

While ES departments are more common in Europe than elsewhere, there are departments and research units dedicated to its study abroad. Their institutionalization in the Americas, Asia and Australasia has taken place at varying pace and degree. Progress has been faster where cultural ties have been historically stronger due to European migration. Close economic ties have also been an incentive. The improvement of bilateral relations, based on common economic interests and governance concerns has often been followed by a series of initiatives from national academia. In response to these policy developments, new ES associations or sections in existing political science/IR associations have been created, new courses have been introduced into university curricula, new research units and think tanks have been put in place, and new area studies journals have been launched. Some of these initiatives have benefited from the support of the EU, but most result from the effort of national governments, the academy or professional associations. The US academy has always been at the forefront of European integration studies and still hosts the largest research community in this field, but now several other universities and

research units in Europe and abroad have stepped in.

AN UNIDENTIFIED STUDY OBJECT

It is controversial to define ES as the academic field that deals with European issues in general and European integration in particular. For some, European integration is but an ideology. Others believe it is an 'n' of 1 that cannot be compared or imitated. For the majority, European integration is a moving target and an unfinished undertaking, whereas a growing number of academics and international commentators speak no longer of integration, but governance. Replacing EU studies by European Studies does not bring greater conceptual clarity. As Steinmetz (2010) put it, 'like Europe itself, the field of European studies has constituted itself through a series of exclusions and negative boundaries: against the east (Eastern Europe, Asia, the non-Christian world), against the south (the colonies and the former suppliers of slaves to Europe and the New World), and even against the "west" of the west, that is, the Americas'.

Although ES existed prior to the birth of the European Coal and Steel Community, its scope was more diffused. It dealt with European history, civilization, and languages. The European integration process represented a milestone in the development of ES and it would soon become the core of this academic field, first as a form of regional integration/international organization and later as a political system in its own right. The attempt to distinguish conceptually ES as broader area studies and EU studies as the study of European integration in the strict sense, was more artificial than real. In several countries the labels ES and EU studies are used interchangeably.

Notwithstanding its ambiguous content, ES curricula followed similar patterns of development across different national academies. It is foremost a multidisciplinary field in the social and political sciences, focusing on developments in the EU. The degree to which the humanities are represented varies considerably from one university to another. In some of them, EU programmes are located in the cultural studies departments, but the majority tend to be anchored in political science/IR departments, or constitute an autonomous department in their own right.

While all programmes focus on the study of EU affairs, only some cover national governments and politics in a comparative perspective. With eastward enlargement, and the multiplication of new member states, ES face the challenge of incorporating this new institutional and cultural diversity into its curricula.

As the EU grew wider and expanded its influence to other world regions, EU studies also began to develop a foreign policy dimension. Not surprisingly, it is precisely the study of the EU's models of external relations in relation to neighbouring countries, or its regulatory and trading policies that attracts the most interest among foreign academics.

THE RATIONALE BEHIND THIS SYMPOSIUM

This symposium seeks to give an account on how ES are taught, trained and researched in various countries or regions of the world. We have asked our contributors to give an overview of the institutional build-up of these area studies (when these subject areas have entered university curricula, where it all started, who the founding fathers were), an introduction to where and how these subject areas are taught (courses, training programmes), an

overview of the major research themes, a discussion about the prospects of the discipline and some ideas of how it should be taught/trained/researched. In particular, we asked: What drives the institutionalization of ES outside Europe? Was this different from classical area studies such as African, Asian or Latin American? To what extent did the establishment of ES associations influence the levels of professionalization in third countries and in the links with their European counterparts? Did the academic work developed in this new field help to enrich public debate and foreign policy making? What aspects of the functioning of the EU have received more attention? To what extent has the strengthening of trade relations and the celebration of special partnerships between the EU and third countries contributed to a growing interest in European integration? Our contributors focused on six countries or regions: two offspring of British colonization (the US and Australia–New Zealand); two offspring of eastern or southern European colonization (Israel and the Middle East, and Latin America’s Southern Cone); the largest Eurasian country bordering the EU (Russia) plus the largest country where European influence has been arguably kept to a minimum: China.

In the article on the United States, Roberto Dominguez and Sebastian Royo show the extent to which the study of European integration reflects the deep roots that keep the vitality of the transatlantic relationship since the end of World War II. The US is still the country outside Europe where ES have the most prominent place in the research agenda of scholars.

Philomena Murray surveys policy and curriculum developments since the introduction of ES in the Australian university curriculum in the early 1990s. By profiling Australian research on the EU, she claims that Australia’s position – and that of New Zealand’s – in the Asia Pacific region has

‘... What drives the institutionalization of EU studies outside Europe?’

provided a useful context to understand the EU as an international actor and as a context for comparative regional integration.

Aharon Yair MacClanahan Shophet shows the emergence and development of ES in Israel from its inception until the present, with a minor secondary focus on the rest of the Middle East. After examining developments in education, research and professional training, he concludes that scholars in Israel have been more concerned with EU foreign policy – including bilateral relations, the role of Europe in the Middle East and EU-enlargement – than with the internal processes of European integration.

Andrés Malamud and Miguel De Luca argue that, in spite of the strong historical links that connect Europe with South America, ES are underdeveloped in the latter region. Their article takes stock of how European politics in general and European integration in particular have been studied and taught in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, assessing the above paradox and evaluating its prospects.

Ekaterina Gorbunova analyses the development of European studies in Russia and assesses its external influences. Although European studies were part of the cultural and academic agenda during the Soviet Union period, it was only with the end of the Cold War and the intensification of the EU–Russia bilateral relations that European studies began to raise significant interest about the EU as a political system. This led to the proliferation of research and teaching activities and the institutionalization of a separate subject area.

Weiqing Song provides an overview of European studies in China and its evolution

over the last three decades. Similar to Russia, ES have changed its focus from the contemporary affairs of the 'whole Europe', including the Balkans, Turkey and the European parts of the former Soviet Union, to a persistent emphasis on Western Europe and European integration (more specifically, the EU). It includes a brief account of the institutional build-up of the academic field, an introduction to major research trends and a discussion of its multi-disciplinary nature, particularly the political science/IR aspect. The article informs the reader about the state of EU

studies in China within the broader context of the development of Chinese political science.

In comparing these six contributions, the most notable finding is that original research has been carried out, and new knowledge has been produced, mainly in the developed countries; in the developing countries, ES have rather served to diffuse EU propaganda. To check whether we can generalize on the basis of this conclusion, future symposia should include overviews of additional cases from both the developed and developing world.

Note

1 For more information about EUSA, consult: <http://www.eustudies.org>.

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About the Authors

Luís de Sousa got his Ph.D. in Social and Political Sciences at the European University Institute, Italy in 2002. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, Portugal. He is also a co-editor of *EPS*.

Andrés Malamud is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon. He received a B.A. from the University of Buenos Aires and a Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute in Florence.