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EUROPEAN UNION BETWEEN THE CONSTRAINT OF BORDERS AND GLOBAL COMPETITION

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The sovereign debt crisis, which currently affects especially the European Union, challenges on the one side the actuality of hard borders and the reexamination of soft borders (Horga & Brie, 2008), and on the other side the need for the European Union to deal with an even more complex global competition, where only a strong actor with strategy and vocation and not reduced national entities can be viable. A major obstacle – the financial crisis – has made many of the researchers, who saw the EU as a vocational actor in the international system and who sustained institutional neoliberal conceptions and attitudes, start doubting such hypotheses by clinging to neorealist solutions. The disfunctionalities between the EU member states within the crisis have fueled a lot of positions, from euro-skepticism, federalism to intergovernmentalism, but also severe critics addressed to the supranationalists, the constructivists and to the people supporting the integration theories, such as governance and policy networks.

Starting from this ambivalence, with which the EU has to deal, the volume which we are putting forward introduces the papers of young Romanian researchers who aim to analyze the actuality of the EU borders and the challenges for the beginning of the 21st century on the one hand, and on the other, the pace of the EU in the global competition.

By tackling the problem of *European Union's borders and the challenges from the beginning of the 21st century*, the papers included in this chapter aim to explore the place of EU borders after 2008 and their roles in terms of delimitation of political communities. In this context, these papers try to determine the role of borders in order to give answers to the economic crises, either by an increased impermeability of the States, or by new approaches of permeability within the new international organization (Mucha-Leszko & Kakaol, 2009). Also, the papers take a look at the concept of borders from a cost and benefit point of view, in order to assess what are the economic benefits stemming from the dismantling of borders and what are the socio-economic and political costs connecting to the functioning of borders (Soproni & Horga, 2009).

The paper *Bosnia Herzegovina, Forever at Cross Roads? Constructing "the Other" in Brčko District*, written by Miruna Trancota, aims to find out whether Europeanization in itself is an attainable result in a society where inter-ethnic cooperation was externally "institutionalized" and imposed without being a natural social result between its members. The author uses a constructivist model in order to show that the Bosnian society is being slowly torn apart by fissures which will break apart into ethnicities. All these fissures create a vicious cycle which translates into political tensions. The poor institutional performance in Bosnia-Herzegovina stems from the lack of regular interaction between the different layers of governance. Cooperation cannot be fully achieved without prolific interactions between them. Thus, Europeanization cannot be safely achieved without a culture of cooperation, as Remeny Peter observed in the case of the Srbska Republic (Remeny, 2011). Europeanization is based on a comprehensive process of institution building and a democratic and stable political community. In this perspective, the author believes that Brčko is a great example of the limits of ethnic homogenization and territorialization. Moreover, Brčko can show the successes that occurred in the institutional design of post-Yugoslav states. The question whether the political and social evolution of the Brčko district can be regarded as a model for other inter-entity conflict driven regions in the Western Balkans becomes a very legitimate question in this context, but it still awaits for an answer in future research.

Mihaela Daraban authored a research called *From competition to cross border cooperation*, aims to prove the validity of the idea the soft frontiers of the European Union by using an analysis showing that EU member states have evolved from competition in terms of economy and national achievements, to cohesion objectives aimed to build a more competitive Europe. This issue can be illustrated by analyzing the partnership between Romania and Bulgaria for common benefits. For instance, the two countries have used European funds to build the Calafat-Vidin Bridge over the Danube.

The aim of European funds is primarily to reduce the development gap between some of the poorest regions and other regions within the EU. One extra ingredient is necessary though, namely a thorough legislative harmonization between member states and a model of good practices for the management of funds (Toca & Popoviciu, 2010). Public administration is one important factor which influences the management of European funds, thus the structure of public institutions and the administrative culture of each country have a direct effect on the achievement of economic convergence. Her conclusion that administrative convergence is a necessity for the process of economic convergence and cooperation within the European Union emphasizes the statements from the paper.

The paper entitled *European Union's Energy Diplomacy in the Wider Black Sea Region* by Radu Dudau, Leonela Lenes tackles the issues of EU borders in the beginning of the 21st century by discussing the strategic importance that the Caspian Basin energy resources, especially natural gas, have within the EU's energy security as opposed to the background of EU's increasing dependence on gas imports from the Russian Federation (see Pop, 2009). Thus, the advancement of competing transport project which transit the Wider Black Sea Region is important and these progresses are seen by analyzing the political engagement of various political actors within the EU, such as the European Commission, the Member States. The dimensions of the EU's energy policy are discussed and special focus is put on the energy security which the Southern Gas Corridor is expected to make and on the Brussels' energy policy initiatives which boast some successes and opportunities, but also are lagged by some systemic constraints. The paper concludes that it has been too little, too late has been undertaken in order to transform the Southern Corridor into a dependable alternative to the Russian gas transport lines.

The paper *Does the eastern partnership still need a 'success story'?*, by Vasile Rotaru, is based on a comparative analysis of the evolution of the six former Soviet republics which are a part of the Eastern Partnerships. Special attention is placed on highlighting the differences between the levels of Europeanization (see also Dolghi, 2010). The research concludes that the Eastern Partnership still needs to convince the European leaders that it is still relevant for the EU's foreign policy. Likewise, it has to become more attractive for the post-soviet republics. There is a definite need for a new impetus for the Eastern Partnership as the EU has shifted focus from the East to the developments of the Arab Spring and the economic crisis.

The European Union should not allow a loss in interest for the Europeanization process from the Eastern partners. However, this is a mutual relationship, because the Eastern partners need to understand that the EU takes the goals of the Eastern Partnership seriously. Immediate and tangible results in different areas are necessary in order to create a new impetus in this relationship. Visa facilitation and trade privileges can become motivations for the Eastern Partners, because they can offer tangible solutions for citizens still longing for Soviet times.

On the other side, the EU should treat the former Soviet Republics as independent entities, but at the same times the European leaders should clearly separate political and economic issues in their relation with Russia, as its geopolitical interests in these countries could become a sensitive issue between Russia and the EU. There is a clear need for a success story, one that could be a powerful example for the Eastern neighbors and the EU leaders. One country that could become a success story is the Republic of Moldova, the most active country within the partnership. However, before becoming a true success story, Chisinau has to implement more essential reforms and to reduce the widespread corruption (Dogot, 2011).

Giorgiana Udrea demonstrates in the paper *European identity and otherness. Theoretical perspectives* that today, the identity of Europe continues to remain uncertain and imprecise, despite the fact that, in the recent years, a growing number of scholars have shown deep interest in the issue of European identity (see Pantea, 2010).

The very existence of this phenomenon is a bit scrutinized in literature, as the findings are the most diverse. Some state that the concept cannot be operationalized, while other researchers claim the idea that an increasing number of European citizens identify themselves with Europe in certain contexts. A common trend runs in the current research claiming that European identity, like all identities, can be created in opposition to alterity. A common identity of Europe could be emphasized by a sense of distinctiveness to a representative other, defined either geographically, historically, religiously or culturally. Social interaction with others is highly important in this relational process of building a European identity.

In a world where spatial and cultural borders become increasingly permeable, it is important that identity issues remain a point of discussion (Horga & Brie, 2010). It is highly important that the identity of Europe is brought in the spotlight and analyzed, even if there are several claims that aim to fragment the possibility of a strong European sense of belonging.

European Union and the Global Competition is a subject of great intellectual interest in the academic field, as it aims to explore multiple dimensions of this aspect. First of all, the ways in which the outermost regions and other overseas territories of the EU imprint upon the Union outright global frontiers, the impact of these frontiers, and of the ensuing cross-border cooperation upon the plurality of sectors of contemporary life: from the Economy and the Environment to Security, Democracy, Good Governance and Human Rights (Horga & Pantea, 2007). Secondly, this subchapter will explore the ways in which the European Union is related to other spaces within the Global Competition.

For instance, in the paper called *What boundaries for the European Union as a Security Actor?*, Monica Oproiu explores the discursive construction of the EU's security identity by putting a special focus on the geographical boundaries of the EU's self-images as an international security actor (Dolghi, 2010). The discourse analysis of the EU's two main documents regarding security reveals an impressive evolution of the EU's strategic horizons. While in the beginning of the 2000s, the EU was dedicated to be a pacifying force on the European continent through the process of enlargement and the ESDP, the Union gradually aimed further to become a stabilizing force for states and regions, to promote a comprehensive concept of security and to protect its citizens. Two main objectives guide the EU in approaching regional conflicts or instability, namely strategic vision and humanitarian concerns. Institutional building is a focus in the Balkans and Afghanistan, but in immediate neighborhood, the EU promotes good governance. In Africa it handles crisis management, while supporting the shaky peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The paper *The European Social Economy and the EU2020*, by Mihaela Ioana Danetiu and Sebastian Fitzek, aims to attest the implications of social economy policies in creating the European agenda. The researchers use a theoretical approach on social economy and make an overview of the EU2020 agenda in order to reveal how political and non-political actors operate at the EU level with elements of the social policy objectives. The instruments used by institutions are validated through specific values that are meant to target an active European citizenship. The neoliberal perspective behind the social economy system leads to a particular European construct.

Anca Adriana Cucu, in the paper called *Enhancing the performance of cross border cooperation governance through legal community instruments: the case of the European Group of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)*, brings into discussion the fact that role of the EGTC, used for fostering territorial cooperation, is to strengthen the economic and social cohesion (Toca & Popoviciu, 2010; Toca, 2011). The results of this community legal instrument and its contribution to the EU cohesion policy are not clearly defined. Even if their placement is not limited to the cross border

cooperation, all these groups have been set up at borders of different Member States. Thus, there's a necessity to communicate more with the local and regional actors within the European Administrative Space.

There is a question though, regarding the Commission's vision about increasing the role of local and regional authorities within the EGTCs. These Groups will have an increased role in managing community programs within the 2014-2020 financial framework and they can contribute to the accomplishment of the 2020 objectives, thus leading to the creation of new borders on the EU territory, not in the sense of physical barriers, but in a sense of multi-level governance instruments.

Mihaela Adriana Padureanu analyses in *EU and India in a globalized world* the way in which the relations between the European Union and India are managed and developed. By using a neo-liberal institutionalist approach, she mainly focuses on the economic cooperation as an instrument to foster and develop the relations between the two entities. Her article is divided into three main parts; in the first part, she presents the theories of reference, the concepts which are relevant to this discussion, the methodology and the reasoning behind these choices. The second part is the case study of the development of EU-India relations, which is used to demonstrate these arguments. Historical relations are presented first in this part, in order to see the evolution of cooperation and interests of the EU and India. The last part of the articles focuses on the area in which cooperation is prevalent and the reasons behind this occurrence. The article concludes that the main interests in these relations are related to the economic area.

The paper *Overcoming european internal borders: towards a genuine single european market*, by Andra Maria Popa focuses on the significance of European integration in the process of overcoming the internal economic borders between the Member States so that the EU can move forward to an accomplished single European market. The tenous process of eliminating barriers and the review of shortcomings within the single market are analyzed by examining official documents and other research that has been done on the topic of the European single market. History is witness to the fact that the process of establishing a single market has always been a struggle and the analysis in this paper shows that these efforts are due to negative as well as positive integration strategies. The neo-functionalist approach is considered the best way to explain the integration process given the existence of functional and political spillovers in the evolution of the European single market (see also Contogeorgis, 2009).

Reporting Romania's 2009 European Elections. Press Coverage and viability of the male and female candidates, by Aurora Iorgoveanu, is a research paper aimed at studying and comparing the press coverage of two of the most well-known male and female candidates which ran for the European Parliament elections held in Romania in June of 2009. The monthly coverage of four of the most influential daily newspapers and tabloids in Romania, *Cancan*, *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Gândul* and *Libertatea*, focuses of two candidates, Elena Basescu and George Becali. By using content analysis, the author shows that Elena Basescu received less coverage than Becali. Also, qualitative differences were found in coverage, which were attributed to Basescu's gender, who was depicted as not being credible to represent Romanian interests in Brussels.

Diana Luiza Dumitru authored the paper called *Role's Dynamics inside a team: between facts and perception*, which focused a multidimensional framework in order to analyse the roles' dynamic inside teams. She combined three complementary axes: task-social, perceptual-factual and attraction-rejection. The case study, based on a sociometric analysis, found that there is a contamination effect between the social and task evaluation of teammates' positions. Also, the study reveals that there is a strong impact of the intra-group competition level because of the way in which the positions of the team members are evaluated. Surely, the world of sport and the business field are very similar, and that is why the results of this study can be safely applied and extrapolated beyond the border of sports.

In conclusion, the papers presented in this book bring up new perspectives on the essence of Europeanization as a comprehensive process of institution building, on the one hand,

and on the other, on the viability of the idea of soft borders of the European Union, which have evolved from being competitive to being cooperative. There have been new perspectives in analyzing the problem of EU borders at the beginning of the 21st century, the Black Sea Region, the role of the Eastern Partnership in the Europeanisation process from EU Eastern borders or the role of cultural borders in creating and building a European identity.

On the other hand, the book deals with the report between European boundaries and the situation of the EU as a security and global actor. Major issues sculpt the scope of the European agenda, such as social economy policies or the importance of EGTCs as a legal and valid instrument for stimulating cross-border cooperation. Moreover, the papers dealt with the perspectives of European integration as a means of overcoming internal economic borders in the journey for achieving a single European market.

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