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Report from the international conference “International Relations and European studies in Poland – current state and prospects for development”

The international conference “International Relations and European studies in Poland – current state and prospects for development” was held on the 18 March 2015 at the University of Warsaw. It was organised by the Institute of European Studies and the Institute of International Relations (University of Warsaw), the Polish Association of European Studies, the Polish Association of International Studies and the Central and East European International Studies Association, under the honorary patronage of the Representations of the European Commission in Poland.

The conference was opened by prof. Konstanty Adam Wojtaszczyk (the Director of the Institute of European Studies), prof. Wojciech Jakubowski (the Vice-dean of the Faculty of Journalism and Political Science for Research and International Cooperation), prof. Edward Haliżak (the Director of the Institute of International Relations) and prof. Jacek Czaputowicz (the Head of the Section of European Research Methodology).

The first of the guests to speak was prof. Stefano Guzzini (Danish Institute for International Relations), the president of the Central and East European International Studies Association. His keynote speech was entitled “The Dual History of IR: Between Practice and Science”. He raised the question of who the scholars of international relations (IR) really are. He referred to the practical and scientific aspects of IR, comparing viewpoints presented by the supporters of idealism and realism and the representatives of two different traditions (strategic studies versus diplomacy). He stressed that on the one hand, IR is a field of research, but on the other it is also an arena for political action. This is important because the practice constitutes science. Another part of the speech was devoted to the relations between observations and theories: “any observa-

tion comes from a theory even if you don't know what the theory really is". Theories are often used as instruments, but according to prof. Guzzini, theories are much more – they affect our definition of a specific problem and which scientific questions we raise. Thus they form the framework for our research. Prof. Guzzini compared the theory to computer software, and researchers to developers, or data providers. He also emphasised that practical knowledge is not enough – not only observations are needed, but also multiple theories, especially the ones borrowed from other disciplines. Concluding, he said that international relations do not need disciplinary autonomy.

Responding to questions, prof. Guzzini stated that international relations have made significant contributions to political theories of power as well as helped to better understand international law. He also stressed the importance of background, which affects the point of view of a scientist.

Next part of the conference was the presentation of the results of two research projects funded by the National Science Centre: “The state of the international relations and European studies disciplines in Poland” and “International Relations discipline in Poland and around the World – distinctive features and similarities”.

Dr Anna Wojciuk (University of Warsaw) described the result of the analysis of scientific journals and doctoral dissertations in the field of the international relations, which included 935 articles and 344 doctorates. Dr Kamil Ławniczak (University of Warsaw) presented the results of the same project in the field of European studies. The analysis included 576 scientific articles and 209 doctoral dissertations¹. Prof. Jacek Czaputowicz was the last speaker in the panel. He discussed the results of the Teaching, Research, and International Policy 2014 survey. This study covers 31 countries and 13 000 scholars. In Poland, the survey has been sent to 376 researchers, of whom 191 answered.

After a short coffee break, prof. Edward Halizak opened the panel concerning the prospects for the development of international relations in Poland. Among the invited guests were: prof. Marek Pietraś (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University), prof. Karolina Pomorska (Maastricht University) and prof. Artur Gruszczak (Jagiellonian University). Addressing the speakers, prof. Halizak raised several questions regarding the IR research area and the concept of borders and disciplinarity, as well as the nature of contributions which international relations can bring to other disciplines.

Prof. Pietraś speech concerned the changing identity of international relations. In the first part of the speech he stressed that contemporary IR studies a wide variety of

¹ Full results of the projects have been already published in Polish, see: Czaputowicz et al. 2015.

internationalisation processes. These processes are a kind of social relations, but possess some distinguishing features. Prof. Pietraś said that most of the IR theories had been established in some other, historical reality, and now we need new theories to suit the qualitative changes we are facing. The hybrid reality requires theoretical pluralism. He also pointed out that the methodological heritage 'seems to be useful in the context of qualitative changes in the international reality'. The last part of his speech was devoted to the language used by researcher. He identified its weakness in the tendency to use simple, but imprecise language of journalism. However, equally problematic is the use of established conceptual grid, which should adapt to qualitative changes in the international environment.

The next speaker was prof. Gruszczak, who raised the issue of disintegration of administrative and regulatory environment and the integration of the scientific community. There is a strong trend in Poland to standardise the approach to the management of science on the part of government officials, while there is also a tendency to fragmentation in science. Prof. Gruszczak also referred to the speech of prof. Guzzini and warned that trying to make social science more practice-oriented can result in it being treated only as a means to an end such as effective foreign policy.

The last speaker, prof. Pomorska, considered identity to be the fundamental issue for the discipline. She noted that realism, while popular among diplomats, is not able to show a complete picture of the world around us. Prof. Pomorska emphasised that international relations need more openness towards other disciplines. She used the example of decision-making processes in which emotions play a significant role, and knowledge of them is provided by psychologists and neurologists. Therefore it can be useful to create research groups comprised of scientists from different disciplines. Prof. Pomorska also talked about problems affecting young researchers such as the lack of institutional support in the preparation of applications for research grants, or the issue of university staff turnover. She also stated that the research methodology is constantly improving, but it is still not good enough.

After a break, prof. Czapotowicz introduced the next speaker, prof. Ben Rosamond (University of Copenhagen, the leader of a multidisciplinary project "Euro-Challenge"). Prof. Rosamond's speech was entitled "Crises and/of European Union Studies?". He briefly described the changes of most influential theories in the history of the discipline. He emphasised that claims from the past can be very important for contemporary inquiries. In the last part of his speech, prof. Rosamond focused on the relations between theory and reality. He also presented a comparison of citation co-

unts of the most important researchers and commented the domination of the English literature in the European studies.

The last panel of the conference was entitled “Development Perspectives of European Studies in Poland”. It was attended by prof. Jan Zielonka (University of Oxford), prof. Janusz Ruskowski (University of Szczecin), Dr Anna Visvizi (The American College of Greece) and Dr Wojciech Gagatek (University of Warsaw). The discussion was moderated by prof. Wojtaszczyk, who started by raising the issue of the subject of Europeans studies. Then he recalled that political science treats the European Union as a political system, while international relations only consider it to be an international organisation. At the end of the speech he addressed the panellists with questions regarding the identity of European studies and the future of its development.

The first speaker was prof. Ruskowski, who presented his diagnosis of the current state of European studies. He stated that the European Union researcher may encounter difficulties related to the dynamics of the EU, the fact that European studies are currently in a phase of studying non-material aspects of reality and the lack of fully developed theories and methods. At the end of his speech prof. Ruskowski called for proliferation of channels of knowledge exchange, boosting the theory and triangulating research methods.

Dr Anna Visvizi started her speech by raising semantic issues. Further parts of her presentation were devoted to the search for answers to the following questions: should European studies be a separate discipline and are there any distinguishing features of Polish European studies? In the last part of her speech Dr Visvizi briefly described the stages of development of European studies in Poland.

The next speaker was Dr Gagatek, who emphasised that for European studies to become a distinct scientific discipline it is necessary to distinguish European studies in the broad and narrow sense. The latter, which concern only the European Union, developed distinctive theories and methods. In an attempt to answer the question of whether we can determine the boundaries of the field of knowledge and protect these areas, Dr Gagatek listed the following areas defining the research agenda: high and low politics, formal and informal politics, Europeanisation and nationalisation, integration and disintegration, centralisation and regionalisation, politicisation and depoliticisation, accountability and efficiency, qualitative and quantitative methods. He also stressed that interdisciplinarity can be used as an excuse for methodological weakness. Dr Gagatek also stated that “we do not need a scientific discipline, because it is a distinguishing feature of a coherent research area, which European studies have not yet become”. He

ended his speech with a call for increasing the number of economists and lawyers involved in European studies, which is currently dominated by representatives of political science.

The last speaker was prof. Zielonka, who emphasised the scientific value of theoretical and comparative studies. He also pointed out that international relations is sometimes treated as an independent field of knowledge, not just a part of political science or history. He also recalled that at the beginning European studies was not strictly devoted to the European Union. Historians and lawyers mainly studied treaties, while economists examined monetary integration. He also stressed the importance of the bureaucratic criteria and grants in determining the course of research and, as a result, the development of the discipline.

The conference was concluded by prof. Czaputowicz, who thanked everyone for participation.

Bibliography

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