

BOOK REVIEW

Daniel BIRO (coord.). 2013. *Relațiile internaționale contemporane: teme centrale în politica mondială* (Contemporary International Relations: Core Themes in World Politics). Iași: Polirom, 336 p.

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In the September 2013 edition of the European Journal of International Relations¹, the end of the theory of international relations is discussed and subject to debate; on the other hand, the Romanian academic world is at the end of a process of a powerful establishment of this domain. This mature phase is highlighted by influential Romanian researchers and professors of Political Science and International Relations in the volume *Relațiile internaționale contemporane: teme centrale în politica mondială* (Contemporary International Relations: Core Themes in World Politics), coordinated by Daniel Biro.

Continuing the endeavour started in the handbook of international relations coordinated by Andrei Miroiu and Radu-Sebastian Ungureanu (2008), the afore-mentioned volume is shaping the theoretical constructions that were defined in 2008, through the broadening of the discussion on the core concepts and issues “which have a clear impact on the existence of the human communities from the beginning of the XXI century” (Miroiu 2013, p. 11). Whereas the 2008 handbook of Andrei Miroiu and Radu Sebastian Ungureanu is focusing on discussing the main theories crystallizing the domain of the International Relations, *Relațiile internaționale contemporane: teme centrale în politica mondială*, coordinated by Daniel Biro augments this approach by opening plenty paths of research and analysis.

¹ The articles can be found at: <http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/current>.

The volume coordinated by Daniel Biro perpetuates an ordering and conveying effort conducted within the Romanian academic sphere by focusing on different concepts and processes that have a crucial influence on the present international relations. Therefore, the authors of the volume are bridging an extensive elaboration of the main themes and concepts of international relations with the present dynamics of international politics.

There are not too many similar books written on the structure proposed by the authors in *Relațiile internaționale contemporane: teme centrale în politica mondială*. One known book that elaborates on the issues of the international relations is the volume *Issues in International Relations*, edited by Trevor Salmon and Mark Imber. In this volume Salmon and Imber assess that International Relations are characterized by “conflicting views and students need to comprehend the origins of such conflicting views and also gain a better understanding about them” (Salmon 2008, pp. 5,10). The issues as well as the concepts tackled in the volume edited by Salmon and Imber cover issues such as the nation and the state, power, terrorism, the environment, etc.

Regarding the volume coordinated by Daniel Biro, what is truly remarkable is that every researcher that is contributing for the volume deals with a theme or an issue on which he/she has a prior expertise developed throughout many years. This valuable characteristic of the volume is translated in the coherence and clarity that every chapter of the volume encompasses.

Taking into consideration the elements emphasized above it is worthwhile to concede that the main goal of the volume – “to offer a reasonably broader perspective on the dynamics of the political processes within the international system” (Biro 2013, p. 14) – is achieved. The topics, concepts, and issues that are discussed in the volume are analysed in depth with clarity and in an easily graspable manner.

The volume alternates traditional concepts and issues with new ones that are more challenging for the international relations. Centuries old concepts as diplomacy are prominent, as well as new concepts and issues as climate change, gender issues and international development. Of course, there could have been included many other concepts to be dissected and analysed in the volume as interventions, cyber-threats or Eurocentrism in International Relations, however the absence of these issues does not affect the wideness of the volume. Considering that the central issue of the volume is international relations, a holistic perspective is correspondingly unattainable.

The linkage between the issues and topics developed in the volume *Relațiile internaționale contemporane: teme centrale în politica mondială* whether traditional or ground-breaking is their present relevance. Considering just a few present events from the international scene as the Iranian nuclear dilemma, the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, state collapses in Africa (e.g. Mali, Central African Republic) or the rise of China, it is easily observable the relevance of the volume in the context of present international relations. Therefore, we can say that this volume is conceived as a Bergsonian tool that helps for a better understanding of international relations, and also opens new paths for researching and innovation.

The relevance of the volume is also augmented by a strong theoretical component that can be found throughout the chapters. For example, power transition is discussed by taking into consideration the foremost contributors to this topic (e.g. Organski, Gilpin and Modelski). Throughout the chapter concerning the role of identities in international relations are mentioned the ideas and the theoretical endeavours of Mary Kaldor and Hedley Bull. The same is applicable to the issue of international development or proliferation where the authors are encompassing the theoretical plurality.

Having said this, the volume *Relațiile internaționale contemporane: teme centrale în politica mondială* has an extensive utility. First, it is a tool for understanding the present processes within the international scene. It helps to trace a clear line between what is opinion and what is an informed argument. Secondly, the volume underlines different theoretical approaches in a coherent and accessible way, in this way easing the start for academic researchers on different issues that they would like to analyse and gain expertise.

As a final remark, I would recommend this volume to BA and MA students from Political Science and especially International Relations. It needs some pre-knowledge on the subject of International Relations, though it is not imperative.

LIST OF REFERENCES:

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- Miroiu, Andrei and Radu Sebastian Ungureanu (coords.). 2008. *Manual de Relații Internaționale*, Iași: Polirom.
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- Salmon, Trevor. 2008. Introduction. In Salmon, Trevor and Mark Imber (eds.), *Issues in International Relations*, London: Routledge, pp. 1-10.