

BOOK REVIEW

Dorin Dolghi and Octavian Țăcu (editors). 2014. *The Security Dimension of European Frontier vs the Legitimacy of Political Priorities of EU and EU Member States*. Eurolimes. *Journal of the Institute for Euroregional Studies "Jean Monnet" European Centre for Excellence, University of Oradea, University of Debrecen*, volume 18, autumn, Oradea University Press, 235p, ISSN 2247/8450.

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The Journal opens with an introductory study written by Dorin Dolghi which discusses the general framework of the volume focusing on the impact that security issues, national preferences and legitimacy mechanism have in shaping contemporary borders. The essay starts from the in-built connection between borders and security and the fact that the territorial dimension remains essential for contemporary international relations. The introductory note also stresses the symbolic meaning of EU and US sanctions on Russian entities, which are in this way restricted from freely moving and conducting business in Europe as a direct consequence of Russia aggression in Crimea. This points to an ongoing re-evaluation of borders that directly impacts European security and beyond.

The first section is concentrated on "EU and its Eastern Neighbourhood" and it comprises three academic contributions that reflect on the latest development of the Eastern Partnership from different perspectives. Dorin Dolghi analyzes the evolution of EU-Russia relations since the Ukrainian conflict erupted by looking at how interests and preferences shifting after the Vilnius Summit from convergence to divergence. Vasile Rotaru contributes to this very challenging topic with an analysis of the same Vilnius Summit in November 2013 and its impact on the "common neighbourhood", a concept that refers to the six former Soviet republics residing between the EU and the Russian Federation. The author uses multiple media resources for his

analysis and his conclusions focus mostly on the Russian narrative regarding the Eastern Partnership and its constructed “failure” after Vilnius. The third contribution of this section focuses on the Republic of Moldova, the other problematic country affected by the conflict in Ukraine. This perspective engages with the concept of societal security and the main obstacles that have obstructed the Moldovan post-Soviet transition. EU does not have one but several types of “neighbourhoods” and all are marked by a so-called “unfinished business” in terms of democratization, minority protection and/or respect for the rule of law. The article explains that this has been also caused by the lack of clear political will on the EU member states’ side. As emphasised in the book, the EU still has a long road ahead until it is ready to efficiently face the new challenges posed by a transformed geostrategic context.

The second section is focused on “Security securitization and de-bordering of the European Union” and it includes four contributions. The article of Dacian Duna and Raul-Ciprian Dăncuță undertakes a military analysis of the challenges of the Eastern borders of the EU by critically reviewing the national defence preferences of EU member states. The authors underline the idea that EU is unprepared to face a Russian offensive both in a political and military sense and showcases the failed debate for a unified EU army. The study of Maria Găvănesci is complementary in this perspective, as it focuses on the influence of media on cross border cooperation in situations of ethnic conflict, with a case study of Russian-Estonian border. The third contribution comes from Chernivtsi University, from Ukraine and tackled the social evolution of Romanian speakers in Northern Bukovina. Liubov Melniciuk concludes in his article that the rights of the Romanian speaking minority in this region are endangered and they need more attention from Ukraine, Romania and EU in the present geopolitical context. The fourth article in this section is a group research edited by Ioan Bogdan, Maria Claudia Mera and Florin Ioan Oroian and deals with the broad phenomenon of migration in the European Union seen through the perspective of politicization and securitization through conditionality. As the study concludes, seen through constructivist lenses, the immigration problem represents for the EU a continuing source of debate, worries and hopes as EU member states continue to fail to agree upon a common policy to tackle the security challenges that arrive from it, both for EU citizens and for the migrants.

The third section brought together two different regions from the EU neighbourhood, the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus offering a transnational view of the interactions between identity, interests and preferences. The three contributions focus on the case of the UN mission in Kosovo as a form of external interventionism (Edina Lilla Meszaros), a comparison between the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in the EU enlargement framework and the last security evolutions (Stanislas Doucot-Rubigny) and a comparative analysis of Moldova and Georgia in the same problematic relations with the EU (Natalia Prună and Victoria Bevziuc). This section brings in very consistent analytic data in order to stress the similar and different challenges that EU is confronted with in its two troubled vicinities – the Western Balkans with their unfinished democratization processes and the Southern Caucasus with their tense relations with Russia and their frozen conflicts and contested borders that undermine their democratic transitions.

The fourth section of the issue is focused on the hottest topic on the international agenda, the Ukrainian crisis, with an extensive analysis of Ioan Horga and Ana Maria Costea. The analysis shows that EU member states are locked in a dependence relation with Russia and that the violent conflict scenarios are improbable in this context, no matter how much the situation escalated in Donbass. The article also maps the main donors that were involved in financial aid in the Ukrainian conflict and it associates their contribution with their security preferences regarding Russia. Assuming a rationalist perspective, the study underlines the dangers of Russia's isolation on the international arena as a response to its military threats. The Ukrainian state is heavily weakened by this in-between situation and the future evolution of an isolated Russia is unpredictable.

The overall contribution of the studies collected in this issue of *Eurolimes* is impressive, with analytic contribution from Ukraine, Moldova and France, but also from some of the most important university centres in Romania – Oradea, Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. The main concept in focus in this volume is the political dimension of borders and their power to unite and to split territories and mindsets. The political exploration of borders is, in this sense, of great interest in the present context of the conflict in Ukraine. Most of the studies point to the remaining ambiguities in EU's position in this conflict and the impossibility of providing new incentives to the Eastern Partnership countries. A dominating explanation that is present in most of the articles is

the rationalist view of EU member states preferences influencing the EU's prioritization of measures to be taken against Russia. This perspective is nevertheless more nuanced, with a constructivist and sociological approach of the border dispute in EU's Eastern vicinity. Such a perspective, as assumed by several articles, points to the importance of intentions and socially constructed expectations that states have from EU (both member states and aspiring member states). The political game of building a border both from inside and outside, confronting it with a series of internal and external forms of contestation is one of the main conclusions that emerge from this volume. Thus, it reminds us that behind the revived Cold War geopolitics at stake in Ukraine for the moment, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was intended to become a tool for shaping a stable environment for the European integration processes, guaranteeing security and stability, supporting democracy and the rule of law. In this way, the ENP was meant to establish a ring of friends on the European Union's borders. Moreover, by using the ENP, the EU has struggled ever since 2004 to preserve the attractiveness of the European model for neighbouring states by using various mechanisms of cooperation, without offering them a full-fledged membership perspective and the cause for its partial "failure" does not solely reside in the contrasting interests of EU member-states.