

Justine Lacroix, Kalypso Nicolaidis (eds.), *European Stories. Intellectual Debates on Europe in National Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 409 + XX pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-959462-7

by **Costel COROBAN***

Recently, Oxford University Press has published a very interesting and engaging collection of 16 studies regarding nationalism and the idea of united Europe, under the signatures of Justine Lacroix and Kalypso Nicolaidis. The volume is more than welcome considering that today's financial difficulty that Europe and most of the world is facing has contributed to a somewhat insecure environment. More so, in the autumn of 2010 Herman van Rompuy, the current president of the EU Council and former Belgian Prime Minister, was warning against the recent wave of aggressive nationalism that seems to be sweeping Europe, arguing that no European country could survive on its own in a globalised world, and that nationalism eventually leads to war.¹ Given these conditions, this thorough, multi-lateral exploration of Europe's lingering and/or resurgent nationalism has arrived just in time!



The authors are distinguished researchers: Justine Lacroix is professor of Political Science at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and author of several books (among which, *La pensée française à l'épreuve de l'Europe*) and of many other articles and studies. Kalypso Nicolaidis, former faculty member of Harvard University, is professor of International Relations at Oxford and also a member of the EU reflection group on the Future of Europe (2020-30). She has published extensively in many academic journals and magazines and is author,

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¹ Bruno Waterfield, “Herman von Rompuy: ‘Euro-scepticism leads to war,’” in *The Telegraph*, 10 November 2010, retrieved on 28 October 2011.

among many others, of *Under the Long Shadow of Europe: Greeks and Turks in the Era of Postnationalism*.

After a thorough Introduction signed by the editors, the volume begins with Part I (Themes), which is opened by Francis Cheneval's discussion on *Lost in Universalization? On the Difficulty of Localizing the European Intellectual*. The author of this study is concerned with the dilemmatic identity of European intellectuals, who sometimes have forsaken the notion of “fatherland” for that of “United Europe” (for example, it is reminded that between 1306 and 1945, there were 182 projects for the unification of Europe). The next two articles are also in the field of European intellectuality: Ulrike Liebert discusses *Contentious European Democracy: National Intellectuals in Transnational Debates*, while Michael Freedren further elaborates *On European and Other Intellectuals*.

Part II of the volume (entitled “Founders”) gathers contributions regarding founding member states of the European Union. Jan-Werner Müller opens this section with the article *In the Shadow of Statism: Peculiarities of the German Debates on European Integration*, and is followed by Justine Lacroix with *Borderline Europe: French Visions of the European Union*. The interesting conclusion of this study is that visions of Europe in France vary from, on one hand, the European Union as the ultimate expression of the dissolution of politics, to on the other hand, the great innovative potential of European integration. Part II closes with Mario Telò's remarks on *Italy and the Idea of Europe*.

The next part (called “Joiners”) reunites contributions from states which joined the European Union before the end of the Cold War. Georgios Varouxakis opens the section with his *Mid-Atlantic Musings: The ‘Question of Europe’ in British Intellectual Debates 1961-2008*. Katy Hayward slightly changes the geography of the same subject by discussing *European Stories as National Narratives: Irish Intellectuals on Europe*. In the 3rd study of this section, George Pagoulatos and Xenophon A. Yataganas move the register to Greece: *Europe Othered, Europe Enlisted, Europe Possessed: Greek Public Intellectuals and the European Union*. The authors conclude that most of the time the opinions of Greek intellectuals on the European Union are balanced, with the exception of moments of unpopularity (the NATO war on Yugoslavia, EU decisions on the “Macedonian” issue) or high popularity (solidarity with Greek external policy, etc). Had this study been finished one year later, the present controversies regarding Greece's bailout would have certainly accounted for an interesting factor. Passing on to the last study in this theme, it is concerned with the Iberian Peninsula, being entitled *Consensus, Benign Neglect and Specialized Knowledge: Spanish Intellectuals and Europe*, and authored by Carlos Closa and Antonio Barroso.

The 4th theme of the volume is called “Returners” and gathers contributions from Central and South-East Europe. The editors consciously argue their choosing this name by reminding us how during the Cold War these nations had been separated from Europe (by dictatorship), and how later, their

leaders would employ the “rhetoric of exclusion/return” when arguing for earlier EU membership. In the first contribution to this theme, Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach’s article takes us *Between Old Fears and New Challenges: The Polish Debate on Europe*. The second article is signed by Daniel Barbu from the University of Bucharest, who discusses *The Geopolitics of the European Spirit in Post-Secular Romania*. This contribution draws on the works of two important figures among Romanian intellectuals: Mircea Eliade and Constantin Noica, and goes on to show that although Europe is viewed as a blessing for its free market and freedom of movement (in exchange for which the Romanians have to comply to “European standards” – the *acquis*), it is nevertheless perceived as hazardous ethically because of its creation of what Romanians perceive as a “recent man”, in the same way that socialism is accused of enforcing the model of the “new man”. Moving on to the Czech Republic in the next article, Muriel Blaive and Nicolas Maslowski close this theme by making a distinction between *The World of the Two Václavs: European-Minded vs. National(ist) Intellectuals in Czechia*.

The next theme brings together two contributions from states which are outside the European Union, being appropriately called “Outliers”. The contributors are John Erik Fossum and Cathrine Holst, with the article *Progressive Nationalism? Norwegian Intellectuals and Europe*, and Nora Fisher Onar and Ahmet Evit with *Convergence and Resistance: The European Dilemma of Turkish Intellectuals*. As expected, in Turkey too opinions on Europe vary from selective collaboration to unequivocal convergence.

In the next and 6th theme, Juan Díez Medrano brings forward *Europe’s Political Identity: Public Sphere and Public Opinion*, finally agreeing that public actors and citizens have almost the same view of the European Union. The conclusion of the volume is signed by Janie Pélabý, Kalypso Nicolaïdis and Justine Lacroix, who eventually voice that fact that a single, homogenized and unique version of the European Union would be neither possible nor desirable, so that it is necessary to find a way to accommodate the mosaic of “stories” in Europe in such a way that their diversity is not erased. This being said, I am compelled to conclude myself by recommending this book to any reader interested in the current affairs of the European Union, although occasionally the academic vocabulary employed in the said volume might make lecture difficult for the unauthorized reader. Nevertheless, academics and researchers will surely adopt these studies as reference work in regards of the study of intellectuality and nationalism in Europe.