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EUROPEAN STUDIES IN POLAND – THEORIES AND METHODOLOGY

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Abstract: *The main objective of this article is to attempt to determine the current phase of development of European studies in Poland. The said studies are treated as a new, emerging academic discipline in statu nascendi, hence, their characterisation seems like a significantly difficult task. The authors present a brief genesis of the studies in Poland and highlight various viewpoints of the leading Polish researchers on the discipline's research field. The controversies as regards the academic status of European studies emphasised in the Polish literature on the subject have subsequently been presented, including discussions as to whether the studies meet the criteria of a separate discipline at all, and if so, whether it is of a more interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary nature. Highlighting such a broad background enables the authors to proceed with the presentation of the main theories having, according to Polish researchers, the most relevant application in the research on European Studies. The article ends with a synthetic conclusion encompassing a general characterisation of European studies, as well as the confidence in their subsequent dynamic development in Poland.*

Keywords: European Studies in Poland, methodology of European Studies, theories of European Studies.

Introduction

The presentation, analysis, and evaluation of such a broad issue as the state of research of a scientific discipline in a given country is, without doubt, a particularly complex task. The complexity refers to both the selection of relevant materials in terms of content, as well as the application of an adequate methodology allowing the authors to study the issues raised in the

best possible manner. As for the first difficulty, one of the main problems is the selection of the issues to be studied, which always poses some challenges, mainly due to the volume limitations imposed upon articles published in scientific journals. For this prosaic reason, and simply due to the lack of space, a number of significant and interesting issues have not been addressed in this paper. This applies, for example, to comparing the state of research in Poland with research conducted abroad, in particular with well-developed European studies in Western countries. Moreover, this issue, due to its importance and complexity, would require a separate study.

In terms of the second of the foregoing difficulties, namely selecting the right methodology, it should be highlighted that contrary to the current tendency in the social sciences, there is no need to use complex theoretical structures in every scientific article. When conducting an analysis of a specific, complex social, political, economic or cultural issue, it is undeniably prudent to consistently apply a specific approach based on theories, e.g., normativism, realism or constructivism. This allows for the use of intentionally selected research techniques and methods, as well as drawing more structured research conclusions. (When presenting individual research schools in the field of European studies in Poland in this article, it has been specified which approaches, techniques, and methods they apply).

The research objective of the article, however, is to determine the current state of research in the field of European studies in Poland. Therefore, it is sufficient to apply traditional research methods, such as: historical, comparative, institutional-legal or, to a certain extent, the prognostic method. (It can be said that Desk Research has been applied here, also referred to as secondary research or secondary data analysis). In this situation, it is also difficult to formulate clear-cut hypotheses or research questions at the very beginning. The descriptive narrative used here imposes the application of not so much the deductive method (leading to a drawing of conclusions based on an analysis of previous assumptions), but more of the inductive method, allowing one to come to conclusions based solely on an analysis of collected material.

Moving on to the presentation of this material, it should be stated that European studies in a broad sense – treated as both a research object and an academic subject – have enjoyed a relatively long history and extensive achievements in Poland. Studies as regards various European issues (including in particular their history, geography, and culture) have been

conducted by Polish tertiary institutions as early as the mid-war period, and, to some extent, also post-World War II. The studies, however, began to flourish following the political transformation initiated in 1989. At that time, a number of academic centres emerged focused primarily on different issues related to European integration, with one of the first and most active entity being the Centre for Europe established at the University of Warsaw.

To begin with, it should be highlighted that European studies in Poland - as in a number of other countries - is a discipline *in statu nascendi*, and is therefore young, emerging, and yet to be officially recognised as a separate academic discipline (Barburska, 2018, pp. 35-48). This generates serious problems as regards fundamental issues, starting with the name itself. There are numerous terms in Polish literature on the subject: in addition to European studies, there is the Polish term *europaistyka* which poses some difficulty when attempting to translate it into English, as well as other names: Europeistic studies, Europeistic research, Europeistic field, European research, studies on European integration, and studies on the European Union. In view of the foregoing, and in order to simplify things, the name 'European studies' will be applied consistently in this article and will also be treated - despite all reservations - as a specific and, although not *de jure*, but *de facto* functioning academic discipline (all the more so since, as of 2003, it has been an officially accepted field of study at Polish universities).

1. European studies research field

As far as the general definition of the research area of European studies is concerned, there is something of a consensus among Polish researchers that they belong to the general category of area studies. The said studies cover a wide range of phenomena and processes across Europe that can be researched with the application of various academic disciplines. This also encompasses research on the comprehensive integration processes which have taken place on the European continent following World War II, covering practically all areas of political, economic, and social life, manifested to the fullest by the functioning of the European Communities/European Union (Czaputowicz, 2018, pp. 12-13; Wojtaszczyk and Jakubowski, 2010, pp. 7).

The consensus, however, ends when one has to present a generally outlined research field in a more detailed manner, and the opinions of individual researchers can vary in a more pronounced way. According to Janusz Ruskowski, European studies have “an ever-changing research subject, which in a broad sense is Europe, but in a narrower perspective, integration processes on the continent, in which the European Union appears as the prime dominant” (Ruskowski, 2014, p. 56). Dariusz Niedźwiecki perceives it in a similar manner since, according to him, European studies appear in three varieties: as the study of the European Union, as the study of European integration (i.e., it covers a much broader scope than just the phenomena and processes taking place within the EU) and as the study of Europe - although it entails a number of problems with determining the scope of such a broadly understood research field (Niedźwiecki, 2014, p. 316).

The authors of the article, constituting a research team of the Centre for Europe at the University of Warsaw, present a rather broad approach. Underpinned by a number of years of academic and teaching achievements and experience, the team has developed an original formula of European studies, which are based on a broad holistic approach that takes into account all vital aspects of the functioning of the European Union, as well as the entire integration processes taking place in Europe (hence not only within the EU, but also outside it, e.g., within the Council of Europe). In addition, various determinants influencing the shape and course of these processes have also been incorporated to a great extent, the research of which is part of the broad formula of European studies treated as area studies. Therefore, historical, civilization, political, economic, legal, social, sociological, anthropological, cultural, and international aspects have been taken into consideration, with emphasis on the final three aspects being a specific distinguishing feature of these studies. The research methods and techniques of various disciplines (exceeding the scope of social sciences) have clearly been applied here, and the studies at the Centre for Europe revolve around four “pillars”: political science, law, economics, and sociology related to cultural studies (Milczarek, 2014; Milczarek D., Adamczyk A., Zajączkowski K. (eds.), 2013, Nowak A.Z., and Milczarek D. (eds), 2006).

However, in other academic circles in Poland, different views and approaches have been formulated. For example, according to Ryszard Zięba, the unresolved question is whether European studies constitute a political science discipline limited to Europe, or are rather an

independent direction of study focused on European integration (Zięba, 2010, p. 42). The latter approach is quite widely accepted - Konstanty A. Wojtaszczyk and Wojciech Jakubowski believe that “European studies strictly refer to the European Union, generally to political, legal, and economic issues” (Wojtaszczyk, Jakubowski, 2010, p. 7). According to Kamil Ławniczak, studies on the EU construed in such a way are divided into two broad sections: one devoted to the study of various determinants of the largely understood processes of European integration, and the other, dealing solely with the functioning of the policies and the political system of the European Union treated as a *sui generis* system (Ławniczak, 2014, p. 199).

Jacek Czaputowicz shares the foregoing opinion since, according to him, European studies based on social sciences (i.e., on such disciplines as political science, international relations, economics, law, and sociology) have far too broad a formula. He therefore introduces a rather uncertain distinction between studies on European integration and even narrower studies on the European Union (EU studies). It is only the latter that he calls European studies in the strictest sense, which apply only the methodology of political science. The researcher, however, shows a certain inconsistency. He uses the following terms: “integration studies” and “European studies” interchangeably, and supplements the foregoing disciplines participating in these studies with history and anthropology, namely reaches for the field of humanities (Czaputowicz, 2018, p. 12-13).

Generally speaking, Polish literature on the subject is dominated by an approach that treats European studies in a broad and holistic manner. Even the above-cited Konstanty A. Wojtaszczyk and Wojciech Jakubowski (who think these studies mainly deal with EU study) find it useful to “outline a pan-European framework for discourse over Europe”. In their opinion, “a pan-European perspective would be the most effective in identifying the social, economic, political and cultural dilemmas of Europe, demonstrating its specificity and distinctiveness, and showing its global context” (Wojtaszczyk and Jakubowski, 2010, p. 9).

As part of such a holistic approach, issues related to broadly understood European civilization and culture are of vital importance. (It is worth pointing out that researchers from the Centre for Europe of the University of Warsaw also share such an approach). For example, according to Andrzej Chodubski, one of the main objectives of European studies is to delve into

the phenomena and processes of cultural and civilization changes taking place in Europe (Chodubski, 2012, pp. 17-19). Dariusz Niedźwiecki (Niedźwiecki, 2014) and Franciszek Gołembski also believe that it is culture that underpins the construction of a new European order in the form of the European Union (Gołembski, 2010). It is also possible - as evidenced by Zbigniew Czachór - to evaluate the phenomenon of the EU in a unique way from the point of view of the mutual influence of European integration as well as philosophy and literature in Europe (Czachór, 2019). Such an approach within European studies allows for the expansion of their research field on *inter alia* significant and interesting issues related to the shaping of a European identity (Šejvl, 2019; Łukaszewicz, 2018).

The foregoing considerations allow us to conclude that in the Polish research and teaching practice, a discipline called European studies exists and functions. Irrespective of the controversies that arise in that regard, it also seems the most practicable to treat the studies in a broad and holistic manner (with terminological issues being of secondary importance here).

2. The academic status of European studies

Establishing the academic status of European studies remains, however, an important predicament. Four main approaches as regards this issue can be enumerated in Polish literature on the subject:

1. totally negating the existence of European studies as a separate discipline;
2. recognising the studies as part of political sciences and/or international relations studies;
3. treating them as an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary discipline derived from the achievements of other disciplines;
4. recognising European studies as a separate, emerging academic discipline.

Ad 1. Proponents of the approach that denies the existence of European studies as a separate discipline have raised various arguments. Among other things, they point out to the fact that even though the studies - as we have tried to demonstrate above - meet the condition to have a separate research area, the condition, however being *sine qua non*, is insufficient to recognise it as a new academic discipline. It stems mainly from the fact that - as Andrzej Chodubski

emphasises - according to a number of researchers, European studies have yet to develop “their own research methodology, which defines a discipline’s individuality, including its identity” (Chodubski, 2012, p. 7). What is more, according to some authors, such as Anna Visvizi, such development of a separate methodological workshop would be even unnecessary since “it would resemble the process of discovering the circle” (Visvizi, 2014, p. 176). At the same time, however, it should be highlighted that there are more and more voices pointing to the gradual development of research methods applicable to these studies only, which slowly makes the thesis as regards the lack of individual cognitive instruments for European studies - as Janusz Ruskowski put it –“become anachronistic” (Ruskowski, 2012, p. 16).

Ad 2. On the other hand, a certain group of Polish researchers present views proclaiming the actual identity of these studies with political science or international relations studies (Wierzchowska, 2010; Zięba, 2010). According to Jacek Czaputowicz, “European studies in the strict sense apply the methodology of political science” (Czaputowicz, 2018, p. 13), and according to Paweł Stawarz, European studies simply “study a fragment of a wide area of international relations” (Stawarz, 2014, p. 385). Such an approach, however, seems too rigorous and unfounded. As it clearly stems from these considerations, what we encounter here is a much greater range of possible research solutions, not limited only to using the achievements of these two disciplines.

Ad 3. There are many indications that the viewpoint that European studies benefit from the achievements of various disciplines is the most justified. Even the above-quoted Jacek Czaputowicz, who recognises the great role of political science in this respect, acknowledges it. The researcher also acknowledges that European studies additionally take advantage of the achievements of international relations and public policy studies (Czaputowicz, 2018, p. 29). The issue, however, can be perceived in a much broader way - for example, according to Andrzej Chodubski, it should also incorporate law, sociology, economics, and disciplines in the field of humanities, such as history and cultural studies (Chodubski, 2012, p. 27). On the other hand, Konstanty Adam Wojtaszczyk and Wojciech Jakubowski propose adding demography, geography, psychology, and ecology to this catalogue (Wojtaszczyk and Jakubowski, 2012, p. 13). Dariusz Milczarek (Milczarek, 2014) and other researchers also have a broad perspective on the issue (Tomaszewski, 2010, p. 232).

The foregoing brings us to an important research question, namely: is the nature of European studies interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary? (Gagatek, 2012; Gagateg, 2014). Admittedly, these studies meet the interdisciplinarity criterion, as they benefit from the research achievements of at least two disciplines. At the same time, however, they are unable to achieve a high degree of homogeneity with respect to their research field, and they lack the full synthesis of research methods. In view of the foregoing, European studies are of rather multidisciplinary nature, the belief shared also by Jacek Czaputowicz. This means that “different disciplines apply their own methods to analyse a single research area”, engage in a mutual dialogue and recognise their differences, but there is no need for a synthesis in this case. At the same time, the researcher suggests applying other, highly sophisticated categories, such as, e.g., transdisciplinarity, intradisciplinarity or analytical eclecticism (Czaputowicz, 2014, pp.14-17).

Other approaches are also possible. For example, according to Anna Visvizi, although European studies are “inherently multidisciplinary”, their specificity forces us to go beyond this limiting framework and to base these studies, in her opinion, on a broader formula of interdisciplinarity (Visvizi, 2014, p. 178). A similar view is taken by a number of other researchers, such as Katarzyna Żukrowska, who also treat these studies as “explicitly interdisciplinary” (Żukrowska, 2014, pp. 135-136). Konstanty Adam Wojtaszczyk and Wojciech Jakubowski go even further and categorically claim that “the study of European processes must proceed in an interdisciplinary manner” (Wojtaszczyk and Jakubowski, 2012, p. 11). At the same time, one should additionally take into account the vital fact that since European studies benefit from the achievements of other interdisciplinary disciplines (such as political science or international relations studies), we are dealing here with somewhat of a "double" or even a "multi-level" interdisciplinarity.

Ad 4. The key question remains whether European Studies can be treated as a separate, though only emerging, academic discipline. When resolving this issue, the said disputes about the interdisciplinarity or multidisciplinary nature of these studies seem of relatively lesser importance (but certainly utmost care should be applied to maintain precision in methodological and terminological arrangements). As it transpires from the foregoing considerations, the most important thing is to recognise that European studies are *de facto* a separate academic discipline – and what is crucial and what should once again be emphasised a discipline *in spe* and *in statu*

nascendi. It can therefore be said that European studies are still “in the process of searching for their own identity” (Wojtaszczyk, Jakubowski, 2010, p. 8), and at the present stage of their development, the related “methodological challenges are still being shaped” (Chodubski, 2012, p.17).

All this means that the formation and consolidation of a new discipline may take decades and requires the development of a separate network of concepts, theories, and principles of research (including one’s own research methods and techniques), as well as a relevant institutional framework. As Dariusz Niedźwiecki explains, in order to become an independent discipline, European studies must meet three basic criteria, i.e., know: what to research (i.e., have their own research subject), how to research (have their own methodology) and speak their own “language”, i.e., develop their own theories, methods, concepts, etc. (Niedźwiecki, 2014, p. 314).

3. The theories applied in European studies

Outlining the research field and then defining the scientific status of European studies creates an appropriate conceptual network allowing for the characterisation of the current development stage of this discipline in Poland to be continued. As part of the said characterisation, it should also be indicated which theoretical approaches, according to Polish researchers, can be applied in European studies.

The task, however, is hindered by the fact that yet again we have to deal with a great diversity of opinions, which is understood in view of the number of possible approaches that have already been highlighted. What is more, even selecting one dedicated research perspective will not solve the problem since – as Janusz Ruskowski aptly observes, “no single theory in European studies (...) is able to explain all aspects of an analysed case” (Ruskowski, 2012a, p. 29). It means that choosing any theoretical approach is more or less subjective and dependent on the individual preferences of a researcher.

Amongst the various approaches to the issue, it is worth presenting the views of Janusz Ruskowski, who claims that the dichotomy between - as he calls it - families of theories “focused on the one hand on intergovernmental theories and on the other hand on supranational

theories” becomes increasingly more important in research conducted as part of European studies. Both of the said families of theories “differ fundamentally, similarly to the classic dispute between idealism and realism in international relations.” The dichotomy has dozens of decades of historical tradition, but still “seems to be fundamental in the early 2000s” (Ruszkowski, 2012, p. 10).

Therefore, on the one hand, we are dealing with a family of intergovernmental theories focused on state actors. The most important example being intergovernmentalism (especially as perceived by Andrew Moravcsik), but the family also includes, *inter alia*, neoliberal institutionalism, constructivism, and communication theory. On the other hand, there is a family of supranational theories focused on non-state actors. Janusz Ruszkowski lists federalism (as the key “starting theory”) and neo-functionalism (represented especially by Ernst B. Haas), as well as constitutionalism and historical institutionalism amongst the most significant of the said theories (Ruszkowski, 2012a, p. 32).

Such an approach and the classification applied as part thereof are, however, not generally accepted by Polish researchers. A contrary opinion on this issue is presented by Jacek Czaputowicz, who claims that when it comes to the main theories applicable in European studies, the existence of the dichotomy between the intergovernmental and supranational approach was relevant only until the mid-1990s, “and since then the dividing line runs, as is the case in the theories of international relations, between a rationalist and constructivist position” (Czaputowicz, 2010, p. 247). Identical or comparable approaches have also been presented by other authors, e.g., Ryszard Zięba, who distinguishes between two main research approaches: positivist and constructivist (Zięba, 2010, pp. 42-44) or Roman Trzaskowski, who discourses about the rationalist-constructivist dichotomy (Trzaskowski, 2005, p. 80).

Besides the existence of otherwise natural differences of views between individual researchers, an additional difficulty in examining individual theories in European studies is posed by the fact that we encounter shifts in opinions made by the same author. The prime example being Jacek Czaputowicz, already quoted hereinbefore, and the evolution of his views. In his earlier works, he believed that European studies benefited from the achievements of only two disciplines: international relations studies and political science. As part of the first he listed

federalism, neo-functionalism, intergovernmental liberalism and three forms of new institutionalism, and as part of the latter: comparative politics, multi-level governance, and policy networks (Czaputowicz, 2010, p. 248).

In his latest works, however, the author applies a somewhat different classification. He nevertheless still mentions international relations and political science as the main disciplines applied in European studies, but incorporates public policy studies as well. What is more, within these disciplines he uses a different classification of theories related thereto: within international relations studies he lists functionalism and neofunctionalism, transactionism, three intergovernmental approaches as well as constructivism, within political science - federalism, comparative politics and three types of institutionalism, and within public policy studies - multi-level governance, governance theories, and policy networks (Czaputowicz, 2018, p. 29).

There are also other classifications of the main theories in European studies presented in the Polish literature on the subject. From the vantage point of political science, Paweł J. Borkowski introduces a division into theories of contemporary neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism, radical democratic federalism, and multi-level governance (Borkowski, 2007, p. 189). Artur Nowak-Far enumerates federalism, neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism, community theory and institutional theories in his research as regards the relations between political science and economic sciences with reference to European studies (Nowak-Far, 2014, pp. 116-121). From the point of view of legal sciences, however, Konstanty A. Wojtaszczyk distinguishes neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism, new institutionalism, political networks, and social constructivism (Wojtaszczyk, 2014, p. 97).

In order to mitigate the essentially unsolvable classification disputes in this respect, Janusz Ruszkowski proposed a different approach (Ruszkowski, 2012a, pp. 29-31). The idea was not only to present theories derived from specific scientific disciplines or research trends, but also to highlight the issue in a more systemic way. The researcher, therefore, proposes a modification to the traditional division distinguishing the so-called grand theories, including neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism, constructivism, constitutionalism, and federalism. These theories “attempt to comprehensively explain the fundamental issues of integration”, but at the same time are “petrified systems”, far too broad with tendencies to overlook nuances

which fail to keep up with the dynamically changing reality of Europe. (According to the author's figurative term, their application resembles shooting "at a mosquito from a cannon"). Even the attempts to revitalise grand theories by creating their newer versions which lead to the emergence of, for instance, not only neo-functionalism but even neo-neo-functionalism, fail to eliminate the deficiencies.

In this situation, Janusz Ruzkowski proposes the application of the theory of a new trend, i.e., "specialist theoretical approaches, even segmented, which will help to explain individual processes, activities or systems identified within the EU". To the specialist theories he includes, *inter alia*, the theory of multi-level governance (MLG), which has even more specialised variations in the form of the Multi-Level Membership (MLM) and Multi-Level Constitutionalism (MLC) theory (Ruzkowski, 2014, p. 46). The author also indicates a number of more or less partial concepts, such as theories of Europeanisation and europeanism, supranationality, Principal-Agent Theory (PAT), customs unions, comitology, optimal currency area (OCA) etc. (Ruzkowski, 2012a, pp. 32-34).

This type of approach definitely has its advantages, but also its limitations. As it seems, its application may lead to excessive fragmentation and overly-detailed research within European studies, which, by definition, should have a very broad, holistic dimension.

Conclusion

As it stems from the analysis of the foregoing research approach by Janusz Ruzkowski, one can have various reservations as regards the concepts and classifications presented in this article. Certainly, researchers' rights to present their own perspectives should be fully respected, but one must also recognise the shortcomings of individual approaches. It applies in particular to the general research effectiveness of individual concepts and theories in the study of a complex reality. This refers not only to researchers in Poland, but also in other countries. Everywhere in the world of science, and in particular in social sciences and humanities, the forewarning formulated by Dariusz Milczarek many years ago may apply: "In relation to some overly complicated or sublime theoretical approaches, one may have reservations as to whether

they are suitable to study the complex conditions of reality, the more so when they sin by over-exposing only one or several selected elements of the analysis” (Milczarek, 2003, p. 19).

It should also be taken into account that a number of the concepts and theories discussed herein are applied not only in academic research, but also in the empirical sphere. This refers, *inter alia*, to the idea of federalism, which can be construed in various ways, not only as a theoretical concept, but above all as a specific political and ideological programme (Sienko 2021). Some concepts closely related to the functioning of the European Union as an international actor, and thus also to European studies, may have a practical application as instruments of the EU's foreign policy. The said refers to, for example, the abovementioned concept of Europeanisation, i.e., the multidimensional influence that the European Union exerts on its external environment, a good example of which is the Eastern Partnership or the Mediterranean Partnership (Barburska, 2020). The same refers to another similar concept applied, as highlighted above, in European studies, namely the idea of Europeanism (Śliwiński, 2020). All of the said issues present the scale of difficulties faced not only by Polish researchers attempting to use European studies to study the complicated reality prevailing in Europe.

The opinion of Janusz Ruszkowski, previously quoted in this article, may serve as a specific conclusion to the foregoing considerations. According to Ruszkowski, European studies, both in terms of methodology and practice, have three main features. They can be absorptive, namely, “they are able absorb and adapt theories and methods from other academic disciplines”, they are flexible, meaning - they can “respond to the constantly changing research subject” that is Europe and integration processes taking place within the European Union in a broad sense, and, finally, they are open to solutions recommended by other disciplines, but at the same time they are not constrained by their “theoretical and methodological corset” (Ruszkowski, 2014, p. 56).

Due to the said advantages, European studies conducted in Poland have not only already gained significant achievements, but also have good prospects for the future. Although they are yet to be officially recognised as an academic discipline under Polish conditions, it is reasonable to hope that it will happen in the most foreseeable future.

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