

РЕЛИГИОЗНЫЙ ФАКТОР В КОНТЕКСТЕ ТЕОРИЙ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЙ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ

С. А. МУДРОВ¹⁾

¹⁾Белорусский государственный университет, пр. Независимости, 4, 220030, г. Минск, Беларусь

Аннотация. Анализируются сильные и слабые стороны основных теорий европейской интеграции – неофункционализма, либерального межправительственного подхода и социального конструктивизма. Акцентируется внимание на необходимости отражения роли религии в процессе европейской интеграции. Наиболее последовательной и убедительной теорией в данном контексте может показаться либеральный межправительственный подход. Однако в связи с расширением Европейского союза в 2004 и 2007 гг. первостепенное значение приобрел социальный конструктивизм, в рамках которого роль неэкономических факторов и конструирования идентичности оказалась особенно важной. Невзирая на то что социальные конструктивисты привнесли в анализ европейской интеграции понятия идентичности и негосударственных акторов, они в целом проигнорировали важный вклад церквей в данный процесс. Отмечается, что социальный конструктивизм обладает богатым теоретическим инструментарием для анализа роли религиозных институтов в европейской интеграции, при этом разработка отдельного религиозного подхода к интеграции способна внести существенный вклад в понимание объединительных процессов в Европе.

Ключевые слова: европейская интеграция; религия; неофункционализм; либеральный межправительственный подход; социальный конструктивизм.

THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN THE CONTEXT OF THE THEORIES OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

S. A. MUDROV^a

^aBelarusian State University, 4 Niezaliezhnasci Avenue, Minsk 220030, Belarus

Abstract. This article analyses strong and weak aspects of the principal theories of European integration – neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism and social constructivism. The emphasis is on the need to reflect the role of religion in the process of European integration. The most consistent and convincing theory in this context may seem to be the liberal intergovernmentalism. However, in connection with the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, social constructivism acquired primary importance, when the role of non-economic factors and the construction of identity turned out to be especially important. At the same time, although social constructivists brought the notions of identity and non-state actors into the analysis of European integration, they have largely ignored the important contribution of churches to this process. It is noted that social constructivism can, in principle, be used to create a theoretical framework for the analysis of the role of religious institutions in European integration, at the same time the introduction of a separate, religious approach to integration would add an important dimension to the understanding of unification processes in Europe.

Keywords: European integration; religion; neofunctionalism; liberal intergovernmentalism; social constructivism.

Образец цитирования:

Мудров СА. Религиозный фактор в контексте теорий европейской интеграции. *Журнал Белорусского государственного университета. Социология.* 2024;4:59–67 (на англ.). EDN: XCEIXK

For citation:

Mudrov SA. The religious factor in the context of the theories of European integration. *Journal of the Belarusian State University. Sociology.* 2024;4:59–67. EDN: XCEIXK

Автор:

Сергей Александрович Мудров – кандидат социологических наук, доцент; докторант кафедры социологии факультета философии и социальных наук.

Author:

Sergei A. Mudrov, PhD (sociology), docent; postdoctoral research fellow at the department of sociology, faculty of philosophy and social sciences.
s.mudrov@gmail.com

Introduction

The process of European integration has often been described as a purely secular project, with very few references to religion or religious organisations. The artificiality of this approach became especially evident in the early 21st century, when the religious factors and actors became quite noticeable in the European Union (EU) unification process. This was evident in the discussions over the key EU documents, including the European Constitution and, later on, the Lisbon Treaty. The very fact that the Lisbon Treaty contained references to religion and envisaged regular and transparent dialogue between religious organisations and EU institutions was a reflection of the significant religious presence in the EU life.

However, one needs to note that in the theoretical studies of European integration there was a lack of specific attention to this important fact. This article aims at filling this gap, analysing the main theories of European integration – neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism and social constructivism¹. Each theory brings its own important and distinct perspective to the understanding of EU unification. None of the three theories, however, gives any adequate consideration to religion. This oversight – or even ignorance – of the role that religion plays in European integration is an important drawback in the current theoretical approaches, which will be addressed in this article.

Neofunctionalism: an obsolescent theory or unfortunate story?

The story of neofunctionalism is somewhat unfortunate. Indeed, it was badly wounded by its own inventor – E. B. Haas, an American scholar who proclaimed his own theory obsolescent. In spite of this, the theory miraculously survived and, after a period of recovery, continued to inspire those scholars who could see merit in its approach. As B. Rosamond emphasised, «neofunctionalism has displayed impressive qualities of obstinacy and revitalisation in recent years» [1, p. 50]. However, the theory has not remained unchanged. Over the course of its long history, neofunctionalism has experienced numerous modifications, which have allowed it to evolve.

When assessing neofunctionalism, its inception should be kept in mind. This theory of integration germinated during the early stages of European integration, when this uneasy postwar child of the Six was still in the crib. Naturally, the hopes and expectation of the early 1950s were not the same as in years – or even decades – later. On the one hand, this evolving thinking can explain why E. B. Haas chose to change his theory, rather than to defend his previous findings, as the evidence of his objectivity. On the other hand, it could be viewed as a weakness of his theoretical approaches, which were often overtaken by changes and developments in the European integration process. Some may argue though that these were major changes; therefore modifications to the theory were inevitable.

Haas's opus «The uniting of Europe. Political, social, and economic forces. 1950–1957», first published in 1958, is a sincere and profound attempt to provide a critical assessment of European developments in 1950–1957, and it contains a number of important points:

- E. B. Haas rejected a purely federalist explanation of European unification, which was quite popular at that time. Speaking about the interests and values of the main groups which were involved in the integration process, he said that they are «far too complex to be described

in such simple terms as “the desire for Franco-German peace” or the “will to a united Europe”»;

- E. B. Haas was bold enough to propose (or predict) the possible emergence of a single state;
- in a further development of his theoretical framework, E. B. Haas asserted that the process of integration would inevitably involve changes of values as well as the redefinition of interests «in terms of a regional rather than a purely national orientation» [2, p. 13].

His reasoning can be summarised as follows. A shift of loyalty – to a supranational body occurs, but this does not necessarily «imply the immediate repudiation of the national state or government» [2, p. 14]. Furthermore, national groups and individuals may even turn to supranational agencies and procedures, in order to achieve their aims which might otherwise be blocked or constrained on the national level. Thus, as it follows from Haas's theorising, a supranational body, especially one that attracts an adequate degree of loyalty from national groups, may well manage to pursue a policy of its own, largely independent from the national governments.

Haas's ideas were enriched by his disciple L. N. Lindberg, who published his seminal work, «The political dynamics of European economic integration», five years after the work «The uniting of Europe. Political, social, and economic forces. 1950–1957» became known to the readers. The emphasis which Lindberg made in the preface of his book – that it was his teacher who «presided over this manuscript from germination to publication» [3, p. VIII] – suggests that the content of the work «The political dynamics of European economic integration» is just a reflection of Haas's ideas. Indeed, L. N. Lindberg takes Haas's thoughts as his starting point, but he also makes neofunctionalism more colourful and diverse. L. N. Lindberg embellishes Haas's famous concept of spill-over, which E. B. Haas had used to demonstrate that integration of one sector causes the integration of other sectors. L. N. Lindberg develops the definition

¹Some scholars include postfunctionalism in the three grand theories of European integration. (*Hooghe L., Marks G. Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century // J. of Eur. Public Policy. 2019. No. 26. Vol. 8. P. 1113–1133.*)

of spill-over in his own way: «We shall formulate it as follows: the initial task and grant of power to central institutions creates a situation or series of situations that can be dealt with only by further expanding the task and the grant of power. Spill-over implies that a situation has developed in which the ability of a member state to achieve a policy goal may depend upon the attainment by another member state of one of its policy goals» [3, p. 10].

As a genuine neofunctionalist, L. N. Lindberg contributes to the analysis of supranational institutions' activities, which he calls central institutions. Here he echoes E. B. Haas, stating that «the central institutions are... endowed with a potentially far-reaching legislative power that can be exercised without the necessity of obtaining ratification from national parliaments» [3, p. 284].

The third, but no less important point worth mentioning, is the discussion about economic interest groups which, on the one hand, are affected by integration but, on the other hand, try to use it for their own purposes. These groups, as L. N. Lindberg posits, may form associations, and may even act independently of their respective national governments at the pan-European level. L. N. Lindberg states that «the commission has encouraged the development of these groups, actively fostering it», probably as a reflection of desire to generate an efficient and strong instrument, which would be effective in influencing national governments [3, p. 98]. This suggestion is quite plausible; especially if the role attributed to supranational (or central, to use Lindberg's definition) institutions in neofunctionalism is taken into account.

Thus, within a few years, due to the combined efforts of E. B. Haas and L. N. Lindberg, neofunctionalism gained the reputation of a well-established and coherent theory which was able to explain European integration adequately and precisely. However, in the 1968 preface to the reissued publication of the work «The uniting of Europe. Political, social, and economic forces. 1950–1957», E. B. Haas was already questioning his previous conclusions: «The ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community. – S. M.) experience has spawned a theory of international integration by indirection, by trial and error, by miscalculation on the part of the actors desiring integration, by manipulation of elite social forces on the part of small groups of pragmatic administrators and politicians in the setting of a vague but permissive public opinion. Functionalism and incrementalism rather than federalism and comprehensive planning are the key terms used in describing this theory. Have events in Western Europe since 1958 validated or weakened that theory?» [2, p. VII].

E. B. Haas decided that the «weakened» was the correct answer. He declared that the theory, which he had confidently presented ten years earlier, suffered from a number of serious shortcomings. Firstly, he recognised

that it was erroneous to neglect «new aspirations and expectations that develop after the initial experience» [2, p. XIV]. Secondly, E. B. Haas asserted that it was premature to speak about «the end of ideology» [2, p. XIV]. Thirdly, he believed that the external environment had not been given sufficient attention in his earlier work. Finally, «the functionalist theory here developed failed to spell out the massive transformations of European society and political style that occurred contemporaneously with, but *autonomously* of, the integration process» [2, p. XV]. Most importantly of all, the logic of spill-over – the key to his original theory, had been demolished. As J. Pinder pointed out, «de Gaulle destroyed any illusions about automatic spill-over» [4, p. 43]. E. B. Haas therefore sought to find a new explanation – and it was found by modifying the role of pragmatic interests in integration. E. B. Haas suggested that pragmatic interests (mainly economic concerns) should not be regarded as irreversible driving forces towards integration. As he stressed, «pragmatic interests, because they are pragmatic and not reinforced with deep ideological or philosophical commitment, are ephemeral» [2, p. XXVIII]. However, this clear and frank admission did not result in any further dissemination of the ideological and philosophical dimensions of his theory. Instead, E. B. Haas postulated that actors in Western Europe are quite indifferent to such doctrines as «Marxism, existentialism, Christian personalism, cultural nationalism, or laissez-faire liberalism» [2, p. XXVIII].

E. B. Haas persistently continued to make non-ideal modifications to the theory of neofunctionalism. In a further attempt to rescue his theory, the California-based academic introduced the concepts of «turbulent fields» and «fragmented issue linkage». According to E. B. Haas, «...a turbulent field... is a policy space in which this type of confusion (among actors pursuing a variety of mutually incompatible objectives. – S. M.) dominates discussion and negotiation. It can be sub-national, national, regional, inter-regional, and global – and all at the same time» [5, p. 179]. The fragmented issue linkage was explained in this way: «We must imagine... a structure which reflects the reality and which performs more adequately than the present institutions in successfully linking the issues which preoccupy modern man» [5, p. 207]. These modifications and innovations were designed to salvage theory of neofunctionalism. They might have succeeded, had E. B. Haas himself not wrecked his own theory by speculating about the likely outcome of the European integration process in the short to medium term. Indeed, his predictions were in sharp contrast to what happened in reality, since E. B. Haas insisted that «there will be no European federation, no political union of even the confederal type, and no economic and monetary union which looks like the federal governance of the customs union» [2, p. 207]. It is quite obvious that Haas's approaches misled him in terms of empirical conclusions, leaving inadequate room

for philosophical manoeuvre. In that respect, J. Pinder identified the following shortcomings of neofunctionalism: «One was that the neo-functionalists' model was based on contemporary behavioural views of industrial society and welfarism which were an unsound basis for their political predictions. A second criticised their unrealistic belief that a body such as the commission, without an electoral or parliamentary base, could give the political leadership required to overcome resistance to the integration process, particularly from the member states. The other side of this coin was the neo-functionalists' underestimation of the state» [4, p. 44].

In spite of these problems, neofunctionalism remains a valid theory today. It continues to be developed in new forms and versions, being ascribed new dimensions. Although many academics may not consider themselves as advocates of neofunctionalism, a number of scholars do seem to align to neofunctionalist rhetoric. However, all neofunctionalist scholars display a degree of uncer-

tainty similar to the lack of consistency, which was evident in Haas's initial theorising. Even the introduction of neo-neofunctionalism, launched by Ph. Schmitter, does not change much in that respect [6]. Up to now, when discussing the interest associations and social movements which contribute to integration, neofunctionalists tend to overemphasise the role of economic groups, unfairly excluding religious or religion-based and ideological associations. Therefore their approaches appear to be not adequately comprehensive, since the global and regional interests of various actors are confined not only to economic benefits.

However, this unfortunate story of neofunctionalism inspired another scholar who – in contrast to the neo-functionalists – offers a very consistent theory, which, as he claims, is able to explain almost the whole history of European integration – from Messina to Maastricht. This theory – liberal intergovernmentalism – is the sole invention of a prominent American scholar, A. Moravcsik.

Liberal intergovernmentalism: a consistent theory

Liberal intergovernmentalism is clearly connected to the theory of intergovernmentalism, which dominated political discourse in the 1970s and 1980s, when the integration process in Europe had slowed down. Intergovernmentalists maintained that states were the main actors of integration and that they retained control over the integration process, without conceding their sovereignty [7, p. 168]. This was a rival theory to neofunctionalism, and this theory downgraded the role of supranational institutions. In spite of its recognised roots, liberal intergovernmentalism, as F. Schimmelfennig points out, is regarded as a theory with one author (A. Moravcsik) and no disciples [8, p. 75]. A. Moravcsik, who published in 1998 a huge volume entitled «The choice for Europe. Social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht» is a scholar who pursues his ideas fiercely and with a high degree of self-confidence. His attempt to explain European integration seems to be clear and convincing, with a good deal of empirical information to support his claims. A. Moravcsik explains the key message of his theory in the following way: «European integration resulted from a series of rational choices made by national leaders who consistently pursued economic interests – primarily the commercial interests of powerful economic producers and secondarily the macroeconomic preferences of ruling governmental coalitions – that evolved slowly in response to structural incentives in the global economy» [9, p. 3].

Although economic interests are not the only focus of Moravcsik's theorising, they do effectively subordinate other factors which might, in principle, be regarded as meaningful for the European integration process. A. Moravcsik rejects neofunctionalism, criticising the neofunctionalist model of supranational institutions, which, as that model alleges, forced the integration pro-

cess. On the contrary, he claims that «the integration process did not supersede or circumvent the political will of national leaders; it reflected their will» [9, p. 4]. A high degree of consistency, evident in Moravcsik's work, is vividly shown in his evaluation of the main steps of European integration. First step, the Treaty of Rome is assessed in the following way: «Whereas the bulk of the literature on the Treaty of Rome negotiations suggests that geopolitical considerations, supranational entrepreneurship, and technocratic or ideological motives for institution-building were crucial, I hold that the preponderance of hard evidence demonstrates the greater importance of commercial interest <...> Existing scholarship (particularly on Britain) greatly underestimates the extent to which national policies were driven by the desire to promote exports» [9, p. 87].

Second step, A. Moravcsik argues that behaviour of the members of the European Economic Community, regarding agricultural policy «further confirms the symbolic rather than serious nature of geopolitical proposals; they were modified as necessary to gain domestic political support and to press for economic goals» [9, p. 213]. The third step he considers is the origin of the Single European Act (SEA). A. Moravcsik dismisses «a conventional wisdom», which «emerged about the origins of the SEA» and was derived «from supranational bargaining theory» [9, p. 316]. For him, the opinion expressed by A. Cockfield («where you have a forceful and visionary president... backed by a strong and effective commission, the community makes progress») is undoubtedly less plausible than his own liberal intergovernmentalist explanation: «The SEA assembled a set of liberalised measures demanded by business, widely viewed as inevitable, and, to a large extent, already being implemented unilaterally and bilaterally. National leaders were also motivated by geopolitical ideologies, but

economic interests remained primary in the sense that no major government... was willing to sacrifice a major economic interest for the sake of ideologically desirable integration» [9, p. 317].

Finally, A. Moravcsik openly challenges the conventional analysis of the Treaty on European Union (the Maastricht Treaty). He admits that «German reunification, agenda-setting by supranational officials, and federalist ideology form the core of most existing interpretations of the Maastricht negotiations», and although none is «wholly incorrect», each «requires substantial revision in light of the available historical evidence» [9, p. 381]. A. Moravcsik maintains that national preferences were driven primarily by the enduring structural economic interests of strong- and weak-currency countries [9, p. 381]. He also believes that negotiations at Maastricht «witnessed a resurgence of the intergovernmental negotiating style», while «supranational and transnational entrepreneurship tended to be ineffective» [9, p. 386]. A. Moravcsik assumes that the Maastricht Treaty negotiations serve to confirm intergovernmental bargaining theory and, in addition, to dispute supranational theory.

Moravcsik's proposition that economic interests form the basis of the integration process raises a number of questions.

1. Should we assume that these interests subsume all others and in every case?

2. Is their dominance comprehensive?

3. How can the 2004 and 2007 enlargements, as well as the Brexit², be explained in purely economic terms, if they showed that political and ideological factors do play a role in European integration? Finally, if it is accepted that the integration process cannot be described in purely economic terms, what space, if any, should be given to non-economic factors?

Whatever the difficulty of these questions on liberal intergovernmentalism, they do not necessarily undermine completely this theory. Nor do the other criticisms, concerning different points of Moravcsik's theory. He is criticised for having a tight focus on British, French and German politics, for depending on evidence which is not reliable enough, and for deliberately selecting specific case studies which confirm his hypotheses [10]. He is also accused of not dealing properly with ideology or doctrine – a point which is probably more relevant than the others: «Over the period of EU evolution more of a tussle has occurred between competing economic doctrines than A. Moravcsik acknowledges. In their turn the

common agricultural policy... the single market and the single currency have been achieved as a particular political-economic doctrine gained a kind of transnational ascendancy at a particular moment» [10, p. 159].

However, even this criticism does not harm liberal intergovernmentalism much. Indeed, its author, elaborating the significance of economic factors, remains flexible. In a 1999 article, A. Moravcsik concedes that «it is always prudent to remember that the world contains more complexity than any single theory can encompass» [11, p. 672]. In addition, he explicitly recognises the importance of the world of ideas, although, of course, he insists that it is not as influential as the world of banknotes, factories and pipelines: «This (liberal intergovernmentalist. – S. M.) explanation does not deny that individuals and governments have ideas in their heads or that we should observe them espousing ideas consistent with rational interests and strategies. It denies *only* that *exogenous* variations in other sources of those ideas decisively affect ideas and therefore policy. In sum, in the LI account of integration, ideas are present but not causally central. They may be irrelevant and random, or, more likely, they are important transmission belts for interests» [11, p. 674–675].

If we consider the strictness of this theory, it is quite a concession for A. Moravcsik to make such an acknowledgement. This is a meaningful sign, since it allows us to move more easily to the world where ideas, norms and values prevail over the world of impassive economic and technocratic mechanisms, shadowing human beings. This is a logical move, because these are the human beings who stand behind the numerous and diverse aspects of European integration. Moreover, as Th. Risse and A. Wiener assert «our understanding of our material interests are only our ideas about our material interests (even if these ideas are social facts and sticky over centuries)» [12, p. 779]. To forget them means to move further away from reality. Therefore the arrival of a new, more human-oriented theory is useful and desirable enterprise. In that respect, even A. Moravcsik was willing to admit that «even the most materialist explanations of European integration... concede an important secondary role for ideas» [11, p. 678]. On our part, we are willing to claim that the less materialist explanations may logically envisage an important primary role for ideas. Therefore, not rejecting completely liberal intergovernmentalism, we need to give way to the elaborations of social constructivism.

Social constructivism: theory of ideational factors

The advent of social constructivism as a recognised theory in the field of European integration studies was marked by the publication in 1999 of a special issue of

the Journal of European Public Policy. It had become increasingly clear that conventional explanations of European integration overlooked some important features of

²This refers to the exit of the United Kingdom from the EU, following the 2016 referendum, in which most Britons supported this idea. It is suggested that the issues of identity and national sovereignty were the primary ones for the Britons's rejection of further EU membership.

this process, which became more visible from the early 1990s. The EU, which is often referred to as an emerging polity, could hardly be constrained to the world of supranational institutions or economically-driven national governments. We can still see the relevance of neofunctionalism if we move back several decades, and we recognise the strength of liberal intergovernmentalism if we do not consider the EU enlargements in 2004 and 2007 and the constitutional disputes in the union. Both theories still retain their topicality and are able to explain most of the steps in the integration process. The problem, however, is that their explanation remains incomplete and omits several important factors in European unification.

Having said that, it should be noted that most scholars do not recognise social constructivism as another theory. Indeed, Th. Christiansen, K. E. Jørgensen and A. Wiener, who promoted social constructivism in the field of integration studies, speak about «a social constructivist perspective to the study of European integration» [13, p. 527]. In their theorising, they «seek to go beyond explaining variation within a fixed setting», also believing that «neglecting the constructive force of the process itself, i. e. pushing intersubjective phenomena, and social context aside, lays the ground for missing out on a crucial part of the process» [13, p. 527]. Unlike some other theorists, who adamantly dismiss the outdated findings of their peers, constructivists have a more modest claim: simply to present constructivism as being «particularly well suited for research on European integration» [13, p. 527]. As the authors state in that respect: «A significant amount of evidence suggests that, as a process. European integration has a transformative impact on the European state system and its constituent units. European integration itself has changed over the years, and it is reasonable to assume that in the process agents' identity and subsequently their interests and behaviour have equally changed. While this aspect of change can be theorised within constructivist perspectives, it will remain largely invisible in approaches that neglect processes of identity formation and (or) assume interests to be given exogenously» [13, p. 529].

Social constructivism exists in a variety of forms and approaches, distancing itself from a unified theory version, as evident even in the introductory 1999 journal on constructivism. As Th. Risse and A. Wiener assert, «the special issue assembles quite a variety of different theoretical orientation» [12, p. 776]. Consequently, this makes it almost impossible to develop a coherent picture of a single social constructivist approach to European integration. It is, however, possible to identify certain trends and developments, without finding a standard and rigid way of theorising. This is both the weakness and the strength of social constructivism, since it allows, on the one hand, more flexibility, but, on the other, makes it more vulnerable to criticism. Certainly, most constructivists will subscribe to the key

definition of constructivism, offered by J. Ruggie and cited by Th. Christiansen, K. E. Jørgensen and A. Wiener: «Constructivists hold the view that the building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material; that ideational factors have normative as well as instrumental dimensions; that they express not only individual but also collective intentionality; and that the meaning and significance of ideational factors are not independent of time and place» [13, p. 530].

Scholars of social constructivism emphasise different areas which they believe to be the most important aspects for studies of European integration. In most cases they only attempt to use the constructivist approach within certain areas, rather than to elaborate it further, and this is evident (with few exceptions) in the special issue. One of these exceptions is J. Checkel's attempt to provide a more vigorously developed theoretical argument. J. Checkel, who positions himself as a modernist social constructivist, claims that there is little knowledge «about its (European project. – S. M.) socialisation and identity-shaping effects on national agents» [14, p. 545]. As he suggests: «The great majority of contemporary work on European integration views institutions, at best, as intervening variables. Missing is a thick institutional argument, derived from sociology, that demonstrates how European institutions can construct, through a process of interaction, the identities and interests of member states and groups within them» [14, p. 548].

J. Checkel considers two areas where social constructivism could make a useful contribution to the discourse. These are learning and socialisation processes at the European level; and the soft or normative side of Europeanisation at the national level. He defines social learning as a «process whereby actors, through interaction with broader institutional contexts (norms or discursive structures), acquire new interests and preferences – in the absence of obvious material incentives» [14, p. 548]. To confirm his hypothesis, J. Checkel describes his interviews in Strasbourg (with members of the Committee of Experts on Nationality of the Council of Europe), which allowed him to uncover how, through the process of persuasion and learning, members of the committee altered their perspectives on a number of important issues. As he claims, «over time, particular individuals clearly shifted from what they viewed as a strategic bargaining game to a process where basic preferences were rethought» [14, p. 551]. Theorising on the emergence of norms, J. Checkel states that «well-placed individuals with entrepreneurial skills can often turn their individual beliefs into broader, shared understanding» [14, p. 551]. This usually happens if some other conditions apply; namely if a larger group faces a puzzle or problem which is new and has no clear answer, and if a process of social learning and socialisation occurs at the appropriate level. J. Checkel then explains that new European norms diffuse to national settings via two

pathways: societal mobilisation and societal learning [14, p. 552]. In the first case, non-state actors and policy networks are united in their support for norms; they then mobilise and coerce decision-makers to change state policy, while, in the second case, agents – typically elite decision-makers – adopt prescriptions embodied in norms; they then become internalised and constitute a set of shared intersubjective understandings that make behavioural claims [14, p. 553]. Although J. Checkel admits that the process of European integration has largely been about market integration, where national and transnational business interests have played key roles and that these groups are, of course, quite different in structure and goals from the actors of civil society – domestic non-governmental organisations, churches, he eventually makes the following emphasis: «If the institutional (enhanced role of European Parliament) and substantive (third pillar of justice and home affairs) innovations of Maastricht and Amsterdam continue to evolve, new actors and policy issues are increasingly likely to make themselves felt. Moreover, the current interest in Brussels, London and elsewhere in moving the EU away from a strict regulatory role to one emphasising standard-setting and so-called “soft law” plays to the strength of social actors like NGOs (non-governmental organisations. – S. M.): it is precisely the promotion of such informal practices and norms where they are most influential» [14, p. 554–555].

Only few other constructivist scholars undertake such pure theorising as J. Checkel. For example, Th. Diez includes a discourse analysis «in the canon of approaches in European studies», trying to «make case for the importance of language in the process of European integration» [15, p. 599, 610]. Discussing the British bid for membership of the European Economic Community, Th. Diez believes that «the language of a free trade area in the British case facilitated the move towards the articulation of an economic community that would otherwise have been much harder, if not impossible» [15, p. 608]. R. Koslowski attempts to use constructivism to analyse federal theories of the EU, stating that «by refocusing attention on political practices, intersubjective meanings and informal norms, constructivism may be useful in developing federal theories for the EU» [16, p. 561]. His approach can be summarised by the following extract: «Federalism provides an important perspective on European integration, even if that has yet to be acknowledged in mainstream IR theory. Constructivism helps to retool federal theories for more persuasive analysis of the EU by refocusing attention on political practices, intersubjective meanings and informal norms» [16, p. 576].

J. Shaw endeavours to «re-examine the challenges of and to the concepts of constitution and constitutionalism» in the EU from a constructivist perspective [17, p. 579]. She believes that constructivism might be more appropriate for studying constitutionalism in

the EU postnational format: «There exists also a dimension to postnationalism which relates to the nature and structure of communities» [17, p. 588].

The creators of a constructivist perspective were attempting to produce a coherent model, drawn from various contributions. It was quite a difficult task: to unite something very diverse and potentially not suitable for uniting. Th. Christiansen, K. E. Jørgensen and A. Wiener claim that «one of the major contributions of constructivist approaches is to include the impact of norms and ideas on the construction of identities and behaviour» [13, p. 532]. They also assert that constructivism may have an impact on the studies of European integration by means of development of theories, construction of frameworks of analysis, and meta-theorising. The authors mention the following aspects of European integration developments, which should be brought into the constructivist framework. Firstly, «there is a need to come to grips with the nature of European polity as an increasingly rule-bounded arena for social interaction» [13, p. 539]. Secondly, the great importance of constructivism for research on identity formation needs to be taken into account. This could possibly constitute: «...[first], research into the nature of a potential European identity; second, research into the reconstruction of national identities under the influence of the integration process; and, third, informed by the results of both the above, there is the question of the plurality of national identities and cultures, and the extent to which a European political identity or political culture can be founded upon such difference» [13, p. 540].

Finally, constructivism is useful for making enquiries into the role of language, discourse and ideas [13, p. 541–542]. However, due to the mixed and rather diverse nature of social constructivism, it is open to much criticism, ranging from the mild and friendly to the strong and harsh. S. Smith exemplifies the former, while A. Moravcsik represents the latter. S. Smith, while admitting that «social constructivism has enormous potential for the study of the EU», asserts that «there is no one social constructivism» [18, p. 690]. He claims that «the articles (in the special issue. – S. M.) reveal approaches based on a wide range of assumptions, and some of these seem to be mutually exclusive» [18, p. 689]. A. Moravcsik accuses constructivist scholars of poor scholarship and of lacking the desire to understand rival theories: «Constructivists... have contributed far less to our empirical and theoretical understanding of European integration than their meta-theoretical assertions might suggest – certainly far less than existing alternatives» [11, p. 670].

To be fair, there is certainly a grain of truth in Moravcsik's criticism. Constructivism, by and large, remains in the shadow of neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism, although it gradually increases its significance. Its contribution has already helped to break the *circulus vitiosus* of meta-theoretical debates,

which were leaving little room for the manifestation of anything apart from supranational institutions and economically-driven national governments. Indeed, in the EU of the 21st century there is so much talk about identity, culture and non-governmental organisations that any pretence to ignore or underestimate these areas should be regarded as superficial. The advent of social constructivism saved a cohort of theories of European integration from an otherwise inevitable decline of relevance. However, one needs to say that constructivist scholars should have been more open and inclusive. They spent much time and effort writing about identity formation in the EU and the role of non-governmental organisations in European integration, yet omitted two

important points: religion and churches. This appears to be superficial, since religion cannot be excluded from the process of identity formation in Europe – not only because of the European past, but also because it remains an important part of the everyday life of many people at present. In addition, it is important to remember that churches remain influential and powerful non-governmental actors, whose ability to influence the decision-making process is often far greater than that of many other non-governmental organisations. Thus, the disregard for religion and churches is an obvious shortcoming of social constructivist thought, which jeopardises the credibility of an otherwise trustworthy and interesting theory.

Conclusion

The range of theories of European integration is constantly becoming more complex and diverse. Each theory, analysing the integration process from its own perspective, has something important to offer for the better understanding of this intricate process, which has gripped the European continent for over half a century. Approaches and conclusions are often contested and criticised by rival theories, giving way to new, at times intriguing, or even strange ideas. Despite declared contradictions and mutual exclusions among the three main theories – neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism and social constructivism (as well as numerous other minor theories) they still have much in common. Each considers the role of supranational institutions, economic forces, non-state actors and ideas in the course of the integration process, each with a different emphasis, but bearing in mind that European integration is based on a number of inter-related factors.

Given the plethora of approaches, it is surprising that the theories' authors have avoided any explicit reference to religion and Christian churches in their analysis of the process of European integration. If «Latin Christendom... has become interchangeable with the idea of Europe» and if «Christianity... is... the under-

current of contemporary European culture» [19, p. 188], then why is religion missing from the volumes of integration theory? If churches are recognised as social, political and even economic actors, then why are they not given consideration, comparable to the other similar contributors to the integration process? Finally, when considering the concept of identity and the notion of ideas with regard to studies of European integration, churches should certainly be included in their role of powerful identity formers and generators of ideas. Yet, this lack of acknowledgement is evident in the current theoretical space of European integration.

There is one more thing here to note. Since the world of integration theories encompasses such diverse theories as the feminist approach, integration through law, etc., it is worth asking why nobody has offered a religious approach to European integration. At this stage, the elaboration of this approach appears to be pertinent. This would actually complement and enrich the existing theories, arming them with more objectivity and strength. This is a pressing task and the one which is increasingly important in the current era, when the religious factor is highly visible within the diverse nations that comprise the EU.

References

1. Rosamond B. *Theories of European integration*. New York: Palgrave; 2000. 232 p.
2. Haas EB. *The uniting of Europe. Political, social, and economic forces. 1950–1957*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; 1968. 552 p.
3. Lindberg LN. *The political dynamics of European economic integration*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; 1963. 367 p.
4. Pinder J. European community and nation-state: a case for neo-federalism? *International Affairs*. 1986;62(1):41–54.
5. Haas EB. Turbulent fields and the theory of regional integration. *International Organization*. 1976;30:173–212. DOI: 10.1017/S0020818300018245.
6. Schmitter Ph. Neo-neofunctionalism. In: Wiener A, Diez Th, editors. *European integration theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2004. p. 45–74.
7. Leustean L. What is the European Union? Religion between neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*. 2009;9(3):165–176. DOI: 10.1080/14742250903168149.
8. Schimmelfennig F. Liberal intergovernmentalism. In: Wiener A, Diez Th, editors. *European integration theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2004. p. 75–94.
9. Moravcsik A. *The choice for Europe. Social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht*. New York: Cornell University Press; 1998. 514 p.

10. Wallace H, Caporaso JA, Schampf FW, Moravcsik A. Review section symposium: the choice for Europe: social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(1):155–179.
11. Moravcsik A. Is something rotten in the state of Denmark? Constructivism and European integration. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(4):669–681.
12. Risse Th, Wiener A. «Something rotten» and the social construction of social constructivism: a comment on comments. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(5):775–782. DOI: 10.1080/135017699343379.
13. Christiansen Th, Jørgensen KE, Wiener A. The social construction of Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(4):528–544. DOI: 10.1080/135017699343450.
14. Checkel J. Social construction and integration. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(4):545–560.
15. Diez Th. Speaking Europe: the politics of integration discourse. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(4):598–613. DOI: 10.1080/135017699343496.
16. Koslowski R. A constructivist approach to understanding the European Union as a federal polity. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(4):561–578. DOI: 10.1080/135017699343478.
17. Shaw J. Postnational constitutionalism in the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(4):579–597. DOI: 10.1080/135017699343487.
18. Smith S. Social constructivism and European studies: a reflectivist critique. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 1999;6(4):682–691. DOI: 10.1080/135017699343540.
19. Haltern U. Integration through law. In: Wiener A, Diez Th, editors. *European integration theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2004. p. 177–196.

Received by editorial board 29.09.2024.