Cristina Voita, Ion Goian, Cristian Popa (coord.)
Istoricul Stelian Neagoe la 75 de ani, București, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice

Impressive and edited in excellent material conditions, the present volume is an homage, as indicated by the title, dedicated to the historian and Professor Stelian Neagoe, by a series of specialists in the domain of history and socio-political sciences, a field investigated by Stelian Neagoe, as a researcher, for almost 50 years. The book begins with a Laudatio, where those who dared to write a few pages for the celebrated personality did not omit to position the career of the historian as a chapter of history in itself, comprising for the most part our intellectual history of the last half of the century. The section is opened by the homage of the President of the Section of Philosophy, Theology, Psychology and Pedagogy of the Romanian Academy, Academician Alexandru Surdu, of the Vice-President of the Romanian Academy, Academician Dan Bălănoș, and of the Director of the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations of the Romanian Academy, Professor Dan Dangaciu, PhD.

There followed a section entitled "Meditations on the destiny of the Romanian nation", including texts signed by Florin Constantin, Gheorghe Buzatu and Cristi Panaitelion, dedicated to the Professor, starting from other books, signed by Professor Stelian Neagoe — milestones, as the Westerners termed them — providing the encyclopedic dimension of the activity of the Professor. These milestones are Duminică politică română [Romanian Politics], Enciclopedie [Encyclopedia] and Politică și Destin [Politics and Destiny: Constantin Argeșianu].

The following three parts of the volume are constituted of scientific articles grouped in an illustrative manner in three chapters defining both for the activity of the historian, and for the activity of the institute which has captured his expertise, research interests and affection: national history, political science, and international relations. The first among the texts, History — the summation of our lives, successfully addresses themes of history which are with priority (but not solely) national and themes of everyday history — where are emphasized with sympathy the topics referring to the natal land of the celebrated personality, Oltenia. The selection betrays eventually as well a condition of the historical research, clarifying that national history is not limited to general national and heroic themes (although it is majestically served by these themes, too) and that, nevertheless, the local element has its own charm in history, leading to special historical lessons. The historical section covers the most part of the volume, probably because it refers to the specialization of the one to whom his colleagues address the homage.

The part of political science is represented by several studies, all bearing the specific of the domain: descriptive and theoretical texts. Calling attention in the text investigating the political significance of the ideas of George Înaltescu, within the difficult Romanian context by the end of the Interwar period, and respectively, within the (possibly) even more difficult postwar context (Ion Goian), but also the alluring dissertation about the political portrait in Romanian history (Nicolae Frigioiu). And this is only if we were to stop at the first texts in the section.

As for the part concerning the international relations, this is, as well, substantially represented, rich both in texts signed by cocreated authors and by young researchers. The themes are numerous and demonstrate a great variability, in a manner similar to the domain itself. Thus, to chose on which of the texts in the series to stop, would be the equivalent of choosing among the global problems analyzed in these texts. As a consequence we reiterate the recommendation of browsing the entire series of writings, as we are hoping that it is understood we recommended for each of the three parts of the volume.

The international relations section offers a more pragmatic dimension to the book, as the usefulness of the analyses from this chapter, so "fashionable" nowadays (sometimes we feel that it is also "unfortunate" that the field is so "fashionable") is obvious, at least from the subjects approached.

Naturally, we could have stopped significantly more to emphasize the scientific contributions of this volume, a relatively arduous exercise, as they are as substantial, as they are numerous. Eventually, this is the meaning of this type of volume, where the authors of the analyses place themselves somehow to a second level, after the one about whom or for whom they wrote. And let us not forget that, doubtless, a review of a homage book is, and it should be, ultimately also a tribute act. Alone, the name of the „subject” of this volume lays guarantee for its scientific posture. As an elegant touch of modesty, the book does not open with an article in which the celebrated recalls his celebrated career until the anniversary moment. The book ends, though, with an anniversary interview, taken to Professor Negoe by the well-known publicist Marius Tuch, interview which has its own story. We find out that it is the anniversary interview taken at the 70th celebration of the Professor, which he did not find appropriate to continue although he promised at the time. Thus it was republished at this new celebration, sparkling and oscillating between living history and personal history, as a pleasant and refreshing reading for the reader who has the scientific curiosity to browse the entire volume in order to reach the confessions of the celebrated personality. And why should we resent the fact that the interview was not altered in comparison to the one five years ago? Eventually, it indicates a constant attitude and a special act of assuming the personal history of a researcher who has investigated for 50 years our national history. After such a career one is entitled to one’s own history.

Dorie Cristea
Translation into English by Henrieta Anașoara Șerbău

Dan Dungaciu

Concerning the “national idea”, it may seem that everything was already said, not only in the West, but also in Romania, where a certain national sensitivity aroused by unfortunate geopolitical events rendered the topic of nation and nationalism central in the debates in the social and humanistic sciences. And yet, it is not the case. After 1989 we have astonishingly discovered that the West, at least on one dimension, has “forgotten” about the national idea or, to a certain extent, it has approached it in a loose, relative manner. “Belated” in a project presented at the time as a semi obsolete (the national project), Romanians found themselves “speaking” a different language than before. New ideas manifested presenting the nation as an “invention”, and not only the modern elites (obsoleto, of course, due to the influence of postmodernism, always thirsty of novelties, again and again) are to be held responsible for that invention, as if meanwhile the masses have nothing in common with this project of social engineering. Nevertheless, a whole working place of historiography was opened to unveil the past proof of the rusty national mythology, which serves only the purpose of collective delusion. History set at its place, national mythology definitively conquered, the national idea failed at the rational exam of the cosmopolitan world, which are the nervous centers of the new ideated architecture. The “New Europe” did not care to know about the old one, anymore.

Dan Dungaciu worked over since the first half of the 90s, diligently, against this deceiving current. His approach was not one in the entrenchments, for the “war” with the theoretical adversaries was not one led with brutal weapons. On the contrary, the opposed points of view was gathered with calm for dialogue and the result did not delay to appear. Whoever reads now this book presented to the public in this review has the feeling of a full encompassing of the subject, and encounters a calm consciousness – we do not know within present day Romanian sociology a more familiar author with the theories of nation and nationalism and this is a recommendation already. The book is a dynamic and dense outlook of these theories on both dimensions of the phenomenon, as the analysis of the book considers both the skeptics of the national idea and the pioneers or those who
admit the natural logic of the national existence, historically and ontologically determined. Indeed, there are as many competitors on this imaginary scene as that Dan Dungaciu undertakes all the possible efforts in order to present as many as possible. The effort of imagination, creation, even the intensity and novelty of the concepts invented to elucidate the national phenomenon at this late moment of history is fascinating. The excursus within these theories becomes fascinating in itself.

The book has a balanced structure and consists of three parts. The first section deals with the relationship between modernity and nation. Before this ample chapter, there is a relatively brief introduction, prologomena to the theory of nation and nationalism familiarizing us with the great debates of the field.

The national idea is followed as well theoretically, as historically. The inborn quality is happily combined with the historiographer’s analysis – here the author proves real qualities as historical narrator, naturally situating the analysis preponderantly within the Romanian context, starting with Transylvania (where was the national idea casedhardened, if not in Transylvania, where the national idea was most denied and thus, casehardened?), but also in Bucovina, Bessarabia, and, in fact, all over the Romanian space. As the author states, the national doctrine is “beyond the political area”, as an existential project! We could say that within Romanian culture we sensed the nationalist echoes of the cultural organic nationalism of the German spirituality as described by Fliege, similar, but not necessarily borrowed!

Then, we find within the harmonious architecture of the book, a dense chapter approaching the theme: “The Nation and the challenges of (post)modernity”. Modernity meant, with all the known predicaments, an epoch when the national idea survived most fortunately. Of course, the Pan Europe of C. Kalergi is a modern, interwar project, but its real implication is sensed only now, in the conventional (even banal?) postmodernism. The greatest chalenge of this epoch is something we can call “inventionism”, next to deconstructivism, already included in the debates of political philosophy. The label of Marxism applied to the two is becoming and it does not diminish their “authority”. In fact, within a coherent deconstructivism, the negative labels could be signs of distinction and Marxism may appear “glorious”, with all its avatars, infinitely numerous. The idea of avatars, namely of the variations on the theme, of national negation, appears extremely fortunate, and the author does not save the means to prove, based on the strongest arguments (newer or less new theories, historical analyses, or up-to-date geopolitical realities) that this point of view is weak.

The last section of the book is, due to its content, the most provocative: “Europe, the nation and postmodernism” is a geopolitical realist depiction of the limits of postmodernity, with its counter or a-national “inventions”. The essential element in target is the European construction. In fact, the negation of the national idea takes place also from the present day process of European construction, one where, within the Brussels’ European space dwells a bureaucratic and loosely sheltered elite. The partial European identities are so strong that to deconstruct them to invent a new identity means to a certain extent to commit suicide, while hoping for rebirth. It seems impossible, at least the second part of the operation does. Dan Dungaciu asks legitimately: “What does ‘European identity’ mean?” Who can define nowadays this phrase outside the current meanings of the term and especially, beyond the national referential in convergence with which it functioned for almost 200 years? (p. 287) This is a rhetorical question, obviously.

This book represents a genuine tour de force within the theories concerning the nation and nationalism. Outside the gratuitous exaggerations, the book clarifies objectively a difficult dispute, empowering the reader exposed to the topic. The place of the nation within the global economy is opened, for history is not going to end, as Fr. Fulvia believed, but starts right there where our forerunners left it. The problem is to identify them...

Cristi Pantelimon
Translation into English by Henrieta Anizoara Serban
Valentin Naumescu

Author of many studies of political science and international relations, Valentin Naumescu has reunited in his most recent published book, Themes of International Politics. Conflicts, Tensions, Debates, with a preface by Professor Dan Dungaciu, two studies and many more analyses and commentaries concerning events from world politics during the period February 2012-January 2014, posted also on two electronic platforms of communication. The work is not a mere gathering of disparate analyses concerning various events that took place on the international scene, but on the contrary, it is a chronicle of the international politics during the last two years, from the perspective of a profound analyst of international politics and foreign politics of Romania.

The two studies at the beginning of the book, “From ‘Too Much’ to ‘Too Little’? The ‘Exceptionality’ Dilemmas of the United States Foreign Politics” and “Democracy and Security in the ‘Post-American Era’” present the central subject of the volume, through the presentation and critique brought to the contemporary debates, concerning the place and the role that the USA have in the future configuration of the nature of the international system. “The Era of Unipolarity is Revoluted” (p. 17), sustains Valentin Naumescu, and more recently “the interpretation of the ‘mission’ of the United States in the world knew a different turn, whose global consequences are just now profiling under our very eyes, as they are too diffuse and fledging to be evaluated.” (p. 18).

“All which are going to be the powers that will dominate in the future in the international politics?” is a question which constantly preoccupies the specialists in international relations. The domain is anyhow one from which is solicited – much more than from any other domain – an increased degree of predictability, which is far from being met, yet. Many analysts of the world political scene seem to have not learned anything from the failure concerning the foreseeing of the fall of the communist system, hazardously sustaining which will be the future vectors of power in the international system. Meanwhile, the scenarios are multiple: from the replacement of the USA’s hegemony with China’s, to the creation of a multipolar system, the number and the names of the future great powers vary from one author to the other.

Within this “trap” of predictability Valentin Naumescu does not fall, but on the contrary, he warns on the appearances of certain events and phenomena, avoiding though the facile and superficial explanations and searching for the more profound ones, even when they are in a flagrant contradiction with the predominant ones at a certain moment in time. (See, for instance, the article “A Minor Theme? Mali”).

“The swan song” of the American power, so frequently invoked lately, can prove to be just an illusion for a long time since now on, despite the apparent withdrawal of the USA from the international politics, after 2009. The author, beyond all the criticism that could be addressed to the United States, remains an adept of the model of the Western democracy, based on the fundamental human rights and liberties. However, fundamentally, as Dan Dungaciu affirms, it “is the book of a pro-Euro Atlantic, without ‘change’, who pleads for this model, explicitly or implicitly, on each page, and even then – or especially then! – regretting its disfunctionalities and the fact that America and Europe could lose the global competition.” (p. 10)

All the analyses composing the volume are significant for this general discussion. During the two years while the Cluj scholar wrote his analyses, the international agenda was dominated by conflicts, more or less open, all over the globe. From Asia to Brazil, and from the Middle East to Europe, either the internal tensions, or the interstate ones have raised numerous question marks concerning world peace. Whenever were local events (see Mali or North Korea) or when regional phenomena unfolded (in the Middle East or in Central Asia), all had an influence on the international system, within its assembly, addressed with clarity by the author. The European Union and its numerous crises (financial, economic, social, etc.) occupy an exponential generous space of investigation, according with Romanian interests and with the influence of the EU at the world level. As well, the analyses dedicated to Romanian foreign policy and to “Bessarabia question” complete a volume meant to be useful to all those who want to understand the complex phenomena of the international politics, unfolding at a rapid pace under our very eyes.

Cristina Voatu
Darius Cristea


The volume Prognostic și prejudiciu [Prognosis and Prejudice] approaches the topic of the deficit of methodology in the field of international relations and of its most important sub-domain, security studies. The need for a debate on the methodological crisis with which the field of international relations is confronted, as the author shows, does not represent a recent discovery, but it is justified by the fact that the majority of the Western specialists do not differentiate between the probable and the possible aspects within international relations, and in Romania the importance of the methodology in this field is not fully understood in its usefulness within the scientific approach in the formulations of doctrines, policies and prognoses.

The fundamental idea of the book is “to situate the idea of prognosis within a methodological circuit for the production of scientific knowledge” (p. 27). In his approach, the author starts from the premise that in international relations and security studies it is difficult to advance prognoses not because “the data, conclusions or prognoses in international relations are usually false”, but only because often these “are unverifiable or pre-interpretable”, placing the accent on the clarification of the role of prognosis in the methodological circuit of security studies. The technical and methodological discussion on the balance between prognosis and prejudice in international relations and security studies proposed by D. Cristea, attempts to clarify whether the methodological deficit (especially in the relation to data) is a specific of the discipline or a result of a deficient paradigmatic development.

The book is structured in three parts, each divided in several chapters. The first part, entitled The explanation in the theory of international relations: the inter-paradigmatic debate and the approximation of reality opens with an introduction where the author establishes the position of the international relations, and that of the derived disciplines, as parts of the system of social sciences and assesses the existence of the deficit of methodology in the studies of international relations. The question raised by the author is if the theory of international relations owns the necessary instruments for the production of policies with empiric foundation (theoretical structures or paradigms) and realistic prognoses concerning the evolution tendencies of the international system or the policies are rather ideological products, while prognoses are more prophesies founded on stereotypes, since “the field of international relations is extremely permeable to the pressure of common knowledge”. International relations as discipline “produces with difficulty creditable scientific knowledge accordingly to the methodological canons”.

The following chapter describes the current landscape of the international relations influenced by the competition between realism and liberalism and the apparition of the “conceptual reshuffling” (radicalism). The author sustains that the theory of international relations develops in parallel with their practice, while under the aspect of the scope of the object of study and approaches, the field is a border one, which makes that the methodological area (the methods and techniques) to be dependent on the concurrent sub domains and correlated with those in use for the social sciences, in general. A distinct chapter of the first part is dedicated to the concept of security and to security studies, a discipline which tends to reform the study of the matters specific to international relations. The chapter treats those aspects and schools of international relations which are relevant for the posterior development of the security studies, emphasizing the fundamental paradigmatic change brought about by the security studies in this domain, inclusively in what concerns the methodological aspects. In the attempt to capture a methodological trajectory, the author concentrates to the concept of security, a comprehensive interpretation including also the military aspects, with a special attention for the School from the Copenhagen which has the merit to situate the security studies within the international and historical context from the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s and to approach sociologically the international relations, operationalizing the concept of security, thus succeeding to describe it as an “autonomous domain.” In this view, the author notices that “security studies are equivalent to a triumph of the pragmatic approach over the ideological one” and identifies the source of a methodological deficiency in
security studies mainly in the "difficulties registered in defining universal procedures in the gathering and analysis of the scientific data" (p. 23).

In the second part, entitled Objective vs. subjective: on the common knowledge and scientific knowledge in international relations and security studies, the sociologist makes an application on the matter objective vs. subjective in international relations. The first chapter of this part is dedicated as well to redefining the concept of security and to the sector reconsideration of security, as well as of the matters related to the conscious approach of researchers of the subjective aspects of security. Besides, the chapter includes an empirical and practical case study on the security of the Balkans in the 90s, which concentrates "on the manner in which the real and the imaginary combined at the time to bring back the status of European geopolitical risk for the Balkans (p. 68)."

As following, the author investigates another discipline within the international relations, geopolitics, which, after a long period of contestations, has gradually reappeared in the public and academic space after September 11, 2001, and it began to assume a function within the new global and strategic context. The chapter consecrated to geopolitics refers as well to its methodological positioning against international relations, as to the unverifiable provisions it emulates.

The last part of the book, Prognosis and prejudice: the methodological dilemmas of the international relations, reflects the central idea of the volume — the acknowledgement of the abundance of the theoretical paradigms in the field and of the deficit of methodology in the research of international relations and security studies—, and shows the real chances to accomplish "prognoses freed of prejudice." According to the sociologist D. Cristea, prognosis is "a prophecy with scientific bases" (p. 138) which goes hand in hand with the idea of politics, policy or with the idea of planning, and international relations is "the discipline where nothing is probable, but everything is possible (p. 142)." After showing that, at present, in the theory of international relations there is a confrontation of two concurrent approaches (the society of risk vs. the culture of security) which have replaced realism and liberalism, the author plucks, from a methodological standpoint, for a sociology of international relations called to accomplish a synthesis between a "more correct identification of the risks and the study of the norms and values which can ensure the management of risk." (p. 143).

Finally, the author suggests that the new methodological requirements for the international studies can be found in the methodology of sociological research, offering in this respect, three types of projects originated in the methodology of sociology (in the form of peace studies) proposed by the sociologist Johan Galtung: "the empirical peace studies," the critical studies" and the "peace studies of constructivist paradigm." (p. 145)

This research is relevant for the theoretical study and especially for the practice of international relations in Romania and elsewhere, significant for the specialists, for the Master students and PhD students in international relations and security studies, but also for the decision makers in the political, strategic and military fields.

Sandra Cincă

Viorella Manolache


In Signs and Designs of the Virtual(izing) E@ST, Viorella Manolache proposes a very interesting journey, to a fascinating place, using several stimulating guides.

Estica Platform (www.estica.eu) is used as a compass and the East/West coordinates form a reference for analyzing the changes taking place in Romania and the move towards a new society model, characterized by consumption and economic and cultural relations, and, where Western logic seems to prevail. People, events and political and social processes are analyzed in the blog, not to mention imaginaries and mental shortcuts which also result very important because of their ability to mobilize. From the East, it appears that the West has over-idealized itself. The meeting of two
spheres does not occur in an environment of equality or exchange. It appears that on the way the East has devalued its own identity. Fragmentation can be seen in the idiosyncratic vocabulary used in the blog: "archipelago", "discontinuous form".

Various questions get all mixed up in the process: What does Europe mean? What sense is there in talking about borders? What is left of citizenship or the neighborhood? What is democracy made up of? Viorel M. Manoleache revises these ideas in a post modern critical way in a globalised world.

We do not know if we will all end up helpless under a single homogenizing ruler ship; we do not know what the goal is. Today more than ever, the definition of reality also covers what is virtual and what is simulated. We know that half way along the line we can build defenses with the thoughts of the classical authors, and if we look to the future, proper use of new technology can give us reasons for hope (a channel for expressing plural thinking) and above all for participating.

Virtual words and written words. Political speeches and psychoanalysis. Historical narrations and geographical narrations. The space built on the hills of our thoughts and our way of sharing conceptual maps.

In Signs and Designs of the Virtualizing East, references to discourse analysis become epic adventures. The metaphors used by the author take us to an unexplored world which currently is being built (e.g. virtual maps, virtual logos, from geocritics to GIS maps). Modernity is "liquid" and "fluid" and that leads us to uncertainty and shipwreck in the same way it also offers us safe sailing to a safe haven.

The reader can sense the need to give ideas and values to the challenges we have to face in a world which is changing so rapidly. Therefore in both the East and the West, and the North and the South, there is also need for utopias; new ways of communication where we see ourselves as heritage, speech and possibilities.

But it is not just a matter of naming something, of setting its boundaries or giving it a definition. The concept of a platform (Estica Platform) refers us to a common place of arrival and at the same time to a place of departure.

The splendor of the book lies in travelling through words, in our history and culture so that we can become agents of change and development.

Marta Gil Lacruz

Lucian Boia

Martin Luther once said: "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple trees." In my view, this thought expresses the resilient power of values and hope, as well as the idea that no good deed could get wasted. It also illuminates the bold and generous perspective of Lucian Boia's book.

The book entitled Sfârșitul Occidentului? Spre hunea de mâine [The End of the West? Toward Tomorrow's World], by Lucian Boia, captures the substance of the current transformations taking place in Europe, against the various scenarios for the future: the miracle of the West is replaced by a fascinating and troublesome moment of confusion, which might just as well prove to be fruitful.

The first chapter, A World Is Ending, is describing the "acceleration of history" and the process of "equalization" that brings about a more important impact of the "others" upon tomorrow's world. Considering these phenomena, there is no accident that the title includes a question mark. What does the future hold in store for us? Nobody knows, and there are no guarantees, but the end of the West heralded by some authors may be just the sum of the intriguing hallmarks for a new beginning.

The miracle of the West held the promise of a democratic world, promoting human rights and prosperity. The West embraced the technological civilization, and the scientific research maintaining the national, cultural and democratic ideals and an important trend toward secularization. This was the fuel for the Western progress, with freedom and equality as privileged targets. At the same
time, the West promoted also colonialism and overseas slavery along the development of its
civilizing mission, utopias and millenarianism, communism, Nazism, Stalinism (and genocide),
and fascism. The West brought also the two World Wars. Nevertheless, for many centuries, the
supremacy of the West seemed something taken for granted, but it may have been just a powerful
illusion brought about by a highly hierarchical world, which appears nowadays already less
dependent on the West. “The West pays the price of ‘effluvence’: the prosperous societies have less
childen, culture overshakes ‘nature’, and the price of democratization, a process which, initially
reserved for the masculine segment of society, included eventually the feminine population, too;
the woman exited her traditional role of ‘domestic being’, ‘producing’ children” (p. 34). For the
author the West is marked by a paradox: the emancipation of the human condition affected the
substance of the Western societies and the equilibrium brought by immigration triggers other
perceived or unperceived imbalances.

China, the USA, India, Russia are still the potential supreme powers, while Europe struggles
to remain European (united, civilized and prosperous) and to remember its identity in front of the
unprecedented process of ethnic mixing. “Up to now, the percent of the ‘others’, otherwise, partially
assimilated, in various degrees, did not overpass the threshold beyond which the persistency of the
Western pattern becomes questionable. Between what is best and what is worst, the portrait of future
allows all possibilities. The things may calm down: the immigration to be kept, approximately,
under control, the integration to progress (inclusively with the secularization of the Muslim
communities, so far, the most resistant to the Western values) and the fertility indices, now higher
for the newer Westerners than for the autochtonous Western population to decrease gradually
toward the general average.” (p. 84-85).

The author identifies three prognoses for the foreseeable future: first, the disappearance of the
Euro and the European Union; second, the consolidation of the European Union; third, the
compromise prognosis, European Union will not function homogeneously, but under different
registers and gears. The European Union faces the economic and financial threats, as well as the
demographic, ethnic and cultural challenges. The entire world faces a symptom of world ending.
In this respect the global warming which is for some an objective fact, while for others, including
scientists is just a more or less fashionable alignment to the archetypal plot of the end of the world.
Ecology is potentially the next totalitarian ideology: the ecological imperatives set the industrial
profiles of the countries, their production and consumption profiles, nationally and individually.
The author quotes Claude Allègre, geophysicist and former French minister of education and
research who noticed that a “world bureaucratic network is organized around the climate (...) who
has behind it businessmen and bankers.” (p. 103) The North is named the beneficiary of the global
warming and the target of the population, business and wealth exodus. But will global warming
prove to be indeed a dramatic reality as predicted?

The book illustrates on the one had the uncertainty of the future, and, on the other, the fact
that all options are in place. The main idea of the book is that everything may be reinvented. “The
human being is the most adaptable being; so, no worries, she will adapt perfectly to any of the
possible histories, with no reason to regret whatever was before.” (p. 122)

Henrieta Anişoara Serban