
Book Review

Jody Jensen and Ferenc Mislivetz (eds) (2015) Reframing Europe's Future. Challenges and Failures of the European Construction. London and New York: Routledge.

This thought-provoking book addressing the challenges and failures of the European integration processes from an interdisciplinary perspective has been published in the series of Routledge Advances in European Politics. The main aim of the book is to contribute to the deeper understanding of the structural problems standing behind the European crisis and to the identification of ways out. The editors emphasize in the introduction that in previous crises there always was a pro-integration bias to proposed solutions on which consensus was based. These days that is far from clear as more and varied voices articulate increasing frustration, dissatisfaction, distrust, and cynicism with the current state of affairs in Europe. Furthermore, the increasing number of asylum seekers means great external challenge to the integrated Europe. We might say that the ship of European integration is cruising on troubled waters under gloomy sky.

Historical perspective might help to preserve some optimism. To illustrate this I would like to recall the observation that European integration is rather similar to the construction of a Gothic cathedral in the Middle Ages. The construction of a gothic cathedral lasted for centuries; those who started never saw the end product; it happened that the original plans were altered, new architects had different ideas, and there were periods when the construction came to a standstill because the financial burden was too high. New rulers had different priorities; there were personal antipathies between the leading figures in the construction, there were quite understandable and hardly understandable delays, the faith in the construction was lost, but anyway, somehow they passed the point of no return, and if you look at Europe today, we have many marvelous gothic cathedrals (sometimes only finished in the nineteenth century though.) But the *longue durée* optimism is not exempt from the painstaking process of search to find solutions to the deep problems of *histoire événementielle* of today. The authors of this book promote the idea that the project of European construction has always accelerated because of periods of crises. What the authors have in common is a drive to change the current state of affairs, “while endorsing a more balanced multi-stakeholder (states, markets, and society) approach to problem-solving.”

The authors raise a very important question that came into a challenging new perspective in 2014: What is Europe as a politico geographical concept? Is Ukraine a part of Europe from the point of view EU enlargement in a time when young Ukrainians are sacrificing their lives because they are convinced that they belong to Europe?, is this problem addressed by Ferenc Mislivetz. József Böröcz scathes geopolitical scenarios to preserve Europe's competitiveness and economic weight on the global stage, a scenario called North-Atlantica which would include the EU and the NAFTA, or another one called Northern Eurasia: the EU and the CIS together.

Well, although the economic rationality behind these scenarios can be seen, the political logic contradicts such constructions, because size matters. Even in the case of the Turkish membership size might be the real problem and not cultural and religious background. A stronger inclusion of the NAFTA states or the CIS would completely change decision making by diminishing the role of the current leading member states of the European Union. Stefano Bianchini recalls the Bavarian premier Stoiber's concept of the absorption capacity of the EU, an idea that can be considered the real limit of the integration for policy makers. This could be translated like this: no enlargement can endanger the decision making weight of the leading member states.

Another delicate issue is the impact of integration on politics. As György Schöpflin underlines, the EU faces considerable difficulties to accommodate collective identities in the integration processes; although there is an additional half sentence in the Lisbon Treaty, actually the rights of historic and linguistic minorities are not protected by the law of the EU and as Steve Austen points out, the protagonist of cultural citizenship should consider that collective rights must be recognized. But there are problems not only with ethnos, but also with demos on EU level. The proactive demos is missing in European governance, as it is pointed out by Jody Jensen, mainly because European political elites systematically keep EU policies out of electoral politics, even in the case of the election of the members of the European Parliament.

The financial crisis and its wider implications is a major topic in the book. The Euro, the symbol of the post-Cold War phase of the European integration led to dissatisfaction and in certain cases to despair. I think Tibor Palánkai is right in emphasizing that the original sin was committed when Germany and France violated the Maastricht rules without negative consequences. When Angela Merkel said no to the transfer union, it clearly proved what Doris Wydra and Sonia Puntscher quoted: the European system of democratic states is one where some tend to dominate others. It is called diffused reciprocity. As Federico Rampini points out, the outcome of the German behaviour is almost paradoxical, Angela Merkel, inaugurating her third mandate as a chancellor, seemed almost eager to embrace the social policy requests of her junior partner, whereas Germany continues to preach austerity abroad. Discussing problems of the Euro-zone, Annamária Artner concludes that data reveals that the euro zone has been harmful for the less developed members while it helped the stronger ones become even stronger. Stuart Holland emphasizes that the policies imposed by the Troika as a treatment for the Euro crises in many respects resemble to the policy of the Brüning government of Germany of the early 1930's. Holland emphasizes the importance of learning from the New Deal. A great expectation of the population of new members has also failed in many respects and as it has been demonstrated by Dóra Györffy, the dissatisfaction with democracy is an important root of the crisis.

But what are the roots of the crises? And what kind of crises is it? On a high level of abstraction Elemér Hankiss correctly emphasizes that the continuity or the belatedness of modernism in the period of postmodernism might be a powerful reason. György Schöpflin basically sees an epistemological crisis. Anyway, on the level of the basic political premises the main reason might be the contradictions among

three major tendencies: deep economic integration, powerful nation states, and democratic politics. Or, on even a lower level of abstraction the contradictions among the ideas of fiscal consolidation, the preservation of welfare state and green investments.

To find solutions first we should understand the achievements correctly. Europe achieved a lot in past decades. It is important to remember that Europe created a new phase in the history of international relations. As Steve Austin points out, the EU can be seen to have added a new chapter to the Von Clausewitz doctrine suggesting that “the EU is the continuation of peace by other means”. Analyzing the effects of the Lisbon Treaty, Jaap Hoeksma concludes that the EU can no longer be described in terms of the traditional categories of states or as a union of states but rather constitutes a new phenomenon of international law. I would say that it has been the case even before the Lisbon Treaty. The member states are not simply nation states any more, membership in the EU creates a new quality of statehood, which cannot be described by specific terms of international law. Moreover, the EU itself is a sui generis phenomenon, neither a federation nor a confederation of states. The EU is a regulatory union, but it is not an international legal phrase.

Social scientists were not able to foresee the crisis. As Ferenc Miszlivetz states, as far as the future for post-crisis Europe is concerned two things are clear: the fear from German Europe, from the Bundesrepublik of Europe, and the chance for a new social contract. It is also sure that neither member states nor markets are able to provide automatic solutions, and the EU does not exist, evolve in social vacuum but in the shadow of global tendencies.

In this review I selected only a very small fraction of the great reservoir of thoughts which can be found in the book. The title is *Reframing Europe's Future*. In a way all of us is a part of that project. There should be some possibilities to overcome *Unordnung und frühes leid*.

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