

REVIEWS OF REVIEWS

Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review, no. 2/2016

Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review, no.2/2016 published by the Faculty of Political Sciences, Bucharest University brings in the section dedicated to articles a special study signed by Jörg Michael Dostal, entitled “Transnational War in Syria. The Eisenhower Doctrine in the 21st Century?” The author analyses the geopolitical interests and the strategy of the United States in the Middle East. The accent is placed on Syria, as case study, a state which was outside the sphere of influence of the USA, even since the middle of the 1950s. In this respect are discussed the long, medium and short term factors related to the role of principal leader in the region played by the USA, especially in Syria. The author realizes the fact that the geopolitical writings of Nicholas J. Spykman influenced the “Eisenhower doctrine” since 1957, a doctrine stating that the USA should assume the unique role of counter-weight and balance factor in the Middle East. This aspiration is to explain the American undercover interventions and actions in the Syrian conflict in March 2011. At the same time, this type of interventions, the author shows, demonstrates the continuity of the American efforts to take advantage of the regional powers such as Israel, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, ones against others, a strategy which strengthens the geopolitical role of the USA.

As well within the international geopolitical context we find interesting the study entitled “The Role of the Enquiry Commission in the Decision-making at the League of Nations Regarding the Albanian Issue” proposed by Deona Cali. The inquiry focuses on the activity of the Commission of Investigation of the League of Nations, in Albania, during the time interval 1921-1923, established as a means toward a better understanding of the progress of the relations of this organization with Albania. At the same time, the study attempts to give an answer to the interrogation concerning the extent to which the work of this Commission of investigation influenced the decision of the League of Nations concerning the problem of Albania during that period? The subject is of interest because it is oriented toward certain themes of historiography that require further clarification. The article analyses the reports that this Commission has sent toward the League of Nations and also, the decisions that the latter has taken on the basis of the reports and recommendations made by the members of the Commission to the purpose of the improvement of the relations between Albania and the League of Nations in the economic and political sphere. In the economic field, the results were related to the mission of the economic councillors, while in what concerns the political sphere, the decisions taken by the League of Nations were based as mentioned on the basis of the reports of the Commission for the country and not on those presented by the international press. The decisions taken by the League of Nations during this period represent an indicator of the efficiency of the activity of this Commission, states the author.

A relevant study with multiple authors, namely Abel Polese, Borbala Kovacs, David Jancsics, is entitled “Toxic or Inoffensive Informal Practices? ‘Despite’ and ‘Beyond’ the State: the Case of Romania and Hungary”. Starting from the observation that during the last ten years a vast literature was dedicated to “informality” brought to the fore the pertinence of the traditional legal-illegal dichotomy for the understanding of the social actions. The study presents the informal practices as situated in a continuous grey area and based on the individual perception on the role of the state within a certain sector and the results obtained from the illegal, legal and extra-legal transactions. The authors attempt to cancel this opposition, between the above-mentioned terms, concentrating on the mechanisms of understanding and explaining the “informality”, debating its relation to the market mechanisms and to society. Rejecting the idea that “informality” is just an economic phenomenon, pecuniary evaluated, the authors show that it involves also social and

cultural phenomena, often neglected and conclude: “informality” constitutes a normal manner for social and economic interactions in a social and institutional environment, characterized by incoherence, inconsistency and typical contradictions; as well in the “North”, as in the “global South” (p. 220). Using the double dichotomy licit-illicit and beneficial-baneful the article analyses two types of post-socialist informality illustrated by two case studies: one dedicated to the informal care for the children up to three years old in Romania (the informal character “beyond the state”) and another type “despite the state” correlated with the phenomenon of corruption in Hungary. The authors consider that in place of a treatment for informality, through legality, it is more useful to analyse it from the perspective of morality and from that of the micro-and macro-social benefits and losses. In conclusion, observing the plural nature and the persistent and adaptive character of informality, one could differentiate among the manifestations that require urgent actions and those less relevant for the political and administrative reforms of the state, for certain unregulated areas left free in the social life, aware of the fact that it is impossible to eliminate it entirely (p. 240).

The new section “Quaestiones disputatae”, introduced in this issue, includes two articles: first an answer of Valentin Stoian to the study of Alexandru Volacu – “Distributive Justice and Political Ideologies” – published in *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science review*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2015. The second is the reaction of Alexandru Volacu to the ideas sustained by Valentin Stoian toward the understanding of the concept of “distributive justice” and of certain political ideologies (anarchism or Marxism, or communism) in relation to this concept.

We are emphasizing the ample book review signed by Andreea Zamfira from the last part of this issue, presenting the book of Dragoș Dragoman, entitled *Naționalismul. Identitatea etnoculturală și proiectul elitelor*, Adenium, Jassy, 2014.

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Translation by Henrieta Anișoara Șerban

Balkan Journal of Philosophy and the project Democratization, Religious Identity and Fundamentalism in Romania and Bulgaria (2016-2018)

The *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*, published under the auspices of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, is a peer-reviewed international and academic journal. The journal is relocated on a new site <https://www.pdcnet.org/bjp> and welcomes contributions regarding topics of contemporary interest, relevant also for Balkan studies nowadays.

Balkan Journal of Philosophy affirmed an interest to be an instrument disseminating research presented and elaborated also within the project entitled *Democratization, Religious Identity and Fundamentalism in Romania and Bulgaria* (2016-2018), sustained by researchers from the Institute for the Study of Knowledge and Society (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), namely Professor Nina Dimitrova, Professor Erika Lazarova and Associate Professor Bogdana Todorova (coordinator) and researchers from the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations “Ion I. C. Brătianu” of the Romanian Academy – Scientific Researcher III Vioella Manolache, Scientific Researcher III Lorena Stuparu and Scientific Researcher II Henrieta Anișoara Șerban (coordinator).

Sadly, the initial group is hurt and diminished by the sudden death of Professor † **Erika Lazarova (1954-2017)**. Docent, Head of Department “History of Science”, ZNIN; Docent affiliated to the Center for Science Studies, BAS (1995-2010), Docent, affiliated to the Institute of Culture, Sofia (1991-1992), Professor at University of Sofia, Department of Journalism (1992-1995), New Bulgarian University – History of culture (1993-1995), Tehno University, Sofia (1997-2007), Professor Erika Lazarova was an interdisciplinary and creative personality and an important part of our project. She participated in the work of state or government authorities, in national and international scientific councils and commissions. She was also Member of several scientific institutions such as the Union of the Scientist of Bulgaria, Union of the Bulgarian Journalists and

a President of the section “Theory, History and Critics”. She was a Member of the Translator’s Union in Bulgaria. In 2001, she was awarded with National Cultural Prize.

She authored numerous books from which we are mentioning *The Bulgarian Humanism as Titanism* (comp.), Sofia, 2006; *The Scientist against the Politician Naiden Sheitanov*, Sofia, 2005; *The Literature as cultural self-knowledge and self-consciousness*, Sofia, 2005; *The Surgeon Dr. Assen Petrov or the biography as mirror of the epoch*, Sofia, 2004; *The unknown Oscar Wilde or the ethical lessons of Lord Paradox*, Sofia, 2000; *Brunhild Moldenhauer*, Sofia, 2000 (in German); *The Flame of the Alive Ethics* (author and editor), Sofia, 1996; *The Language of flowers* (applied aesthetics), Sofia, 1995; *The German Romanticism between Ideal and Reality*, Sofia, 1991; *Humanism and Perestroika*, Sofia, 1991; *Aesthetical Education*, Sofia, 1986.

She participated in 60 conferences in Bulgaria and 30 – in Austria, Croatia, Greece, Germany, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Mexico, Norway, Russia, Spain; 100 symposiums in Bulgaria and many scientist forums in Austria, Germany, Greece, Croatia, Israel, Kazakhstan, France, Macedonia, Mexico, Norwegian, Russia, Spain, Ukraine. MONT – “Golden fund of the Bulgarian science” 2009-2012.

The project in which she was an active part, entitled “Democratization, Religious Identity and Fundamentalism in Romania and Bulgaria” is extremely relevant for the current European context. The state of knowledge in the field indicates that the dynamics of the contemporary theories on securitization are related to theories concerning democratization, liberalism, private self-understanding, religious identity and fundamentalism. The theories concerning religious radicalization are connected to counter-radicalization and securitization, too. There is an increased interest for these research topics and their inter-relations mainly in the USA, Canada, and Western Europe, registered in studies oriented towards the so-called Muslim world and South-East Asia.

Within the current circumstances that indicate increased radicalization and terrorist activities in Western Europe, regional studies in Bulgaria and Romania complete the scientific knowledge on the field with a more in-depth view on the theories with relevance for a global perspective and with reference to globalization, democratization, ethnic pride, the cohabitation of Muslim and non-Muslim population in correlation with political aspects related to marginality in newer democracies.

Henrieta Anișoara Șerban