

BOOK REVIEW

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Romanian Journal of European Affairs is a peer-reviewed research publication of the European Institute of Romania from Bucharest, Romania. The journal is published since 2001 on a quarterly basis and it is the first Romanian publication with strong focus on the European integration debates and the role of Romania within the European Union. The journal is dispatched in a printed version and a free of charge online version. Since the year of its debut the journal has constantly improved its international visibility and recognition, being indexed in numerous databases, including Proquest, Ebsco, SCOPUS, Index Copernicus and many others. The journal had already established its reputation for bringing and bridging together authors from different backgrounds (political practitioners, academic, economic, civil society, etc.), sharing a common research interest on European issues.

The number of September 2015 which is in our focus clearly confirms two long established patterns: 1) the journal is clearly encouraging inter-disciplinarity by accepting the work of scholars coming from different backgrounds such as political science, international relations, economics, or conflict and security studies; 2) the research is not solely based on a single methodological paradigm: the scholars have different epistemological stances, from positivism or post-positivism to hybrid approaches. Moreover, the journal is encouraging young promising researchers from Romania and abroad to publish their articles in its pages, alongside more experienced scholars – a clearly positive feature of the publication released by the European Institute of

Romania. The number is presented in a simple yet elegant graphics. It comprises four articles in English, one in French and two book reviews.

2. RETHINKING THE EUROPEAN UNION: FROM UNITY IN DIVERSITY TO DIVERSITY

The author of this article is Professor Florin Bonciu, PhD, Vice-president for Research at the Romanian-American University in Bucharest and Senior Researcher at the Institute for World Economy in Bucharest. Professor Bonciu is investigating the recent evolution of the European Union - marked by economic crises - pleading for a 'fresh restart' of a Union „adapted to the new realities, efficient and competitive in an ever more integrated global economy” (p. 6).

Taking into account the long term perspective, the author has convincing arguments that the EU has been in a declining position not after the 2008 crisis but much earlier before. It is a process that is unfolding since 1980, according to the empirical evidence compiled from Business Monitor Research and the IMF. Professor Bonciu notices that „the share of European Union in world GDP in PPP expression has declined constantly from about 29.775 % in 1980 to about 16.939 % in 2014” (p. 6). Correctly interpreting the data, the author stresses that the European Union was amongst the most affected of the world's entities in terms of GDP per capita. It is also true that the relative decline of the EU in terms of contribution to the global GDP was expected since the population of the world has increased exponentially since 1980 and new global competitors emerged. The global stage of the 1980s and the one of the 2000s are fundamentally different.

The passionate argument of professor Bonciu for fundamental not incremental change is transparent throughout the entire article. The author is using the European documents to illustrate it (such as *Global Europe 2050 Report* or the more recent *Global Trends to 2030...*). It is not only about containing a „catastrophic decline” (p. 12). It is also about finding a common purpose, a common identity for the citizens of the EU, or to rebuild trust. The EU excels when it is about motivational papering. It is a perfect source of international law and research data.

Nevertheless, the failure to address the challenges of the global crisis is found by the author to be at the core of the European construction: the

overimposition of the „unity in diversity“. Instead, professor Bonciu is proposing that the EU should embrace „diversity in unity“ as its core principle of organization. He actually proposes the abandonment of the pressures to unite from above (federalism) in favor of a functional approach (p. 18). One could argue that embracing „diversity in unity“ could mean a Europe with more speeds – a recurrent idea of the Great Powers of the EU, rejected by the smaller states. It is unclear how this would provide the means to stop the further fragmentation of the European Union.

3. LA CONSTRUCTION NATIONALE DU CONCEPT EUROPÉEN DANS LA VIE POLITIQUE ET CULTURELLE DE LA ROUMANIE DE L'ENTRE-DEUX-GUERRES - LA PREMIÈRE MOITIÉ DES ANNÉES 1920. LE GRAND DÉBAT. PRÉMISSSES INTRODUCTIVES

The article written in French by Mihai Sebe, a Postdoctoral fellow from the Institute for Global Economy, is an interesting insight into the past. The author is presenting the debates between the Romanian interwar elites concerning their European ideas with a clear focus on the 1920s.

The work begins with an understanding of the European and international context, marked by the ideas of Woodrow Wilson, the emergence of the League of Nations, and the structural characteristics of the Romanian political system after the First World War and the Great Union – the birth of the Greater Romania. It was a time of great social and political upheaval, of great contradictions, marked by the emergence of new social forces having the purpose to obtain a political representation, claiming revolutionary change, such as the peasantry.

The second part of the article approaches the cultural life developed in the Greater Romania with a focus on the debate between Europeanists (Eugen Lovinescu, Ștefan Zeletin), that insisted upon the synchronization with the West, and the traditionalists, that idealised the past and rejected the „import“ of Western ideas (Nicolae Iorga). It was also a debate between journals. The Europeanists were grouped around the review *Ideea europeană* (*The European Idea*). The traditionalists, initially grouped around a short-lived prewar review, *Sămănătorul* (1901-1910, in English *The Sower*), had developed a political movement around the historian Nicolae Iorga – sămănătorismul (the sowerism). The period is marked by the emergence of European and regional

integration ideas, from authors like Oskar Iaszi to Mihail Manoilescu, fitting perfectly into the European debates on federalism, illustrated by the *Pan-Europe* movement for European unity of Richard N. Coudenhove-Kalergi (1923). Mihai Sebe insists upon the project of Manoilescu (1929) that envisaged a custom European Union that would reject the condemnation of the least developed Member States to stagnation or even underdevelopment. In modern terms, it would not a Europe with different speeds, but one more related to a successful model of federalism, the United States of America. Clearly, Mihai Sebe succeeds in understanding the atmosphere of intellectual emulation in the 1920s' Romania that it is not totally different from what was going then and now in Europe. For instance, the debate between the Euro-optimists and Euro-skeptics is still backgrounded by a sequence of crises, from the sovereign debt crisis to the more recent refugee crisis, in many regards similar to the events of the interwar period.

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MINIMUM INCOME GUARANTEED SCHEMES WITHIN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The author of this article is Simona Maria Stănescu, senior researcher at the Research Institute for Quality of Life from the Romanian Academy. The article is a convincing analysis of the state of the social policy in the European Union, using comparative methods to approach the safety nets for the most vulnerable people supported by the EU's Member States.

Using the MISSOC (the EU's Mutual Information System on Social Protection) databases of the Union, the author attempts to explain the diverse frequency of the regulations for minimum income in the EU Member States from the moment of their accession to the community bloc. The main finding after the complex screening of the safety nets offered by the Member States of the EU is that the "common goals of promoting a decent life standard and the free movement of workers especially but not exclusively for EU citizens within member states involve a continuous assessment of social security arrangements" (p. 49). The focus on guaranteed minimum incomes is particularly helpful. It partly explains the discrepancies in what concerns the quality of life for the citizens of the European Union between countries like Romania on the one side, and countries like France on the opposite side of the

spectrum. Even though the author does not emphasise the need to develop a European common social policy, her findings are particularly useful for the scholars and practitioners that would support such an endeavour.

5. THE CHANGING NATURE OF SECURITY IN EUROPE: THE TRIANGLE BETWEEN RUSSIA'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY, THE CSDP AND NATO

Katerina Veljanovska, Professor of Political Systems at the Faculty of Security, Criminology and Financial Control at MIT University, Skopje, proposes a thorough strategic analysis of the current security situation of Europe, involving a triangle formed by the European Union (with its CSDP), Russia (with its new assertive foreign policy) and NATO, which according to Professor Veljanovska, is „the first military alliance ever formed during times of peace” (p. 52). This last idea could be opposed by the very fact that in 1949 it was nothing less than a relative peace between the West and the USSR. One must recall that the emergence of NATO was related to the first Berlin crisis, a situation of quasi-confrontation between the US and the Soviets.

The author is switching easily from national to international security, using the interface of societal security, without mentioning it explicitly. The following statement is suggestive: „Inside the European Union, the national security and the national identity are more vulnerable and threatened because of immigrations, foreign ideas or products, which means that the control of the state is going over these issues” (p. 55). The use of national security and national identity in the context of the European Union would suggest that the author is a neoclassical realist since it forces us to think that the EU is just an international society formed by states responsible for their security and identity. However, the next section of the paper – regarding the development of the CSDP – sees the European Union as an ambitious world player, acting as a Great Power, competing for global influence with the United States. This would suggest the adherence of the author to the neorealist idea of the EU as a future superstate. While appraising the achievements of the CSDP, Professor Veljanovska criticizes its weaknesses: it is underfinanced; „the diversity and complexity of the decisions delivered on a short notice” (p. 58) (an idea shared with a defensive realist, Charles Glasner).

The third chapter of the paper written by Katerina Veljanovska is addressing, as the title clearly suggest, the „Challenges for New Security Policy of Europe: critical aspects“. The tone of the chapter is perhaps too imperative and normative to account for a realist narrative. There is an apparent contradiction present in the text: on the one hand, the author is pleading for the unity of European Union and the complementarity between the EU and NATO. It even suggests that the Russian „aggression“ on Ukraine should be responded by the others actors of the international scene. However, at the same time, the author is for a common strategy of the EU and NATO for improving their relations with Russia. The author is approaching the Minsk agreements and the prospects of the NATO summit of Warsaw (set for 2016) and the terrorist attacks from 7 January 2015 in Paris. In fact, the best part of the paper regards the international and regional security situation, the terrorist attacks and the Russian aggression against Ukraine and its defiant attitude toward NATO and the EU being seen as the most dangerous issues claiming priority on the European agenda. The author is masterly defining the complex nature of the Russian politics and the need to find a solution for returning Russia to a pro-Western attitude.

The article signed by Katerina Veljanovska reflects today's contradictions regarding the European security from the point of view of the „triangle“ European Union – NATO – Russia. It is difficult to find a middle ground between the pragmatic necessity to have good relations with Russia and the normative necessity to implement sanctions against it following the annexation of Crimea and the conflict fueled in the Donbas region. The solutions are rather precarious. The article is a serious call for European common action in the field of security without tackling the impediments to it stemming up from the intergovernmental nature of the European Union's CSDP and NATO.

6. UKRAINE IN THE WTO: EFFECTS AND PROSPECTS

This article represents the contribution of three authors: Elena Anatolyevna Bessonova is Doctor in Economics, Professor, and Head of the Department of Accounting, Analysis and Auditing, Southwest State University, Russia; Oksana Yurevna Mereschenko is a postgraduate fellow of Southwest State University; Nina Sergeyevna Gridchina is MA student with the same university. They are presenting a complex and systematic analysis of

the effects of Ukraine's accession to the WTO and its lessons for a possible WTO membership for Russia.

The research results are obtained after a careful consideration of expert opinions, the interpretation of facts and figures regarding the foreign direct investment in Ukraine, the evolution of various sectors in Ukrainian economy including their financial performance, the changes in consumer market. The tableau is extremely suggestive and well done. It identified the causes of Ukraine's failure in obtaining positive results after the accession to the WTO. The initial poor terms of the accession to the organisation (for Ukraine) are especially considered to be responsible for this negative trends (p. 81). Ukrainian economy lost considerably especially due to low competitiveness especially in high added value products (aircraft, automotive, agricultural and transport machinery), agriculture (livestock, wine) and the textile industry (p. 82). The positive aspects of the WTO membership are not forgotten: „the ability to conduct an equal dialogue with trade partners, the enhanced competitive advantages of the major manufacturers in the real economy, the introduction of new technology, improvement of product quality to enhance competitiveness” (p. 82). Based on Ukraine's experience, a post-Soviet country with many similarities with the Russia Federation, the authors have been able to underline a number of policy recommendations so as to minimise Russia's losses and maximise advantages which derive from the accession to WTO” (p. 82). The work of Elena Anatolyevna Bessonova, Oksana Yurevna Mereschenko, and Nina Sergeyevna Gridchina actually becomes an excellent model of how universities can offer quality expertise to governments.

7. BOOK REVIEWS

The final section of the journal presents two ample and well written book reviews. The first one is signed by Gheorghe Octavian Roșca, MA student in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the Department of International Relations and European Integration, National University of Political Science and Public Administration, Bucharest. The author is reviewing the *Europolity Journal, Continuity and Change in European Governance*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2015. The second one, signed by Bogdan Mureșan, one of the experts of the European Institute of Romania is reviewing the book published by Professor Paul Dobrescu, *Lumea cu două viteze. Puterile emergente și țările dezvoltate (Two-Speed World: Emerging Powers and Developed Countries)* (Romania: Comunicare.ro,

2013, 205 pages). The reviewers have thoroughly scrutinized the work done by the authors of the two volumes, correctly emphasising the best findings, an indirect invitation to reading and understanding interesting contributions to the study of politics and society.

8. CONCLUSION

A final remark on this interesting number of the *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* (Vol. 15, No. 3, September 2015): this successful academic journal of the European Institute of Romania is once again succeeding in finding the perfect balance between topics of global interest which are not alien to Romania's foreign policy objectives. The articles and reviews are positive attempts to understand the international context and explain the need of policymaking in such fields as the national and European security, social and economic policies, or the adaptation of the European Union to the new global challenges of the 21st century.