

BOOK REVIEWS

Sjur Bergan, Ira Harkavy and Hilligje van't Land (eds.)

Reimagining Democratic Societies: a New Era of Personal and Social Responsibility, Council of Europe Higher Education series No. 18, 2013, 298 pp.

John Dewey has correlated among the first democracy and education within the context of modernity. He said that humanity has truly made progress in understanding that the final value of each institution is its distinctively human effect, or its effect on the conscious experience, and we should think that this lesson is to be learned in the relationships with the young.¹

Democratic societies favor education and the enlargement of horizons for the understanding of the rights and duties in democracy, of the procedures, rules, institutions and opportunities which ensure the functioning of democracy.

Reimagining Democratic Societies: a New Era of Personal and Social Responsibility is a plea for the centrality and importance of higher education in democracy. Responsibility, involvement and education are strictly correlated aspects, crucial for the maintaining and evolution of democracies.

The introduction – signed by Snežana Samardžić Marković, General Director for Democracy at the European Council – discusses the implications of higher education for citizenship, institutional perfection and labor market. The foreword from the Executive Director of the European Center Wergeland, Ana Perona-Fjeldstad, places the accent on the role of education in the training of the citizens considering the changing realities through participation. The Editors underline the following fundamental idea: “Only if higher education – institutionally as well as through individuals with a higher education background – engages in working for the common good will be able to build the kind of societies in which we would like our children and grandchildren to live. This will require determination and imagination – as well as a solid dose of re-imagination” (p. 24).

The volume inherits the good tradition of the debates from the journal *European Higher Education*, of the philosophy and actions of the European Council and also the tradition of the conferences organized by the International Association of Universities, all contributing to a democratic ethos based on the strong correlations between the higher education institutions and democracy, sustained by educational dialogue within a higher education based on active participation and active citizenship for the development of the competences and values in democracy.

Tora Aasland, the Norway Minister for Higher Education and Research brings his specific political experience within the discussion about higher education and democracy stating from the importance of academic freedom sustained by freedom of expression and thought. Thus the importance of higher education goes beyond the democratic problems, deeply into the hopes and dreams to improve the world. Olle Petter Ottersen inscribes the analyses of the role of university into an attempt to overcome democratic challenges. University is a cradle for all the ideas concerning the rights, liberties, laws, institutions for the ideas concerning communication and practice in democracy.

In the case of democracy in Norway higher education has a clear cultural role. Ira Harkavy connects the reimagining of the schools and universities with cultural and democratic practice emphasizing their active role in reimagining democratic societies.

Sjur Bergan considers the centrality of education and democracy within the adventure of conviviality: “If we accept that, however important democratic institutions are, they will not bring democracy unless they are underpinned by democratic culture, we are talking about the importance of education. If we say that democracy requires its citizens not only to vote, but also to engage actively in the public domain, we are talking about the importance of education. If we say that democracy is about the will and the ability to live peacefully with those whose backgrounds and opinions are different from our own and being enriched by the experience, we are talking about the importance of education” (p. 49).

Eduardo Padrón, the president of Miami Dade College, uses the metaphor of *open door colleges* to describe open society where democracy flourishes due to the revitalization flux of education which begins with the presence of the students. This is the role of learning not just an opportunity but the substance of progress,

¹ J. Dewey, *Democracy and Education*. Chapter 1, http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/publications/Projects/digitexts/dewey/d_e/chapter01.html

because the students contribute with their best instincts for think democratic institutions to adapt to a reality which is to a certain extent claimed by the young scholars (p. 60).

Srbijanka Turajlic approaches society based on knowledge as the best bet for democracy against the changing contexts offered by contemporary world. At present, democracy favors free choice and the variety of opportunities, making the democratic image incomplete. The democratic story concerns reform and adjustment. The difference between the declarative action and true reforms should be managed by the academic community (p. 68).

Bert Vandenkendelaere notices that when the youth is passive the European democracy is in danger. "Education on the macro-level can be the lighthouse for what goes right and wrong in our societies and for what history has taught us." (p. 86)

Inga Bostad and Lars Løvlie interpret a "lively and healthy democracy" established on education in the effort to make more efficient the contribution of knowledge to a better world. They identified several important questions: "How may our society be inclusive and at the same time defend its own values? How can we express even more clearly respect for human integrity and our inherent value as humans? How do we combine fruitful and sound nationalism with global solidarity?" (p. 89)

Caryn McTighe Musil, who "has directed more than two dozen externally funded national projects with colleges and universities seeking to reform the curriculum, improve teaching, promote civic engagement and create more inclusive academic institutions" (p. 292) proposes a movement of civic reform in order to re-link democratic action, education and reflection on democracy.

Muriel Howard and Jennifer M. Domagal-Goldman examine the Association of American Universities AASCU, as context for education, for informed and involved citizens. "The current focus on civic engagement in higher education in the United States began in 1980s. Almost 30 years later, as we look back on that work and its successes, there is much to celebrate. Yet looking forward, in the midst of the complex and often divisive politics of the twenty-first century, it must also be recognized how much is left to do" (p. 135).

Sev Ozdowski studies the aspects related to equity and diversity and their implications at West University, Sydney. The University became more open and inclusive through policies approaching diversity and inclusion. "An institution that values diversity is, by nature and experience, likely to be more democratic and fair and equitable in its relationships with all its members and other stakeholders" (p. 143).

Vidar L. Haanes and Helene Lund approach the role of religious institutions in development democratic community, "how the churches and local parishes, especially in rural areas, can contribute to community development. An important element of the project was related to the flexibility and ability to adapt to the different challenges facing different local communities. An important lesson to be learnt from this project is the success of multicultural, professional learning environments for discussing common challenges across national, social and religious borders" (p. 155).

Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. proposes a case study to evaluate participative democracy, especially in the case of the revitalization of the neighborhood based on education at the University of Buffalo. Participative democracy is the foundation of the process of the reimagining the democratic society, recreating societies with authentic democratic ideology (p. 163).

Paul Pribbenow presents a case study from Augsburg College and is interested in the manner in which the situation of the neighborhood Cedar-Riverside was improved. As Simon Critchley says in his book *Infinitely Demanding*, this author also considers that the ethical human being should look around and get involved into the matters identified as problematic attempting to offer solutions. Here the correct answer comes for conflicts and contradictions triggered by personal and political conditions. The lesson of this case study is not to ask what others have done to correct things but what each of us does in this respect.

Giedrius Viliūnas analyzes university as beneficial factor in democratic societies, in the case of Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania. The process of globalization had a positive role in this case. The ideas associated with the social democratic mission of university sustained that the probable future of the university is deinstitutionalization, the "dissolving" of the university in society so that it becomes a wide network of students and professors.

Sondra Myers follows the advice of Adam Michnik – "Act as though you live in a free society". In her view, the citizens ignite democracy and in the absence of participation democracy is just a form without substance. The training of students is the engine for the emotional favor and for the imagination necessary for democratic citizens (p. 191).

Gilbert L. Rochon and Thierno Thiam evaluate the model of governance at Tuskegee University. There the academic engagement is relevant for the advancement of democracy in the struggle for Human Rights (p. 197). The Committee of Non-Violence Students, the case Gomillion vs. Lightfoot, the chapter of Tuskegee University from the Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Tuskegee University College Chapter of College Democrats of America are examples of contributions to this struggle.

Piotr Wilczek signs the chapter interested in the analyzes of reforms in the Polish state universities after the fall of communism, characterized by the following features: involvement of the academics and researchers

into the public discourse, promoting a Polish, Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian academic dialogue, including the marginalized groups, building a bridge between academic and policy professionals, as well as EU and non-EU academic networks (p. 216).

Brian Murphy sees the community colleges as examples for the democratic societies. The citizens are better trained within these communities, because these are the media with free access where students employ their democratic and learning abilities, contributing to a qualitative democratic culture and stimulating the engagement in democracy.

Edward J. Ray approaches the recent history of his university with examples of processes and policies relevant in institutional change, as well as curricula changes and the professors' responsibility in promoting civic activism, the democratization of government, public discourse competences and democratic practices of the future leaders.

David Maurrasse discusses the threats correlated with economic instability and insecurity, concerning the role of academic institutions as anchors in democratic society. Common critical preoccupations can be better approached through institutional partnerships. Thus, in 2010, the institutions Anchor Task Force were created to reunite the elite of scholars and practitioners who could influence, advice and sustain the political decision factors in solving local problems.

Tony Gallagher proposes the case of Queens University, Belfast to investigate the overcoming of conflict and the promotion of civic engagement in students. The sustained promotion of civic consciousness of students became the center of the strategy of education for university. "The University's graduates should emerge as informed, active, responsible global citizens, sensitive to issues of social justice, sustainability and cultural diversity" (p. 252).

Gwen Dungy counts on the contributions of the participants to the International Forum "Reimagining Democratic Societies: A New Era of Personal and Social Responsibility?" that took place in June 2011, in Oslo, to emphasize the common belief concerning the key role of education in promoting democracy, human rights, rule of law and social dialogue. This is the core of democratic reality and its engine.

Martina Vukasovic capitalizes the results of the above mentioned conference in relation with the events of 2011, and the test of Norway democracy. In 2011, the government's quarters in Oslo was bombed and the participants in the summer school of the Utøya Party Youth Branch confronted with shootings. These events highlight even more the importance of democratization and the debates concerning the global democratic deficit of the EU.

The editors Sjur Bergan, Ira Harkavy and Hilligje Van't Land, in their conclusion to the volume underlined the necessity to reinvent and refigure democracy. Keeping the current path shadows the democratic aims and aspirations. The modalities of increasing responsibility offered by higher education are valuable for democratic consolidation as well through educated individuals as through a life-long learning society.

The volume follows and enhances John Dewey's remark: "Without such formal education, it is not possible to transmit all the resources and achievements of a complex society. It also opens a way to a kind of experience which would not be accessible to the young, if they were left to pick up their training in informal association with others, since books and the symbols of knowledge are mastered"².

Henrieta Anișoara Șerban

Viorella Manolache, *Repere teoretice în biopolitică*, Institutul de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, 201 pp.

The narrative of biopolitics insists on being heard even in the psychological milieu. It is thus absorbing to listen, to discover within the dialogue of this text from another discipline connections and echoes, questions of power and life and death. Freud himself postulated two primary drives: Eros, the drive to love, and Thanatos, the drive to death and the inherent conflict between the two.

In his book "The History of Sexuality" Michel Foucault argued that, "Where there is power, there is resistance" – Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality 1: An Introduction*. It is this anomaly that Viorella Manolache seeks to uncover and apply in her discussion of biopolitics, its difficulties as a narrative, its origins, relevance and application.

In her exposé Viorella Manolache draws on the philosophical underpinnings and the history of this difficult narrative towards an application which can take into account the future of politics and *bios*. She affirms the continued need to link life with politics and takes us on a journey from Aristotle to Foucault and beyond to ask many important questions about the way we do politics in this *post-post modern* era.

² *Ibidem*.

The researcher thoroughly explores the link that Foucault emphasized between living and power “the natural life begins to be included in the mechanisms and the calculations of state power, politics transforming itself in biopolitics” and notes the apparent oxymoron even in the name. She argues that Foucault cannot be eluded and emphasizes his view that heretofore in juxtaposition (biology meeting politics) the terms no longer retain their original meaning.

Researcher Viorella Manolache also understands the irony within the narrative and points to the fickle nature of the intellectual world which owns and disowns theoretical frameworks, at will, bringing them in or out of fashion. She proceeds to discuss biopolitics and its theoretical underpinnings using Foucault as a guide and the view that the narrative of biopolitics is a hermeneutic tool, itself designed to act as means to an end, a way of perusing and examining life and its many facets within various narratives. Life and politics inextricably linked by their mutual need and at times pathology.

“Suspected of abuse of philosophical instruments, and loaded with the existentialism that separates it from Sartre’s and Heidegger’s models, the Foucaultian version of biopolitics becomes more of a philosophical approach to (re)assess the immanent politics of history and the politics of truth. Because, “the unusual subversive Foucault (!) is the one who offers the instruments by which the structures can be subverted, as purely human constructions, built against man.” (Gabriela Cretu, 2004).

The author will not settle for absolutes but examines and acknowledges the struggle between the biological body and the establishment of political bodies which seek ascendancy over each other.

Highlighting the link as well as the distinction between Biopolitics and Thanato politics, death can be seen as politically and ethically productive in itself. She asks questions about liberalism and totalitarianism and assigns areas of interest to exegete Foucault’s peculiar framework. Areas such as *Bio-Power*, *Biopolitics as a Political Diagnostic of Medical Possibilities* and *biopolitics as bios*, are narrative and hermeneutic applied to the current political struggles of the world.

Viorella Manolache rigorously reminds us that we cannot afford to forget the voice of Foucault.

I find this volume particularly stimulating with regards to the discussing the anomalies within narratives of power and I am glad to say that Viorella Manolache demonstrates that resistance to extant power exists.

John Rual Comninos

Daniel Biró (coord.), *Relațiile internaționale contemporane. Teme centrale în politica mondială*, Polirom Publishing House, Jassy, 2013, 336 pp.

The nature of world politics has changed in the 21st century, while the researchers of international relations widen their field of investigation, including new themes in the object of international relations in order to enrich, clarify and open the field toward new dimensions. Their approach extends beyond the classical themes such as diplomacy, the great powers, military strategies etc., toward transcendence of the matters concerning traditional national state. The author of *Foreword* considers that these changes are occasioned as well by the change in the paradigms of research through “entering the postmodern, deconstructivist and hardly quantified paradigms”, as well as the intern dynamics of the present discipline, to whom there are dedicated university and postuniversity disciplines, institutes/ centers of research and numerous publications which widened the interest of the researchers in the field.

Relațiile internaționale contemporane (Contemporary International Relations) is a collective volume, dedicated to the world politics, which contains contributions of Romanian experts in the field, structured on 16 thematical chapters. The contributions gathered in the volume propose major topics on contemporary international relations such as: development politics, terrorism, the proliferation of mass destructions weapons, energy, the Third World, disputes regarding Human Rights, global governance, etc.

The first chapter entitled *Tranziția de putere (Power Transition)* signed by Simona R. Soare, analyzes one of the main dimensions of change in the international system, the “systemic transition of power” arguing that at the beginning of 21st century, the international system passes from unipolarity to multipolarity, naming also the special importance of the relationships between United States and China. Radu-Sebastian Ungureanu approaches a theme, recovered with interest nowadays in the international politics, namely the identity politics. In the chapter *Identități și comunități politice (Identities and Political Communities)* the author elaborates critics toward the traditional approaches, concerning the centrality of state and rationalism and explores the intellectual potential of non-rationalistic theoretization on collective identities. In chapter III (*Diplomația – Diplomacy*), Olivia Todorean discusses the status and the potential of diplomacy in the new international political framework, and Bogdan Ștefanachi approaches the problematic of *Sistemul economic internațional – International Economic System* (chapter IV), appealing to a historical approach in the global contemporary economic system and a critical analyse of the major actors and institutions in the international economy.

The following two chapters are dedicated to the recent international relations problematic: *Transferul de armament (The Transfer of Armament)* signed by Simona R. Soare, discussing the evolutions on the world weaponry trade and the international regulations in the field and *Proliferarea armelor de distrugere în masă (The Proliferation of Mass Destruction Weapons)* by Mihai Zodian, who establishes that in the proliferation domain there are no credible sanctions.

Serban Filip Cioculescu approaches in chapter VII, the international terrorism phenomena, a theme which assaults the international security medium and which occupies a top place on the threatening list against the international security. Under the title *Terorismul, un fenomen străvechi, dar totodată nou și surprinzător (Terrorism, both an Old, but also New and Surprising Phenomena)*, the author realizes a consistent historical and theoretical investigation of the terrorist phenomena, presenting the origins, definition, prototypes and implications, emitting the hypothesis according to which "Al-Qaeda could represent a pattern for the future terrorism" (p. 15). The same author approaches also the problem of energy, a theme with a higher political significance in the field of international relations. In his study, *Energia în relațiile internaționale: mize și soluții (Energy in International Relations: Stakes and Solutions)*, Ș. F. Cioculescu presents the manner in which energy influences as well the economic interests, as well as the security interests of the states, discussing the energy strategies of the major international actors, NATO and EU, as well as the role of energy superpower of Russia in Europe.

Under the title "*Conflictele înghețate în spațiul post sovietic ('Frozen Conflicts' in Post Sovietic Space)*", Octavian Milevschi and Stanislav Secieru approach a current topic of political and security matters in Europe. In order to explain the evolution of these conflicts, the authors relate to a specific structure of the originary causes of conflict, using a theoretical frame with four dimensions (individual, intrastate, interstate and global), followed by an analysis of each conflict and, then, by a synthesis of the characteristics of the four conflicts.

The coordinator of the volume, Daniel Biró, presents in his study entitled *State eșuate și construcția statală. Radiografia unor concepte și practici contestate (Failed States and State Construction. The Radiography of Disputed Concepts and Practices)* an analysis relevant for the debates around the phenomenon known by the name of failed states. The author insists on the ambiguities present in the literature of the domain, regarding the terminology, the objectives of external interventions, the mechanisms of implementation of the policies of state construction, and proposes as solution for these ambiguities "a genealogical approach of the conceptualization of state construction, accompanied by a process of de-securization of the failed states" (p. 16).

Paula Gângă presents the concept of *global governance* (chapter XI), a key concept that has started to gain a prominent place on the international agenda and analyzes the manner in which it is integrated within the wider theoretical domain of international relations. An interesting contribution is proposed Valentin Quintus Nicolescu who approaches *Lumea a Treia (Third World)*, a conceptual clarification starting from the fundamental intuition of a three-folded periferic status (economic, cultural and political), following also the processes of identity construction. Victor Negrescu interprets *Dezvoltarea internațională: între politici de dezvoltare și relații publice internaționale – International Development: Between Development Policies and Public International Relations* (chapter XIII), where he critically analyzes the manner in which the topic of development is included in international relations from three perspectives: realism, liberalism and neomarxist theories. The following chapters are dedicated to the subject of *religion in international relations* (Diana Andersson Biró) and of the *climate change* (Mihaela Răileanu).

The volume ends with the chapter entitled *Problematika genului în relațiile internaționale (Gender Issues in International Relations)* signed by Diana Elena Neaga and Valentin Q. Nicolescu, where are emphasized the specificities of feminist contributions and gender studies in international relations.

Due to the variety of themes approached, the volume offers a broader and more interesting perspective on the dynamics of the political processes in contemporary international system, contributing also to the consolidation of the field of international relations in Romania. The volume addresses theoreticians and practitioners alike, and all those who are interested in developing their abilities to interpret current events in world politics.

Sanda Cincă

Dan Dungaciu, Gabriela Tănăsescu (coord.), România și Rusia după 20 de ani, ISPRI Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, 317 pp.

Without the express aim to contribute to the amelioration of the political mechanism of correlation between Russia and Romania, dependent on the higher political actors from both states, the volume *România și Rusia după 20 de ani (Romania and Russia after 20 years)*, approaches a step toward the establishment of a dialogue between Romanian Academy, The Institute of Political Science and International Relations and The Russian Academy of Science, the Institute of Scientific Information in the field of Social Science.

Published as a follow up of the International Conference "*Russia and Romania after 20 Years – Perceptions, Realities, Perspectives*", the volume includes studies resulted from the research of the economic, political and

geopolitical directions of research of the Russian Federation concerning its strategic partnerships – reflected mainly in the evolution of the Community of the Independent States, in the position adopted by Russia toward the nearby neighbourhood, in its relation to the Eastern Partnership and in the initiation of a project Eurasian Union.

The volume increases in importance with the study signed by Tatiana Bitkova “*Locul României și Rusiei în contextul relațiilor Est-Vest: aspecte politice și culturale*” (“The place of Romania and Russia in the Context of East-West Relations: Political and Cultural Aspects”) after a short presentation of the deficit of modernization and of the “the Romantic and Westernization” tendencies of the two nations, elucidating the causes of the desperate search of position and stability in the case of Romania, or, for re-finding and influence in the case of Russia, within the new international context up surged after the '90s. The author emphasises the reasons for the lack of normal relations between the two geopolitical actors.

Thus, although Russia becomes a promising economic actor for Romania, the problem of influence disputes of the two states concerning Bessarabia (Moldova Republic), the presence of the Russian military contingent in Transnistria, the agreement concerning the implementation of the American Missile Defence System in Romania are to maintain the relations frozen without any signs of change in the near future.

The study signed by Aristide Cioabă, *Consolidarea democratică în România (Democratic Consolidation in Romania)* represents a warning for the reader and the foundation for the next study, *Cazuri ale semiprezidențialismului – România și Rusia (Cases of Semi Presidential Regime – Romania and Russia)*, authored by the coordinator of the volume, Gabriela Tănăsescu, who underlines at some point that “the mistrust of the authors of Romanian Constitution in the ‘strong’ presidential institution of a ‘pure’ president within the Romanian context after 1990, and in the context of Romanian transition from dictatorship toward an authentic constitutional system, in the attempt to prevent an autocratic presidential behaviour proves to be the right one as long as a nevertheless ‘new’ semi-Presidential regime in the constitutional landscape, namely the one instituted in Russia beginning in 1993, is, according to a quote from Sartori (the most complex presidential version of semi presidential regime)”, an illustrious acknowledgment of the distinguished author concerning the disproof of the liberal pro Western current in both countries, coming from a much too impoverished political culture.

The book is intriguing due to the diversity of Romanian – Russian visions and analyses, with a pragmatic message conveyed by Nadezda Feyt in the study “*Relațiile româno-ruse în sec. XXI*” (*Romanian – Russian Relations in the 21st century*), or by the research conducted by Darie Cristea and Lucian-Ștefan Dumitrescu entitled “*Vectorul Conservator din Geopolitica Rusiei la început de mileniu*” (*The Conservative Vector in the Russian Geopolitics at the Beginning of the Millennia*).

România și Rusia după 20 de ani (Romania and Russia after 20 years) situates the reader within the discussed problem and therefore the reader becomes witness to a new beginning. Considering a multidisciplinary approach, the volume succeeds to emphasise the truly qualitative contribution of the authors involved and (why not?) a long lasting initiation of dialogue.

Radu Cupcea

Oana Simion, *Geopolitica spațiului ex-sovietic, între hegemonia Rusiei și structurile euro-atlantice*, ISPRI Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, 305 pp.

The book entitled *Geopolitica spațiului ex-sovietic, între hegemonia Rusiei și structurile euro-atlantice* (The Geopolitics of the Former Soviet Space, between the Hegemony of Russia and the Euro-Atlantic Structures) answers, through the topic approached, to various recent tendencies and debates, concerning geopolitics and the study of the geographical space resulted after the dismantlement of the USSR. The challenges of this geopolitical space arise from the conflict between past and present, as well as by the attempt of the Russian Federation, as “inheritor” state of USSR, to impose its regional hegemony against the aspirations of the newly separated states, at their political, economic and social independence.

The author conducted a comprehensive analysis on the ex-Soviet space focused, as announced, on the geopolitical interferences which have Russia as point of convergence. In the opening of the book, the scene covering the geographical and historical coordinates is described and the events that lead to the formation, development and fall of the “Empire of Evil”, as was USSR was named by USA President Ronald Reagan are indicated. The author uses the method of themes or the method of the file and sustains her choice by identifying the advantages: the clarity of approach, the balance between the space analysis and the diachronic analysis, the possibility to also engage the readers who are not accustomed with the matters of the area studies, and last but not least, that this method focuses only on the problems considered most important at that specific moment.

Thus, we find that despite the climatic impediments, this territory knew, from Ancient times, numerous forms of state concentrated mainly along the most important hydrographical arteries. The overview of the events that led to the formation of USSR proves to be fluid and the merit of the author is that she is able to

present the historical episodes in a manner in which their succession is most logical. The enumeration contains the most relevant moments: the leadership of Romanov dynasty, the repercussions of the World War I, the revolutionary movements around 1917 and as a direct result – the accession to power of Vladimir Ilich Lenin and the construction of the Soviet Socialism. The chapter ends with the administration of Vladimir Putin, considering also the numerous manifestation of political turmoil generated by the succession of many political leaders that were worn out physically and/or psychically and proved to be unable to strengthen the position of the country, the attempt of Mikhail Gorbachev to modernize USSR that ended up in its dismantling.

The difference between USSR and Russia – which after 1991 inherited the role of “supra-power” in the Euro-Asian space – consists in 14 newly independent states. These new territories and the elements that continue to connect them in one way or another to the Russian Federation are extensively presented in the following chapter. Here, the author considers the geopolitical theories concerning Ex-Soviet space starting from the idea of Hartland proposed by Mackinder, used also by Spykman and Huntington and their echoes in the geopolitical thought in post-soviet Russia, presents the geopolitical schools, and their main representatives whose opinions oscillated between arguing that Russia is indeed a centre of power in the Euro-Asian space launched by Dugin, up to the thesis of Trenin, stating that Russia “has lost the centre of gravity quality of the continent”.

Starting from the theory postulated by Ion Conea, that a geopolitical study must identify first the geographical elements of the studied area, the author presents in the third chapter the physical, climatic and hydrographical characteristics of the whole ex-soviet space and analyzes the interdependence between these and the political environment created. A specific place holds the human potential of this territory. The demographic specificity of each newly independent country is followed by the analysis and the interpretation of phenomena such as the evolution of the natural rate of increase, the decline of fertility, the typology of migration and the determination of the inhabitants’ quality of life. The chapter ends with the author presenting the result of the conflict between the human element and the natural one, the author describing certain environmental concerns such as: the desiccation of the Aral Sea, the phenomena called the Arctic Fog or the nuclear disasters from Chernobyl and Kîştîm.

The analysis of ex-soviet space natural potential continues by extending the discussion about the natural resources, which are considered by the author to be an “essential element for the geostrategic position of the ex-soviet space”. At a first level, is described the manner of utilization of these resources and the effects, too, sometimes disastrous as well for environment as for the inhabitants of this space, due to the position adopted by USSR concerning the relation between man and nature. The most important resources are considered to be the energetic ones and the author puts them on the same level as the “power” exercised by the Russian Federation in its relation with the newly independent states and also the rest of the world, especially its perpetual enemy – USA. The investigation identifies important sources of power both in the alimentary resources and in the energetic resources and their percentage in the total sum of USSR’s resources. After the fall of the Union, numerous problems emerged related to the control of resources and to their extraction, procession and transport to either Europe or Asia. A special attention is given to oil, on one hand, due to its internationally recognized importance and to the fact that the ex-soviet space constitutes to be a vast area of extraction. There are investigated both the history and the conflicts involving the main oil regions and the constant efforts of the Russian Federation to control the interactions between the ex-soviet states and the rest of the international scene, efforts widely investigated within the chapter. The author also discusses the projects concerning the trans-national oil pipes and natural gas pipes in the present times as well as the ones dating from the time of the USSR. Next, the author presents the former and present status of the nuclear energy power plants and the reasons for the insufficient use of renewable sources such as the Aeolian, solar or geothermal energy, and analyses the potential of agro-forest resources. We find out about the consequences that the long communist influence has had on the manner of employing these resources (agricultural lands and forests) after fall of the USSR and the obstacle that these influence turned out to be sometimes and extremely difficult to overpass in the ex-soviet states when they attempted to adapt to the economic realities of the beginning of the 21st century.

The following three chapters interpret the relations and interactions among the Russian Federation, the ex-soviet states and the European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

The fifth chapter evaluates exclusively the foreign politics of Russia after 1991, the author continuing the discussion concerning the heritage of the newly independent state of Russia, and its capacity to conform to the changes taking place at the international level. Thus, the author considers the situation of the certain territories and implicitly of the ethnic groups which once the Union was dismantled were forced to face political conflicts which degenerated in armed conflicts. The author also presents the numerous cases in which the conflicts were presumably ignited and fuelled by the backstage plays of the Kremlin in its attempt to regain the status of supra-power. Therefore the reasons for the accession of Russia to PFP, the politics led in relation with NATO are investigated in this study along with details concerning discourse analysis that targets to identify the position of President Vladimir Putin who (we find out) was rather “a great supporter of the word *partnér*, “partner”, than *soyuznik*, another term used for ally”. The author concludes that contemporary Russia has lost an empire but hasn’t found yet its role to play in this global mosaic which makes its attempt to construct an agreement difficult to please the interests of Russia to be “ratified by the parliaments of all the EU member states”.

The chapter reiterates the statement that Russia's greatest trump card is its geographical position and that Russia continues to control the transport networks of the traditional energy resources. The chapter ends with the discussion of the modality in which Russia interacts with the ex-soviet countries from Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and China, on the other.

The next chapter focuses on the integration process of the ex-soviet states in the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. There are important differences in what concerns the status quo, the problems and the steps taken in view of integration in the European environment of the newly independent states, which the author categorizes according to common characteristics. Firstly, the Baltic States are treated as a homogenous group, as they were the first to receive the agreement of accession in the EU. The difficulties faced by the Russian ethnic groups in these territories and the matter, yet unresolved, and of Kaliningrad are evaluated. In a special sub-chapter the history of interactions between Ukraine and NATO, and also with EU are approached from the moment of the state formation up to present day, and the author states that the issues this country faces consists in the insistence of authorities to access EU and NATO, and also the impossibility of the country to conform to the norms imposed by these structures due to bureaucracy, violence and corruption inherited to a certain extent from the Soviet system. On the other side of the continent, the states of the South Caucasus are analyzed, as one coherent geographical region, although they are "divided by the aspirations for integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures and the pressure of Russia for maintaining them in its sphere of influence". In the case of all mentioned states, the more sensitive aspect of their relation with Russia is energy, namely the delivering of natural gas and oil. The author emphasizes their high energetic dependence on Russia – see the cases of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Ukraine. The last point of interest in the chapter is the delicate situation of Republic of Moldavia, especially the Transnistria region, that, the author says, "has an important strategic meaning [for Russia], ensuring the access to South Eastern Europe".

The final chapter approaches *Politica Europeană de Vecinătate* (the European Neighbourhood Politics), its manner of action in the ex-soviet space, the weaknesses it may present and the involvement of the Euro-Atlantic institutions in the alleviation of the tension in the case of several frozen conflicts in the South Caucasus – Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh – and Moldova Republic – and in Transnistria".

In conclusion, the book *Geopolitica spațiului ex-sovietic: între hegemonia Rusiei și structurile euro-atlantice* (The Geopolitics of the Former Soviet Space, between the Hegemony of Russia and the Euro-Atlantic Structures), dedicated to such an important territory, which is also in the same time very controversial, is extremely well documented, sustained by appropriate arguments and absolutely necessary in the nowadays geopolitical context.

Alina Mareci

Lorena Stuparu (coord.) *Identitatea individuală în contextul globalizării. Studii și interviuri*, Aius Publishing House, Craiova, 2013, 250 p.

Structured around two dimensions with a direct reference to the interconnection of the studies and essays concerning the topic of individual identity in the context of globalization, along with the interviews with renamed personalities in the field of political philosophy and cultural studies, the present volume (including a plurality of identities) establishes from the introduction the analytic approach regarding individual identity, social-political identity, European reconstructions, aspirations and orientations, all these gathered under the metaphor of "a ring from the trunk of identity".

Although apparently indebted to a whole rank of studies in the field establishing that "identity is the thing that differentiates one from another" (p. 8), the volume bridges the logical concerns and the epistemological moment, with renewed attention for the philosophical or political delimitations, hypostases and legitimacies.

Within the investigation of the subject "Individual Identities: Between the Exterior Perception and the Interior Reception" the study of Lorena Stuparu reconstructs the possibilities of an architecture of identity, considering also the geopolitical consequences of expansion toward the West of supranational structures, regarding present day modernity constructions. From here on is developed a categorizing version of the personal, national, or global self, with deviations and consolidations concerning the theoretical blueprints of the liberal or conservative individualism. The strong core of the study stays in the interpretation of the narrative identity as a mediating instance between liberalism and conservatism, as the author appeals to a series of narrative convolutions, some with feminist characteristics: unrealistic identity typical for Bovarism, fictive identities, either Gulliverian or Kukulian (an allusion to *Kukunia*, the fictive name given to a community of liars), all regarding the imperative launched by Paul Ricoeur, to represent the past in the "good tradition" of the ego-logical questions (p. 37). The study is narratologically inscribed in the sphere of dialogical identities, translated also in the European temperament, or in the taste for adventure with relevance in the modern manner of theoretical construction of identities.

The study of Ana Bazac "Identity and Globalization: An Epistemological Perspective" has a clarifying role in what concerns the status of case and medium of identity, regarding the logical and often limitative meanings of identity (similar to the meaning of limit which does not limit, according to the phrase of Constantin Noica, p. 49) discussing an equivalent of functionality in the analysis of the principle of identity and of the principle of alterity. Preoccupied with the etymological moment, with the most general mechanism conceiving identity, or the types of identities (concerning the human being), and the dialectics of close-distant identities, the author investigates the subject, in a dialogue with the perspective opened by Lorena Stuparu, thus offering the concept of identity not only the logical meanings, but also the contextualization of the manner in which identity is "captured in words" (p. 51). Facing the rhetorical question "What happens next?" (p. 67) Ana Bazac answers by counterweighing the idea of mass with personal uniqueness, clarifying from these aspects the meaning of a concept such as multitude, pretext for the affirmation that "identity cannot issue a comfortable discourse" (p.68), but it can arrogate the right to represent a subversive perspective.

Within an "autochthon" perspective, the study signed by Adriana Neacșu reconfirms the entering in dialogue of the national models with the European ones, bringing to the fore the conception of I. D. Gherea, who justified the term of pure self in relation with the substantial self, configuring concrete features found in relative stability (p.82). The two categories imply individual identities that entertain complex situations and reconfigure their own lasting interval as a criterion for individual identity (p. 83).

In a key apparently detached from the theoretical and philosophical tendency delivered by the first studies in the volume the study signed by Georgeta Ghebrea, "Social-political Identity and Occupational Aspirations of Youth in Romania", although uses content analyses of formal documents such as the Work Code and the Law of Youth, or secondary analyses, both qualitative and quantitative, approaches also the philosophical dimension of the subject, considering "market", "demand", "offer" as metaphors which justify the discrepancies sent between the latent content of the policies of work employment for youth and their occupational aspirations.

"European Identity – A Reconstruction?" by Gabriela Tănăsescu investigates the major challenge represented by political philosophy of European identity. In this perspective, the study capitalizes the influence exercised by the policies of identity and difference, by the theory of identification and the theory of multiculturalism, considering also the importance of the deconstructive, poststructuralist and psychoanalytical theories and the sociological theory of roles to discuss the dispute between essentialism and constructivism occupying the centre of a social theory of identity. European individual identity is shaped in relation to a theoretical foundation concerning the "concrete solidarities", "the European concerted action" and "the plurality of loyalties and appearances" as "plurality of identities" in shaping an operational concept for "European identity" (p. 105), thus bridging the European ethos of identity and other dimensions of identity such as the constitutional patriotism, post national identity, or supra state European identity or potentially confederate identity (pp. 125-133). The subject of European identity is studies also in the dynamic perspective of the prioritization triggered by the "financial crisis" and by the more recent evolutions taking place in the European Union.

Liliana Popescu approaches "The Moldovan Identity and European Aspiration" – "Orientation of Moldova Republic", starting from an analysis of the public self-identification of the people of Republic of Moldova, of the Moldovans, an affirmation of the uniqueness as Moldovan nation, as well from the perspective of their own personality among the nations, as from that of the problems and aspirations of the Moldovan nation. Thus, the role of ideology represented by Moldovenism in the formation of the national identity, as well as the relation with the state generates identity characteristics, the ethno-national identity as a relative foundation in the construction of the civic and national identity, of a constitutionalist patriotism recommended by Habermas in the process of construction of the European citizenship. "The solidification of the Moldovan civic nation is going to contribute to the strengthening of the position of Moldova Republic, either as a future candidate, or as a future member, of the European Union" (p. 148).

The experience of the shaping of the personal and national identity through the foreign experience is presented by Gabriela Blebea Nicolae in the essay. "An Identity's Trunk Ring". Among the individual identity "rings", the affective-national ones play an important role, "the intellectual experiences" forming the basis of the relation with the academic and political realities and of the opening toward the world, from a national identity nucleus.

"About Identity with Mircea Flonta" is the title of an interview where, under the sign of the lack of reservations, the affective de-centering is unmasked, for certain irreducible convictions, regarding the support of the culture of dialogue, with a sound discipline of thought and experience, the ones entertaining the historical and cultural background of the subject of identity (p. 160). National citizenship does not imply national identity for all the people with a certain civic identity. Civic identity and cultural identity may be harmonized, as they are complementary (p. 162). The interview with Mircea Flonta has the merit of drawing differences and delimitations – modifications triggered by the ideological pressure or institutionalized systems of belief, opening the discussion toward the separation, at the human level, from the "unfriendly" mentality following the current state of affairs, generated by lies and arbitrary (p. 177).

Otherwise, the philosophical solution is identified by the academician Alexandru Surdu, who reconfirms that there is a specific of Romanian philosophy, an original contribution given by its very particularities,

relevant also in the context of the already elaborated philosophical system of the academician Alexandru Surdu, the pentad system. The interview with the academician Alexandru Surdu clarifies therefore also the status of the ethnic and national conscience, found in evolution toward its conversion into civic conscience concepts that could limit the discussions that are apparently utopist to a theoretical reality which can be justified or, why not, having as effect precisely the situation of the "migration of patriotism" (p.182). The Academician reminds us the fact that within this context, not everything is reduced to the philosophy of being, but rather to the ontological problems evaluating in a lucid manner the fact that state, continental or planetary citizenship are adapted often regardless of the ethnic, national or individual conscience and sometimes there are forcedly constituted against conscience (p. 183).

The interview with the academician Gheorghe Vlăduțescu on the philosophical reflection of identity surprised the fact that the advancement and enhancement of knowledge implies as well the recognition of the other, in the similar manner to the reconstruction of the individual and of each subject in history (p.184). Admitting the significance and operational functioning of the term "the spirit of peoples", the academician sees in the national component the first condition of the construction and deconstruction of the supranational identity, which is artificial and conventional, while the ethnic identity and the national one are based on the communitarian nature of each individual. While the Romanian feeling of identity with its specific history and geography of the reconstruction of being is described through metaphor, the academician recognizes after 1989 a retrieving dynamics, which is nothing but a necessary exercise warning about the long duration attachments that favor the birth of dogmatism in cultural, social and political thought (p. 186).

Academician Alexandru Boboc notices in the interview "About Identity Phenomenology and Philosophy of Culture" the fact that globalization can be considered a horizon of expectancy, where the European spirit is the capitalization of the Herderian idea of humanity and, thus, the reception of the concrete identity is based on this idea. Philosophically, the interview promotes the idea of "oscillation", understood as a possibility to analyze both identity and the principle of identity, which welcomes a fashionable discourse nowadays, which mediates and relates various aspects in order to found the unity of the *same*, resulted from the union of thought and being. The approach considers the multiple processes of identification by determination and self determination, towards clarification (p. 191). With interest for the current debates within the European space, the Academician proposes as solution the rejection of the insistence on total, absolute symmetries capitalizing the global aspect in globalization, an asymmetric term whose asymmetry allows also symmetric dimensions (p. 200).

The philosophical and logical perspectives open other horizons for two interviews relating exclusively to the domain of political science, with researchers Aristide Cioabă and Constantin Nica. The interview "About Political Individual and Collective Identity" calls to attention, according to Aristide Cioabă, the unanticipated risks and consequences of the Romanian adventure after 1989, challenges considered by the researcher signals and derived meanings. Political identity includes, therefore, a set of stable and inertial elements with effect in the perpetuation, reproduction and domination of the collective mind, vindicating also normative and constitutional action, as well as sustained processes of redefinition and adaptation of the democratic environment (p. 206). The researcher identifies a structure of resistance and continuity for the Romanian political architecture, noticing that post-1989, the inherently negative consequences in the current confrontation with the matter of the affirmation of its new political identity (p. 210). The interview offers a generous frame for discussion of the consensual decision in the mechanism of construction of the identity and legitimacy for the political power. Thus the model of constitutional identity of the "social arrangement" is clarified, considering from case to case that in the dispute *polites – cosmopolites*, the latter term finds adepts to a greater extend among the international elites with decision of power.

For Constantin Nica the discourse about identity cannot be limited to individual or group identity, but it has to be opened toward the plural identity series, a perspective that confirms the superiority of modern state, especially in extracting the fundamentals of the reason of existence and of its functions in society's relations with the human demographical factor (p. 223). The interview with Constantin Nica shows that the identity of Europe is based on the originality of creation in the scientific and technological domains, while the European organization is sustained by European solidarity. Regardless of the attribute considered – "Evolutionary Europe", "Americanized", or "disintegrated Europe" – this space remains one of culture and civilization, a classical model of genesis, maturation and consecration of the nations: "nation is a reality already imposed and it remains the complete form of modern ethnic and historical community, a perennial reality that generates progress, common points of conviviality and understanding among peoples" (p. 232).

This incursion within the opened limits of identity reconfirms the status of reliable construct of the volume, answering through individual interventions, through original discourse and substantial commentaries to the task of clarification and annotation of the concept of identity, having as result what Lorena Stuparu has underlined from the introduction as an attempt to rearrange a *puzzle* according to imaginary blueprint to obtain a unitary and meaningful image: an imprint with individual identity into the European reflexes, which compose and recompose the harmonization of the individual with the world.

Henrieta Anișoara Șerban