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EUROPEAN UNION AT THE CROSSROADS OF THE THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The theoretical pluralism trying to explain European integration is worth to parallel and compare with the attempt of several blind men trying to grasp the shape of the elephant via touching it. In fact, each of them touches just one part of the elephant and makes deductions about the whole shape based on the part it touched. This pluralism can be explained with the truly sui generis nature of the European Union (hereinafter EU). The paper discusses the process of European paper integration from the viewpoints of the three major theories of International Relations – Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism. It identifies the major deficiencies of each theory while encountering the EU. Nevertheless, it is shown that Constructivism fits the best with the complexity of the EU.

Key words: *EU integration, IR theories, theoretical glitches, realism, liberalism, constructivism, inter-paradigm “dialogue”.*

JEL: F50,F53

Introduction: The sui generis nature of the European integration attracted the attention of almost all the schools of IR attempting to explain the logic behind the phenomena happening in international relations. The so-called “grand theories” (realism, liberalism and constructivism) are not an exception. Each of them interprets the reality from its own viewpoint which can be paralleled with the wish of several blind men trying to grasp the shape of the elephant via touching it. On the other hand, literature lacks comparisons and contrasts among various theories or, in other words, a “dialogue” among the theories.

The purpose of the article is dualistic: 1. to showcase the relevant theories and identify thereof inherent glitches, 2. to develop interparadigm comparison. For that sake, the following theories will be contemplated: realism & neo-realism, Liberal-Intergovernmentalism and social constructivism. For that purpose, in my academic journey, I realized that the body of literature lacks communication among paradigms, save probably the academic fight between neo-functionalists (minority if one is to believe Mr. Mearsheimer¹) and liberal-intergovernmentalists (hereinafter LI), a single-author theory according to Schimmelfenning,² developed by Andrew Moravcsik, professor from Princeton University with outstanding methodological prowess anchored upon the best traditions of the rationalist school. In honor to him, it has to be mentioned that he also challenged the constructivism trying to reaffirm the righteousness of his LI theory, but mostly on epistemological grounds stating that constructivists are hiding themselves behind the meta-theoretical clouds, thus not leaving a room for new debate in the IR theory, but reinvigorating positivism-reflectivism clash in the social sciences.³ Against this background, it is especially perplexing that European integration process, something new for the discipline of International Relations (hereinafter, when it refers to discipline – IR) dating back to the times of Thucydides did not become a fertile soil for great debates.

Overall, the above-mentioned theories are not chosen randomly. The rationale behind is the following: realism (rarely discussed in the context of European integration), liberalism (and consequently LI as its just one branch) and constructivism are well established IR theories, also known as “grand theories”. They lay claim to explicate the considerations behind almost any interstate affair and they will remain pertinent to the field of European integration at least as long as the Treaties (for example, the Lisbon Treaty) are signed by “High Contracting Parties”.

Methodology: It is of paramount importance to state that in the purview of this paper, I will focus only on integrative aspects that transcends the day-to-day policy process and concerns the super-systematic level of the EU. In other words, putting à la Peterson, only history-making decisions will be discussed.⁴ Nevertheless, “history-making” is not tantamount to treaty amendment as a result of intergovernmental conferences, as it also incorporates landmark decisions of the ECJ that are of utmost importance for closer integration, as well as, generally speaking, phenomena that considerably altered the power balance between Brussels and the national capitals in favor of the former.

¹ NOTE: Mearsheimer does not mention the labels, but briefly tells the central messages of each theory whereby one can easily infer that neo-functionalists are minority. See Mearsheimer, J. J. Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War. *International Security*, Vol. 15, No.1, 1990, p. 44.

² Schimmelfenning F., “Liberal Intergovernmentalism” in A. Wiener and T. Diez (ed.), *European Integration theory*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 75.

³ Moravcsik A., *Bringing Constructivist Integration Theory out of the Clouds: Has it Landed Yet*. *European Union Politics*, 2(2), 2001, p. 228.

⁴ Peterson J., *Decision-Making in the European Union: Towards a Framework for Analysis*. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1995, p. 72.

Stemming from the purpose, the following two research questions were formulated:

1. How is European integration interpreted in the scope of the “grand” theories of IR?
2. What challenges do the IR theories face while trying to explain European integration?

To tackle the research questions, ideographic methodology was applied. The method used is illustrative case study. In particular, European integration is the object of the present thesis that was studied through the application of theoretical eclecticism. The theories mentioned were not only collated, but also compared, contrasted with one another and critically analyzed.

Analysis:

Realism

Realism, as the oldest school of IR, significantly predates the onset of European integration. Therefore, in this context, the first research question shall be amended slightly as follows: how could European integration have possibly been interpreted through the lenses of the realist scholars? The shortest answer would be – there is no and cannot be European integration! Let us see why.

Nicciollo Machiavelli, in his celebrated seminal oeuvre *The Prince* gives a set of commandments on effective implementation of power-oriented politics.⁵ Having a cherished dream to unite the then-scattered Italian city states under the same polity and, most probably, bearing Lorenzo de Medici of Florence in his mind for that historical mission, he would hardly imagine any prince to unite the bulk of Europe in a way other than military conquest, let alone voluntary relinquishment of considerable part of sovereignty by 28 sovereigns to any kind of supranational formation. Almost a century later, British philosopher Hobbes, another prominent forerunner of the modern-day realists, considered war as a natural condition of human being.⁶ Notably, the mentioned two seminal works later became major philosophical inspiration for the modern-day realists among whom Hans J. Morgenthau defined the following six principles of realism: 1. The government of politics by rational laws rooted in the nature of human being, 2. Ensuring the national interests by the means of power acquisition/acquiring, 3. The variable nature of state interests, 4. Inapplicability of the universal moral principles to state foreign policy, 5. Disguising the actions of the nations under the universal moral principles, 6. The autonomy of IR, i.e. political realism unlike other disciplines defines interest differently.⁷

Among the modern day realists, John Mearsheimer foreboded the collapse of the European integration. In particular, he stated that the realm of peace on the old continent was a corollary of the following factors: bipolar world, the presence of nuclear weapons and distribution of power among the poles with the

⁵ Machiavelli N., *The Prince*, 1532, re-published by Hendricks House, Massachusetts, 1964.

⁶ Hobbes T., *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*, St. Pauls Church-yard, London, 1651, pp. 76-79.

⁷ Morgenthau H.J., *Politics among Nations: the Struggle for Peace and Power*. New York: Knoph publishing, 1948.

latter being the most important factor.⁸ As for the polarity, he avers that the presence of multiple poles leaves a room for maneuvers that might entail a miscalculation and war is inevitable for guaranteeing security. As for nuclear balance, his arguments, largely shared by another (defensive) neo-realist Kenneth Waltz,⁹ are mostly about the deterring effect of nuclear weapons preempting the wars. In addition, he gives due credit to the role of nationalism as a source for mobilization for war.¹⁰

Mearsheimer, believed Soviet's departure from the Old continent will pave a way for the following four scenarios: 1. Europe without nuclear weapons, 2. Europe with no further proliferation, 3. well-managed nuclear proliferation and finally 4. not well-managed nuclear proliferation.¹¹ Moreover, all the scenarios would be fraught with dangers. For instance, if the European power rids itself of nukes, than the likelihood of conventional wars will sharply increase turning the whole Europe into Balkans. No further proliferation (something that actually happened) seemed to Mearsheimer as the most plausible, though not the safest, since Germany would feel threatened and would choose to go nuclear while at the same time bullying smaller and weaker central European powers.¹² The most likely scenario according to Mearsheimer, is further nuclear proliferation in Europe (which actually did not happen) with attempts of preventative attack and mismanagement of missiles being the greatest possible among the perils foreseen. Fortunately for all of us, none of Mearsheimer's lackadaisical predictions hitherto happened and Europe did not turn into Balkans. However, for the sake of the present article, the most interesting is how Mearsheimer rejects the competing theories. In fact, Mearsheimer only challenges three of the competing antitheses: 1. Obsolescence of war, 2. Liberalism-pacifism (which he (ironically) calls peace-loving democracies) and 3. Economic liberalism. The latter incorporates both LI and neo-functionalism. The essence of "obsolescence of war" theory rests upon the circumspection of the states. The central message of the mentioned theory lies in the extremely severe nature of modern-day wars, which unlike all the previous ones is as dreadful as ever and states will not opt for going to war. Mearsheimer finds this explanation as the most convincing, though not enough compelling warning about the possibility of blitzkrieg and pointing out that the dreadfulness of WWI did not prevent WWII.

As for democratic-peace theory, he acknowledges the correlation between democracy and the absence of war, however stating that correlation does not mean causality, which is actually true. He further notes that history lacks evidence to empirically verify the argument about democracies not fighting each other, because democracies are a relatively new way of governance. Furthermore, he points out the cases where democracies were about to fight like

⁸ Mearsheimer, op cit., see pp. 10-31.

⁹ **Sagan S.** and **Waltz K.**, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: an Enduring Debate*. WW Norton & Company, New York, 2013.

¹⁰ Mearsheimer, op. Cit., p. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 32-40.

¹² *Ibid*, 36

France and Britain in 1898 or the covert warfare orchestrated by democratic USA against democratic Guatemala and Chile.¹³

And finally Mearsheimer rejects both LI and neo-functionalism stating that the primary aim of the states is not prosperity, but security. He further argued states care more about relative gains (who got more) than the absolute ones (what will be gained).¹⁴ He also states that economic interdependence instead of strengthening peace might lead to war as states do not like dependency and will try to get rid of it. As a response from the side of liberals, Moravcsik criticizes such approach stating that realists and neo-realists treat states as “billiard balls” or “black boxes” with unchangeable preferences, in case when the preferences are defined domestically, hence are variable rather than fixed.¹⁵ Admitting that uneven distribution of welfare might make some states dissatisfied and render opposition against policy coordination, Moravcsik believes that such opposition and unwillingness to cooperate can be surmounted by collective actions of the governments.¹⁶

Mindful of the central tenets of realism, the existence of the EU might be explained as state’s desire to maximize both their power and security in the anarchic system of international relations (the pivotal point of the realists). For example, Krotz and Maher quoting Jones (no footnote was put) stated that the increase of intra-European security cooperation is a result of changes of both international system and regional system in Europe that occurred after the end of the cold war.¹⁷ In particular, European states, according to the rationalist logic of the realists, might have chosen to intensify the cooperation for the sake of being less dependent on the USA in the domain of security. Especially, the Treaty on European Union gives legal prerequisite to make such a claim with its Article 42.7.¹⁸ Also, unity enables the EU member states to have more bargaining power around the table of trade negotiations, thus more trade and economic power. It is also noteworthy to mention that between 1950-1990 period European states sanctioned third state through the EC in 12% of cases, while since 1991 78% of the sanctions are imposed collectively.¹⁹ As Moravcsik truly noticed, 60 years after signing the Rome Treaty, the EU in terms of many crucial indicators (national GDP, FDI flow, FDI stock, tax revenues) surpasses the USA.²⁰ His central message is that the EU is a superpower. Hence, it shall be regarded as one coherent group rather than 28 separate states (or 27+1 in the heyday of Brexit process) since impasses like in case of Iraq are extremely rare.²¹ In

¹³ Mearsheimer, op. Cit., p. 51.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 44.

¹⁵ **Moravcsik A.**, Preferences and Power in the European Community: a Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach. *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol. 31, No. 4, 1993, p. 481.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 487.

¹⁷ **Krotz U., Maher R.**, International Relations Theory and the Rise of European Foreign and Security Policy. *World Politics* Vol. 63, No. 3, 2011, p. 557.

¹⁸ European Union, Treaty on European Union Article 42.7, available at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2016:202:FULL&from=EN>, consulted on 11 May 2018.

¹⁹ Krotz and Maher, op. Cit., p. 559.

²⁰ **Moravcsik A.**, Europe is Still a Superpower, *Foreign Policy*, 13 April, 2017, pp. 9-12.

²¹ Ibid.

addition, it might be also argued that European states were interested in ever closer economic integration to contain the stronger Germany after its reunification.²²

Overall, realism is the school of thought that touches European integration probably the least. Especially, there is little attention on the domestic considerations of the member states. This is astounding since as Krotz and Maher stated realists believe that “international system shapes the security environment in which states operate, structure alone does not determine the outcome”.²³ The problem is that realists challenge something that exists – the ever closer union which becomes more and more tightly knitted with each and every treaty change. Mearsheimer, for instance, instead of addressing one of the central points of neo-functionalism – the impact of supranational secretariat (in case of the EU the Commission) on deepening the integration process, simply states that neo-functionalists are minority among the economic liberals. This is what I mean by saying lack of cross-paradigm communication and the need to develop a dialogue between different “isms”. Mearsheimer, speaking about the difference of correlation and causality does not give any explanation why exactly in the bipolar world, power distribution and the existence of the nuclear weapons shall be the key variables to be accounted for the lasting peace in Europe from 1945-1990 time period. If it is not a conclusion based on correlation then whence did he arrive at such conclusion? The reality is that as of now we live neither in really bipolar world, nor any single EU member state has commensurable military power with giants like the USA, Russia or China, the nuclear weapons were not further proliferated either and Germany acquiesced with that. However, to the best of my knowledge, no single (even minor) skirmish occurred among the EU member states in 1990-2018 time period. Notwithstanding those shortcomings, I believe that it is worth discussing European integration from the realist point of view, especially taking into account the attempts of the realists to explain the political and security considerations behind the joint decision-making of European states.

Neo-functionalism and Liberal-intergovernmentalism

Neo-functionalism, the brainchild of Ernst Haas is an eclectic approach based on Mitrany’s functionalism and Monnet’s pragmatic view towards furthering European integration. Interestingly, Haas has never considered his brainchild a theory and later just abandoned it after realizing that his not only descriptive and explanatory, but also rather prescriptive approach is not on par with reality,²⁴ but nevertheless it is still believed that the neo-functionalism firmly entrenched its place in the family of IR theories.²⁵ In fact, neo-functionalism is probably the most frequently criticized theory. Nevertheless, not all its merits were utterly annihilated.

²² Krotz and Maher, op. Cit., 558.

²³ Ibid., p. 560

²⁴ **Schmitter P., Ernst B.**, Haas and the Legacy of Neo-functionalism. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 255-256.

²⁵ **Rosamond B.**, The uniting of Europe and the Foundation of EU studies: revisiting the Neo-functionalism of Ernst B. Haas. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2005, p. 19

The central message of neo-functionalists, putting in a nutshell, is the following: despite states remain relevant actors in furthering the integration, self-interested regional bureaucrats of the resourceful international secretariats are keen to level the integration process up by exploiting the inevitable spill-over effects.²⁶ The prerequisite for such exploitation of spill-over effects is power (even limited) vested in supranational agents that renders some autonomy for the latter. It is argued that the institutions themselves consciously create situations that can be tackled only through spillover.²⁷ Another prerequisite is democracy “reigning” in the member states.²⁸ Neo-functionalists distinguish three types of spill-over: functional, political and cultivated.²⁹ In short, functional spill over refers to the technical necessity to concentrate more power in the hands of the central regional bodies and, in fact, reflects the most banal general understanding of neo-functionalism, i.e. integration in one sphere triggers it in another spheres. For example, monetary policy delegated to the ECB required strict and stiff fiscal policy coordination among EU-19. Political spillover is about the wish of different domestic stakeholders of the member states to seek supranational rather than national solutions as the former are less susceptible for frequent changes. This process was later labeled as “engrenage”. And finally, cultural spillover refers to the ability of central regional organs (secretariats) to promote pro-integration culture by elevating common interest of the member states. Haas argued that without the impartial mediation and arbitrage of the supranational bodies, member states stick to “the minimum common denominator determined by the least cooperative partner”.³⁰ Neo-functionalism arguments are predicated upon the following assumptions:

1. States are no longer the predominant actors in the regional system
2. Integration process is interest driven rather than identity-driven
3. Decisions about integration are happening under the conditions of asymmetric information and knowledge.
4. Functions and issue-areas are the locomotives of further integration.
5. Regional/international bureaucrats are interested in furthering the integration process. This argument is completely in line with one of the realist arguments explaining the persistence of military alliances (the role of NATO bureaucracy in keeping the alliance alive).³¹
6. Integration occurs not as a result of identical, but convergent and overlapping interests of the agents.
7. Integration is not confined to the initial treaty signed, but is a dynamic process revolved around new agreements.³²

²⁶ **Schmitter P.**, Neo-functionalism, // A, Wiener, T. Diez (ed.), *European Integration Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 46.

²⁷ **Rosamond B.**, op cit., p. 11,.

²⁸ Schmitter, Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neo-functionalism, op cit., p. 257.

²⁹ **Tranholm-Mikkelsen J.**, Neo-functionalism: Obstinate or Obsolete? A Reappraisal in the Light of the New Dynamism of the EC, *Millennium*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1991, p. 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³¹ **Walt S.**, Why Alliances Endure or Collapse. *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1997, p. 166.

³² **Schmitter**, Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neo-functionalism, op cit., pp. 259-260.

To these assumptions made by Schmitter, I would add two more: neo-functionalists disregard the possibility of use of force in case of unpleasant outcome of negotiation. Such assumption is intrinsic to all those schools originated from the liberal political thought. Secondly, neo-functionalists assume that the timing of integration process is not set or, in other words, they do not specify when and under which conditions the spillover will eventually be ceased.

The relevant literature is full of criticism of neo-functionalism which is summarized as follows:

1. Neo-functionalism is silent about widening of the EU, i.e. EU enlargement. In fact, Schmitter posits that neo-functionalists might respond to arguing that the new member states already accept the EU *acquis* in the negotiation process and by the virtue of being EU members they are *ipso facto* members of all the EU institutions.³³
2. Neo-functionalism does not differentiate between high and low politics. In fact, states will relatively easier concede sovereignty over the issues of low politics (such as trade) than high politics (such as foreign and security policy).
3. Neo-functionalism, does not duly acknowledge the power and pro-integration efforts of other institutions, namely the ECJ and the Parliament as it is excessively focused on the role of the supranational secretariat. Such critiques, though pertinent, are a bit unfair, since only “integration through law” theory pays a close attention on the role of the ECJ, while Moravcsik, for instance, earlier found its role unique and later attempted to explain it so that it does not contradict the pivotal doctrine of his theory (will be discussed below).
4. Neo-functionalism fails to address the impact of exogenous factors, i.e. trends and developments happening outside Europe that may both strengthen and weaken the European integration. In fact, neo-functionalism tackled this criticism arguing that spill-over effect is not automatic, but crisis-driven.³⁷ Therefore, as a result of crisis not only spill-over, but also spill-back is completely possible.³⁴

In addition, to the above-enumerated criticism, I will add four more which I find quite pertinent. First of all, though major works by neo-functionalists were produced before 2000s, the realization of neo-functionalist predictions is less likely nowadays after the introduction of Lisbon Treaty, as the activities of the supranational Commission are further constrained by the specialized committees, a principle generally known as Comitology.³⁵ Furthermore, the member states delegate power not only to the Commission, but also to the so-called *de novo* institutions and agencies the number of which has grown significantly in the

³³ Schmitter, Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neo-functionalism, op cit., p. 70.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

³⁴ All the points are based on Schmitter, neo-functionalism, op cit., Tranholm-Mikkelsen, op cit., Schmitter, Ernst B. Haas and the legacy of neo-functionalism, op cit., Rosamond, op cit.

³⁵ For further information see European Commission, Comitology register, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm?do=implementing.home>, consulted on 12 May, 2018.

recent years.³⁶ Secondly, neo-functionalists, while acknowledging the role of self-interested regional bureaucrats, pay no attention to the role of the head of Commission and his wish and stamina to bring the union forward. Dinan Desmond, while narrating the history of the EU, stresses the crucial role of Jacques Delors in further deepening the integration, while at the same time fulminating against Jacques Santer and his College of Commissioners for discrediting the Commission, thus bringing further integration to a deadlock.³⁸ Indeed, the arguments of the neo-functionalists will be more compelling if they prove the nexus between the activist Commission President and furtherance of the integration. Thirdly, despite Haas's conviction, neo-functionalist pivotal idea of spill-over was not noticeable outside Europe. For example, in the recently formed Eurasian Economic Union (hereinafter EEU) member states delegated some power to the supranational Commission, but so far no spillover transpired. Last and the most important criticisms are on the ideational grounds. Haas himself acknowledges the soft-rational ontology of neo-functionalism stating that "the ontology is not materialistic values shape interests and values include nonmaterial elements".³⁹ Nevertheless, he skips the role of dominating ideology and its possible change. For example, on the national political level the attitude towards further integration largely differs both within and across different political groups and movements such as federalists, communists, liberals, socialists, leftists, rightists, populists, Eurosceptics, etc. The ideology of these groups, i.e. their self-perception determines their stance towards integration as one lives in intersubjectively constructed social reality (will be discussed in detail below). As it is already mentioned above, further advancement of European integration can no longer be carried out only on a whim of elites and the consent of the peoples of Europe is indispensable.

LI is a branch of much broader liberal school of IR premised on the following two core assumptions: 1. International law and agreements are coupled with international institutions like the UN that serve for pooling resources for the common goals, 2. The spread of capitalism through international organizations established market-based economy all over the world and makes any potential conflict unreasonable.⁴⁰ Moravcsik argued that European integration is a brilliant example of intergovernmental regime that manages economic interdependence through negotiated policy coordination.⁴¹ If one is to single out the key three concepts of his theory that would be: rational behavior of states, national preferences and interstate negotiation. The central message of his theory is that the European agenda is shaped primarily in the national capitals and afterwards

³⁶ **Peterson J.**, *The College of Commissioners: Supranational Leadership and Presidential Politics*, // D. Hodson and M. Shackleton *The Institutions of the European Union*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2017, p.132.

³⁸ **Dinan D.**, *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration* 4th. Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 127-129.

³⁹ Rosamond, *op cit.*, p. 7.

⁴⁰ For further information see Meiser J., *Liberalism*, in S. Mcglinchey et al (ed.) *International Relations Theory*, E-International Relations Publishing, Bristol, England, 2017, p. 24.

⁴¹ **Moravcsik A.**, *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach*, *op cit.*, p. 474.

is negotiated in Brussels through intergovernmental negotiations. Juxtaposing with the famous classical economics graph, he states that the domestic sector represents the demand side of the curve, while the international bargain – the supply side.⁴² He further elaborates stating that national governments do not necessarily wish economic cooperation or policy coordination through supranational entities. In fact, they do it for two major purposes: 1. to satisfy the domestic constituencies and preserve power in democratic system, 2. to use international agreements for the sake of economic growth and efficiency through pushing domestic producers for necessary adjustments under the pretense of the “Brussels”.⁴³ This is how he interprets the acquiescence of nationalists like Churchill and de Gaulle with the partial relinquishment of sovereignty. However, domestic constituencies are not unanimous with exporters usually pushing for freer trade, while importers opposing. Nonetheless, eventual market liberalization occurs when “adjustment is relatively costless or compensation between winners and losers can be arranged, distributional effects need not create opposition to free trade.”⁴⁴ In addition, Moravcsik also believes that producers are more organized and keener to advance their interests as they have higher per capita benefit/loss as a result of policy change that outweighs the costs of organizing, monitoring and representing the concentrated groups.⁴⁵

The argument of intergovernmental bargains is premised on the following assertions: 1. governments cooperate under the absence of any military threat or coercion (these assumptions, as I mentioned above, are common in all the liberal theories), 2. transaction costs of intergovernmental negotiations are low as negotiations take place over protracted time period.⁴⁶ Furthermore, it is assumed that the more alternatives the governments have the less interested they are in the outcome, however they try their best not to be insulated and excluded.⁴⁷ Due to time limitations governments tend to do logrolling and issue linkages. The latter is basically about compromise, i.e. you accept my offer and I will accept yours. The classical example is German acquiescence with CAP price in order to get access to French industrial market.⁴⁸

The *raison d'être* of supranational bodies according to Moravcsik is dualistic: 1. to diminish the threat of non-compliance by the partners, 2. to “sell” the policies on domestic constituencies. However, the ECJ, according to Moravcsik is an anomaly that cannot be anyhow explained.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, in his later article Moravcsik attempts to explain the “anomaly”. Here are the five reasons that according to him explain the anomaly 1. ECJ interprets already proven treaties, regulations and directives, 2. ECJ decisions unlike the directives of the Commission have precedential value, 3. ECJ hides itself behind the legal argot, 4.

⁴² **Moravcsik A.**, *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach*, op cit., p. 482.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, see pp. 485-486 and p. 491.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 489.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 499.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

ECJ has a major domestic ally, namely the national courts, 5. Overriding ECJ's decisions requires unanimity which is difficult to achieve.⁵⁰ Those explications, though prima facie convincing, to me do not sound persuasive at all. Especially, the fourth argument seems to be more a fact-matching than truth purported to elevate the explanatory power of LI. Let us vet the case of another regional court – European Court of Human Rights (hereinafter ECtHR). The ECtHR unlike the ECJ has no domestic allies. Furthermore, it does not interpret already agreed legislation but, often the compliance of the national law with the European Convention of Human Rights which might necessitate amendment of the national law. To recall, the ECtHR unlike the ECJ is an institution of very loosely-knitted Council of Europe (CoE). In addition, ECtHR adjudicates over the issues of high politics like *Chiragov vs. Armenia* or *Sargsyan vs. Azerbaijan*.⁵¹ Nonetheless, not only the EU member states, but also countries like Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkey comply with the judgments on the ECtHR and pay the prescribed compensations and change the laws, if necessary in case when the overseeing body – the Committee of Ministers, comprised of the Foreign Affairs ministers of the member states has no real power to sanction the undisciplined states. Indeed, CoE and its flagship institution – the ECtHR are beyond the purpose and the scope of the present paper. What I want to argue is that Moravcsik, had better examine the reasons behind the compliance with the judgments of the international/regional courts in general, rather than the case of the ECJ in particular, before labeling the ECJ “anomalous” and later attempting to simply match it with his LI theory. Obviously, the “anomaly” of the ECJ cannot be explained in the framework of LI theory.

LI is often challenged by the so-called “policy networks” approach the central tenet of which is that epistemic communities, issue networks, and other alliances try to exert influence over Brussels rather than the national capitals, especially, when the decision-making power is vested in the supranational authorities.^{52,53} However, I find such criticism completely irrelevant, since LI is about EU politics, history-making as Peterson puts it⁵⁴, and not day-to-day decision making.

LI is also criticized on both ontological and epistemological grounds.^{55,56} It is considered not theory, but an approach. As Moravcsik truly pointed out, some of the assumptions of LI are anchored on well-known theories, namely the theory of

⁵⁰ **Moravcsik A.**, Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Integration: a Rejoinder, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 1995, p.624.

⁵¹ See European Court of Human Rights, Case of *Chiragov and others v. ARMENIA*, (Application no. 13216/05), Strasbourg, France, as well as case of *Sargsyan V. Azerbaijan*, (Application no. 40167/06) 16 June 2015, Strasbourg, France.

⁵² See **Peterson J.**, *Policy Networks*, // A. Wiener and T. Diez (ed.), *European Integration theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, pp. 119-122.

⁵³ **Risse-Kappen T.**, Exploring the Nature of the beast: International Relations Theory and Comparative Policy Analysis Meet the European Union. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1996, p. 54.

⁵⁴ **Peterson J.**, *Decision-making in the European Union: Towards a framework for analysis*, op cit., p. 70.

⁵⁵ **Moravcsik A.**, *Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Integration: a Rejoinder*, op cit., p. 613.

⁵⁶ **Schimmelfenning F.**, op. cit., p. 81.

rational actors and theory of bargaining.⁵⁷ As for epistemological criticism, Moravcsik responds that the criticism is unreasonably strict and by that very token all mid-range theories of IR, i.e. considerable part of the classics of IR literature shall be rejected.⁵⁸

In addition, the core assumptions of LI were challenged by historical-institutionalists. They argue that LI might be applicable to European integration only in the initial stages, however, once the institutions are established; it becomes very difficult to roll the trajectory of institutional development back even if the changed preferences of the member states do not meet the existing institutional structure. They argue that institutions strive hard to sustain themselves.⁵⁹ Against this background, Western European Union (hereinafter WEU), a European organization with military purposes, may serve as probably the best example. Over time, since its establishment in 1954, WEU became really obsolescent, called only once during the war in Bosnia⁶⁰ and it took several decades to finally cease its functioning in 2011. The criticism of historical-institutionalism, though relevant, does not undermine the value of LI significantly. In fact, Moravcsik may argue that with each treaty amendment member states try to match the institutional architecture to their essential needs.

However, the most important criticism of LI that targets its roots is the case bias. It is argued that Moravcsik deliberately focuses on cases requiring unanimity of the member states and ignore the pro-integration initiatives of the Commission and the ECJ.⁶¹ Furthermore, Moravcsik does not take into account the socialization effect of the governmental officials when the latter meet in different configurations (Council of Ministers, COREPER, etc.). In addition, though as mentioned that LI is not about day-to-day policy of the EU, Moravcsik does not specify how the strongest domestic groups, like unions of producers, try to limit the power of the Commission to avoid decisions like “Europe free of roaming fee”. One cannot disregard the fact that with each treaty subsequent amendment, supranational institutions like Commission and the ECJ, as well as the transnational Parliament found themselves in a stronger position vis-à-vis the member states.

Overall, neo-functionalism and LI, through sharing the same philosophical roots, are in disagreement about the “drivers” of the European integration. LI, however, seems to be less permeable and not yet abandoned by its creator Mr. Moravcsik. The major reason is that LI, unlike neo-functionalism is not uncausal, but tripartite (member state preferences, intergovernmental bargains, supranational institutions as “watchdogs”), thus taking into consideration more relevant factors.

Social constructivism

European integration was paid little heed by the major constructivist theorists. In 1999, however a special issue of *Journal of European Public policy*

⁵⁷ Moravcsik A., *Liberal Intergovernmentalism and Integration: a Rejoinder*, op cit., p. 613.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 613.

⁵⁹ Schimmelfenning F., op. cit., p. 82.

⁶⁰ Desmond D., op coit., p. 119-120.

⁶¹ Schimmelfenning F., op. cit., p.82.

was devoted to constructivism and European integration.⁶² In that issue, constructivists stressed the impact of intersubjectivity and social context on European integration, which was regarded as a continuing process.⁶³ In particular, it was argued that intersubjectivity and social context are the clues to grasp the reasons behind reaching the current stage of European integration and putting it aside would mean missing a focal part of the entire process.⁶⁴ Below, I will firstly briefly introduce the canons of constructivist theory of IR. Afterwards, I will showcase the interrelations of European integration and ideas, norms and socialization from constructivist perspective. And finally, I will juxtapose constructivism with its “sworn enemy” – rationalism (Moravcsik vs Checkel).

Constructivism sees world as socially constructive. It is ontologically agnostic, i.e. it does not include or exclude any variable as meaningful and views the changes occurring in the world as a result of changing practices in the intersubjective world order.⁶⁵ As Wendt stated, 500 nuclear weapons are far less threatening for the USA, than the dinky nuclear arsenal of North Korea.⁶⁶ Constructivism can also be defined *ex negativo*, i.e. what it is not. It is believed state that there are three meta-theoretical approaches: constructivism, reflectivism, rationalism.⁶⁷ Rationalism, incorporating realism and liberalism (with their “neo” versions) is mostly based on “deductive-nomological model of causal explanations, more or less strong rationality assumptions.”⁶⁸ Reflectivism, on the other hand is difficult to define as there is a big dissensus among the scholars. Nevertheless, as Smith puts it ironically, reflectivism always mirrors the antithesis of rationalism.⁶⁹

Understanding of identities is of paramount importance against the backdrop of European integration. The concepts like “United States of Europe”, “Federal Europe” and “one single European citizenship” are disputed mostly on ideational grounds by skeptics and pessimists. In reality, however, as Risse pointed out it is wrong to conceptualize European identity in zero-sum terms.⁷⁰ Risse claims that identities may relate to each other in three ways.⁷¹ First is about the nested identities similar to the Russian doll Matruska, i.e. one identity inside the other. The core (the smallest doll) is the identity one associates himself the most. For instance, Risse mentioned that reports about the Commission officials suggest that Europe is in the core of their identity, while the national identity is in

⁶² **Moravcsik A.**, Bringing Constructivist Integration Theory out of the Clouds: has it Landed Yet, *op cit.*, p. 226.

⁶³ **Christiansen T., Jorgensen K.E., Wiener A.**, The Social Construction of Europe. *Journal of European Public Policy* Vol. 6, no. 4, 1999, p. 528.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

⁶⁵ **Hopf T.**, The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory. *International security*, Vol. 23, No.1, p. 180.

⁶⁶ **Theys S.**, Constructivism, // S. Mcglinchey et al (ed.) *International Relations Theory*, E-International Relations Publishing, Bristol, England, 2017, p. 36.

⁶⁷ Christiansen et al, *op cit.*, p. 531.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ **Risse T.**, Social Constructivism and European Integration, // A. Wiener and T. Diez (ed.), *European Integration theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 166.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

the periphery. This might be explained with the fact that unlike other citizens, for the Commission officials Europe and the EU are not something remote and intangible.⁷² Identities might also be cross-cutting. For instance, one may have very strong gender identity, while the other – European identity. As Hooghe and marks mentioned, Eurosceptic attitude depends whether a person is exclusively or inclusively conceives her national identity, since individuals with exclusive national identity are more prone to Euroscepticism.⁷³ And finally the third way to conceptualize identity is to draw parallels with the marvel cake stating that multiple identities are inseparable from each other.⁷⁴ It is believed that EU membership significantly strengthened the European identity. Furthermore, “Europe” is more and more equated with “the EU”. For instance, when Italy, one of the founding members of the EU, was about to enter the euro-zone, the slogan was “Entrare l’Europa (entering Europe)”.⁷⁵ In addition, constructivists agree that identities, though slow, but can be changed.

Checkel argued that the above-described identity shaping, norm introduction and interest-adjustment take place in the context of the EU via socialization and social learning under the institutional architecture of the EU. Checkel also admitted that social constructivism is built upon the insight of institutional constructivism.⁷⁶ By social learning Checkel means a “process whereby actors, through interaction with broader institutional contexts (norms and discursive structures) acquire new interests and preferences – in the absence of obvious material incentives”.⁷⁷ In particular, Checkel offers the following four presumptions that contribute to the social learning to which I will add two more.

1. Common professional background
2. Common sense of imminent crisis
3. High frequency of the meetings
4. Insulation from any political pressure.⁷⁸

I would like to add two more: smaller size and cosmopolitan thinking. Thus, the maximum number of communications between the group members can be calculated with the following formula: $C=N*(N-1)/2$, where C stands the greatest possible number of communication and N stands for the number of people in the group. It is presumed that one does not communicate with herself, therefore, I wrote $N*(N-1)$ and not N^2 . Furthermore, the communication between arbitrary A and B is the same as that between B and A, therefore the product is multiplied by $1/2$. As for cosmopolitan argument, I believe that socialization between EU officials

⁷² Risse T., Social Constructivism and European Integration, // A. Wiener and T. Diez (ed.), European Integration theory, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 166.

⁷³ Hooghe L. and Rauh Ch., The Commission Services: A Powerful Permanent Bureaucracy // D. Hodson and M. Shackleton The Institutions of the European Union, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2017, p.13.

⁷⁴ Risse T., Social Constructivism and European Integration, p.168.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 169.

⁷⁶ Checkel J., Social Construction and Integration, Journal of European public policy Vol. 6, No. 4, 1999, p. 548.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 549.

will be easier if they have cosmopolitan views rather than nationalist (though as I showed above, constructivist Risse will not necessarily agree with me).

With his contribution Checkel tried to find a middle ground between critical constructivism and rationalism or as he puts it to bridge the two theories.⁷⁹ The core of Checkel's argument is the ability to persuade the others in the absence of coercion. Checkel unlike the other constructivists managed to empirically prove his assertions. In particular, to find out the early European understanding of citizenship, he did interviews with the officials of CoE Secretariat, national officials and triangulated the results with the content analysis of the minutes of deliberations of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE. Strikingly, the results proved the righteousness of the socialization argument of Social-constructivists.⁸⁰ Checkel further notes that the findings from the empirical study about the CoE can be easily extended to the EU which has much more dense institutional architecture.⁸¹

Both LI (Moravcsik) and social-constructivist state that ideas/ideologies do matter. The disagreement is about how do they matter and to what extent. For Moravcsik ideas are just a mask, a cover to justify the rationally-motivated actors of the agents. Agents use ideas to “nicely package” their interest-driven positions. There is even a conviction in social science literature that war is an outcome of misperception.⁸² Moravcsik appreciates Checkel for his empirical study stating that he managed to bring constructivism out of the meta-theoretical clouds. Nevertheless, he challenges Checkel on methodological grounds. Particularly, he argued that the above-mentioned four hypotheses are not intrinsic only to constructivism.⁸³ He offers alternative rationalist hypotheses. Overall, the central message of Moravcsik is that it is difficult to figure out whether the socialization happens as a result of rationalist considerations (like coercion, manipulation) or social-constructivist considerations (like persuasion). He accuses Checkel for not being able to produce distinctively social-constructivist hypotheses.⁸⁴

Unfortunately, despite meticulous and constant searching, only the first page of Checkel's response was found on internet.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, this one page is enough to grasp the nature of Checkel's response. First of all, he argued that his methodology and hypotheses are strictly interconnected, i.e. through his methods he checked the impact of persuasion on preference change, thus effectively controlling the impact of other possible intervening variables.

⁷⁹ **Checkel J.**, Social Construction and Integration, *Journal of European public policy* Vol. 6, No. 4, 1999, p.549

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 551.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 554.

⁸² See **Jervis R.**, War and misperception, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 18, No. 4 1988, pp. 675-700.

⁸³ **Moravcsik A.**, Bringing Constructivist Integration Theory out of the Clouds: Has it Landed Yet., *op cit.*, p. 228.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-236

⁸⁵ **Checkel J.**, Constructivism and Integration Theory: Crash Landing or Safe Arrival. *European Union Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 240, available at, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/clouds.pdf>, see p. 240.

Furthermore, he argued that Moravcsik brought up counterarguments against arguments never stated by him. Checkel argued that he “did not equate rational choice with the realist notion of coercion, but with manipulation and strategic usage of language.”⁸⁶ In fact, close reading of Checkel’s arguments in the article published in aforesaid special issue, one will understand that the claims of Moravcsik are manipulations and attempts of building a “straw man”.

Findings: EU is a constantly reinvented social product born from practices and social interaction. Take the example of Germany and Netherlands. They endeavored to convey a federal spirit to Maastricht Treaty as for them federation is power-sharing and limited central control. On the other hand, federation is associated with sovereignty loss for the UK that struggled to crush Dutch and German initiative.⁸⁷ It has nothing to do with power politics of realism of cost-benefit analysis so much emphasized by Moravcsik. Germany, self-portraying itself as a federal state wished its own structural identity to export and transform to the EU level. Similarly, in 1997, social-democratic parties that were in coalition in 13 EU member states included employment, social regulation, women’s rights into the Amsterdam Treaty.⁸⁸ Moreover, the study of Hooghe and Marks proved that Eurosceptic/Eurocentric attitudes of the so-called TAN parties (stands for traditional authoritarian and Nationalist respectively) is conditioned by nothing else, but their perception of (threat to) the national identity.⁸⁹ Rationalist on the other might argue that European politics is all about material redistribution of wealth. To this argument, Hooghe and Marks respond that only 0.75% of the total European GDP is distributed via CAP and cohesion policy.⁹⁰ Therefore, European politics is less about redistribution and more about regulation. It means that party position towards Europe is a function of the middle ground where multiple identities coalesce. By the same token, the enlargement can be explained too. As Risse noted “rhetorical commitments to community value entrapped EU member states to offer accession negotiations to the Central and Eastern European Countries...despite the initial preferences against enlargement”.⁹¹ Moreover, to understand UK’s supportive stance to eastern enlargement of 2004, one has to take into account that in the UK’s world (or in the world from the UK’s perspective), EU might be a threat to sovereignty, and the more members the less the likelihood of federalization. In addition, the motives behind the vigorous efforts of Greece to implicate Cyprus in the EU family were first of all ideational and only afterwards economic.

Despite siding with constructivist arguments in general, and with regard to European integration in particular, I believe that constructivism has one, yet insurmountable flaw – it very well explains what happened but does not predict

⁸⁶ **Checkel J.**, Constructivism and Integration Theory: Crash Landing or Safe Arrival. *European Union Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 240, available at, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/clouds.pdf>, see p. 240.

⁸⁷ **Koslowski R.**, A Constructivist Approach to Understanding the European Union as a Federal Polity. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1999, p. 569.

⁸⁸ Hooghe and Marks, p. 16.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹¹ Risse, *op cit.*, p. 172.

the future. Christiansen et al⁹² state that it is wrong to compare theories of European integration, like neo-functionalism to constructivism and partially they are right, since theories like federalism, integration through law, neo-functionalism are also prescriptive. In contrast, constructivism is only interpretative theory as it does not foretell how and towards which direction the socially constructed and identity-based reality will be changed.

Conclusion: European integration is a new and unique phenomenon, both for the world and the social sciences. It can be paralleled with an animal not known to the body of zoological literature before that needs to be studied. Each of the aforementioned theories tried to discuss European integration through based on their well-known maxims, such as institutions matter, social world is socially constructed or that everything is about power and security. As it is shown above, each of them and all of them have unequivocally their own merits. While answering the second research question, to say that each of them has several glitches will not bring any added value. This trivial statement is repeated by IR professors many times for Bachelor students, and even the founders of the theories accept that they theories are not flawless and/or able to explain everything happening in international relations. Nevertheless, some of the theories, like neo-functionalism and neo-neofunctionalism are truly obsolescent and inadequate to give a thorough picture of integration. This comes from uncausal explanation of European integration. Nevertheless, it is still valuable to understand the motives of the “founding fathers” of the EU. However, if neo-functionalism is obsolescent, realism is really inadequate, at least in European studies. The mispredictions of Mr. Mearsheimer and the tendency of the EU to develop a successful and institutionalize foreign and security policy foils any perspective of war on the Old Continent. As for LI, I am sure that when it comes to history-making, political considerations outweigh the economic ones. So, what is my conclusion? It is very straightforward. Do you want to understand the factors behind the European integration? If yes, then read constructivist literature very closely. In fact, it touches more than just one part of the elephant and knows a bit more about it than its competitors. This history of European integration is all about changing a perception about one’s own identity and other’s identity about oneself. Of course, it was not easy as it took a lot of efforts from Adenauer to persuade the French that his West Germany is not Germany that existed before. And the founding father of the modern day EU cared, first of all, about shifting identities from inimical to amical and the choice of coal and steel was not made by fluke. Over time European identity coalesced with several norms and values that predicted the behavior of the member states. And it is not haphazard that nowadays any talk about the future of Europe is endorsed/objected on identity grounds. Hopefully, the paper managed to trigger inter-paradigm communication of the IR theories.

⁹² Christiansen et al, 530.

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ԱԼԲԵՐՏ ՀԱՅՐԱՊԵՏՅԱՆ

ՀՊՏՀ միջազգային տնտեսական հարաբերությունների ամբիոնի ասիստենտ, տնտեսագիտության թեկնածու

Եվրոպական ինտեգրումը միջազգային հարաբերությունների տեսությունների խաչմերուկում.– Եվրոպական ինտեգրումը բացատրել փորձող տեսական բազմակարծությունը արժե զուգադրել մի քանի կոյրերի պատմության հետ, որոնք փորձում են շոշափելով հասկանալ փոփ կառուցվածքը: Իրականում նրանցից յուրաքանչյուրը շոշափում է միայն մի մասը՝ փորձելով ինդուկցիայի մեթոդով եզրահանգումներ կատարել ամբողջ մարմնի վերաբերյալ: Նշյալ տարակարծությունը պայմանավորված է նաև ԵՄ-ի՝ իրավամբ sui generis բնույթով, որը, ըստ էության, ո՛չ միջազգային կազմակերպություն է, ո՛չ էլ դաշնություն:

Հոդվածում փորձ է արվել եվրոպական ինտեգրումը ներկայացնել միջազգային հարաբերությունների 3 ամենահայտնի տեսությունների՝ ռեալիզմի, լիբերալիզմի և կոնստրուկտիվիզմի լույսի ներքո՝ վեր հանելով վերջիններիս սահմանափակումները: Իրականում, եվրոպական ինտեգրման հիմնարար գործոնները բացատրելիս, տեսություններից յուրաքանչյուրը առաջնային կարևորություն է տալիս գործոնների որոշակի խմբի՝ երբեմն անտեսելով ոչ պակաս կարևոր այլ գործոններ: Ավելին, եվրոպագիտությանը նվիրված ակադեմիական գրականությունում տեսությունների համեմատությունն ու համադրումը սակավ է, կամ, այլ կերպ ասած, առկա է «տեսությունների երկխոսության» բաց: Հոդվածում եզրահանգում ենք, որ կոնստրուկտիվիստական մոտեցումները լավագույնս են բացատրում եվրոպական ինտեգրման հիմնարար գործոնները:

Հիմնաբառեր. *Եվրոպական ինտեգրում, միջազգային հարաբերությունների տեսություններ, տնտեսական բացեր, ռեալիզմ, լիբերալիզմ, կոնստրուկտիվիզմ, «հարացույցների երկխոսություն»*
JEL: F50, F53

АЛЬБЕРТ АЙРАПЕТЯН

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Европейский Союз на перекрестке теорий международных отношений.– Теоретический плюрализм, направленный на объяснение европейской интеграции, стоит сравнить с попыткой нескольких слепых, пытающихся понять форму слона на основе той части, к которой они прикоснулись. Фактически, каждый из них касается только одной части слона и делает выводы относительно всей фигуры.

Этот плюрализм может быть интерпретирован посредством *sui generis* сущностью Европейского Союза (далее ЕС). В статье рассматривается процесс европейской интеграции с позиций трех основных теорий международных отношений - реализма, либерализма и конструктивизма. Статья определяет основные недостатки каждой из теорий, которые объясняют факторы, способствующие европейской интеграции. В заключение можно констатировать, что конструктивизм наиболее всесторонне объясняет процесс европейской интеграции.

Ключевые слова: *интеграция в ЕС, теории международных отношений, теоретические недостатки, реализм, либерализм, конструктивизм, "диалог" между парадигмами.*

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