

*UNCERTAINTY: ELECTIONS, BREXIT, TERRORISM,
GEO-POLICIES, ISLAMIC REVOLUTION*

EDITORIAL

Uncertainty in Europe and the entire world became a current reality, aggravated by the ever greater expectations from the people, at an ever faster pace, by people's impatience with politics and paradoxical support for populism, and by the spectre of terrorism, by the endangered middle class and poverty, unsustainable development and climate change. As Anthony Giddens warned almost two decades ago, our world is a runaway world (Anthony Giddens, 1999). And we may add that this is a runaway world craving for simple and instant solutions: an impossible, tempting and dangerous mission for politics and politicians. We have left behind a modern world which was fighting inertia (Nicolae Labiş, 1958) and moved instead into the middle of the accelerating world (Paul Virilio, 1977) where time has lost patience (Marin Preda, 1955).

The present issue calls to the fore several illustrations of this younger and less scary sister of instability – uncertainty – that threatens to become a dark shadow for liberal democracy and freedom. Our approach emphasizes uncertainty not as a source of *force majeure*, but as the most appropriate hallmark of our times. Our world is marked by speed, interpreted by Paul Virilio (1977) as a source of destruction in his work, within the favourable context of technological advance. The theoretical perspective developed emphasises the works of Morand, Marinetti, and McLuhan and represents an interesting parallel to Heidegger's account of technology. In this accelerating world democracy is distorted, civilization is reshaped and society increasingly militarized: defence structures, budgets, information, technology, constructions, armies and weapons coming to the fore to the detriment of attention on economic, growth, human rights and culture. This perspective becomes especially relevant against the latest challenges of terrorism and migration.

In contrast, Rainer Maria Rilke wrote in *Letters to a young poet* (1903): "Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. (...) live in the question." These are indeed words from a different era. Transferring this emotional idea into the political realm, on the one hand, we find this to be a key to educating a solid democratic culture, and, on the other hand, we could ask ourselves what is more suitable than democracy for "living in the question"?

Democracy is a perpetual quest, a work in progress, a perpetual source of questions and as democracy is constantly interrogated it especially requires flexibility and it is facing various accusations of weakness. There is uncertainty related to particular democratic aspects which are not favourable to democracy

– electoral competition that could go astray into areas of increased xenophobia and greater populism, political uncertainty in general, institutional unpredictability, war and cataclysm. This is a kind of paradox.

We are living at the present moment with the uncertainty triggered by the astonishingly surprising Brexit and by the tremendously surprising Presidential elections in the USA, to which the elections in France are contributing to a much lesser extent, and likewise the Presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova, the parliamentary elections in Romania, and the Italian constitutional referendum, all characterized by types of fear management which have, at least in part, the effect of enhancing populism, as well as the emergence of popular support for right wing and extreme right parties, in the long run rendering democratic principles and ideals as a distant dream.

The Romanian parliamentary elections clearly won by the social democrats encountered the reluctance of President Klaus Werner Iohannis to accept the nomination of Mrs. Sevil Shhaideh a Muslim woman, and the first female prime minister ever nominated in Romania. This rejection was met with astonishment from Călin Popescu Tăriceanu and Liviu Dragnea – presidents of ALDE respectively PSD and the second and third statesmen after elections – as well as that from national and international media. This unexplained, intolerant, xenophobic, sexist and, in fact, undemocratic Presidential decision may very likely prove to be the defining feature of this mandate and the reason for the reduction or destruction of the chance of a second mandate for President Iohannis, responsible for generating out of blue – with no reasonable or foreseeable political benefits, but actually, risking suspension –, and un-patriotically, a political crisis and a dangerous situation of political instability, until other explanations are offered, out of a whimsical and unconstitutional disregard for the Social Democratic Party.

In Poland we have recently seen the attack by the political class against the freedom of the press. In Berlin a new terrorist attack overshadowed the joy of Christmas. In Zürich, probably for the first time in Europe, an armed attack targeted a mosque, an incident considered unrelated to terrorism and the far right, yet still a cause for concern. The Presidential elections in Austria went against the European trend towards the far right, casting a thread of optimism on the European political scene, emphasizing as well the surprising character and the heterogeneity of this political European scene, which tends to be close to unpredictable. But these are only a few illustrations in terms of contemporary phenomena of uncertainty within the American and European political realm.

At the same time, while considering this specific context, this thematic issue of the journal attempts to draw attention to the importance of a certain calm, predictable, and “normal” political “climate”, which rejects simplistic answers to the complex challenges, sustaining this type of democratic culture and democratic ethos, the only possible foundation for political normality, where democratic principles thrive and enjoy actual forms of realisation and actual democratic achievements.

Recently re-elected as President of the Christian Democratic Union in Germany, Angela Merkel emphasized on that occasion the crucial importance of our

resistance in the face of simplistic answers and reactions. Within academia we look to find pertinent contributions that reject simplistic explanations to these complex phenomena and which emphasize the need to address scientifically the complexities of the contemporary European and world political scene. As an illustration, in a volume from 2014 coordinated by Dan Dungaciu (2014) we find a nuanced analysis of the challenges facing the European integration starting with the heterogeneity of the ideas of Europeanism, continuing with the dual dimensions of the European institutions, national and European, and concluding with an analysis of the difficulties encountered by the policies of the EU.

In 2016, Ruxandra Iordache and Dan Dungaciu coordinated a volume entitled *Perfect Storm in Europe* describing the multiple facets of European crises and their irreducibility to the bulk of problems and developments which fall under the collective heading of economic crisis. The studies approach the complex relations between economic crisis, xenophobia, populism, far right politics, the absence of the “we, the people” at the heart of the EU identity construct, Brexit, migration, terrorism, constitutionalism, accession to the European Union and federalization. In 2001 Rui J. P. de Figueiredo, Jr., from University of California, Berkeley published a study entitled “Electoral Competition, Political Uncertainty and Policy Insulation” in the series Working Papers, available at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5tp3r429>. There, the author argues that “electoral uncertainty is a crucial factor that influences policy implementation: current holders of public authority, nervous that they might lose their position, seek to insulate the agencies they create so that policies will survive their creators. These theories, however, ignore crucial variations in the electoral prospects of groups competing for public authority. In this paper, I examine the effect of electoral volatility on the degree to which groups in power will dismantle their opponent’s agencies and programs and insulate their own policies from such destructive behaviour. Through the analysis of two repeated games, I derive four propositions which fully characterize the conditions under which cooperative behaviour can provide stability in the face of electoral uncertainty and instability. First, I show that if gains from cooperation are sufficiently large, compromise and cooperation can occur in the face of uncertainty. Second, I show that electoral uncertainty increases the possibility of cooperation, a result counter to the informal literature. Third, when electoral uncertainty is low, only one group – that with a low probability of electoral success – will insulate their programs. Finally, as electoral uncertainty increases, a wider set of the parameter values support the extreme cases of either both insulating or not insulating.”

Among the articles selected for this issue, Eric Gilder and Scott Eastman (“As America Trump(ets) the World Gets Tinnitus: Construing the Personal/Political Sphere of Donald Trump’s Supporters and its Effects upon the Election of 2016” the title of the Conference organized at the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations “Ion I.C. Brătianu” of the Romanian Academy at July 11, 2016) interpret various theories such as Kenneth Boulding on deteriorating or appreciating social systems, “rational” individual choices that lead in a dysfunctional system to irrational collective outcomes; the Thomas

theorem on the very real effects of fictive knowledges; Alfred Korzybski's "the map is not the territory" contribution, Chris Hayes distinction between "institutionalist" and "insurrectionist" political orientations, etc. These joint papers emphasize political elections as a form of life where expectations and outcomes collide. Against this background, Scott Eastman defined the general approach to geopolitical forecasting that was refined during a multi-year, US intelligence community financed, research project. The approach is methodologically based on the establishing of a base rate, the application of Bayesian updating, on the identification of potential Black Swan events (Nassim Taleb), on the study of technicalities (e.g. US Electoral College), on the identification of a paradigm shift of the Overton window and identifies a general trend relevant for globalization and a technological transformation with worrying implications for the ability of the current political system to address efficiently and democratically the political demands of the people.

Herman Butime ("Examining the Careers of the Boston Marathon Bombers" grounds his approach on the investigation of an instance of terrorism in the USA and more precisely investigates the case of the Boston Marathon bombers. The hypothesis is that the Boston Marathon bombings were individual acts of political violence. Addressing this hypothesis the author focuses on the individual lives of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, with a special attention to their familial socialization, to their identity transformation challenged by the difficulties of social integration, to their accession to the status of "enemy", within a larger context characterized by intricate USA-Russia-Chechnya relations.

"The Influence of Carl Schmitt's Theory of Just War on George W. Bush's War Politics", by Silviya Serafimova sets in perspective George W. Bush's attempts to describe the War on Terror as a neo-conservative patriotic and heroic defence of American values, as a just war (*bellum justum*), which is also an internal war (*bellum intestinum*) – Schmitt's key concepts. Although Schmitt's fundamental distinction (namely, the friend-enemy distinction) is assessed as not directly implemented in Bush Jr.'s military politics, it is emphasised as being a consequence of discarding the ontological grounding of Schmitt's political theory. This theoretical perspective provides the framework for further clarifications of George W. Bush's conception of the War on Terror and also for a discussion of the ontological implications of Schmitt's theory.

"Ideological *Realpolitik*, Euroscepticism and American Exceptionalism in Robert Kagan" by Gabriel C. Gherasim interprets the main consequences of the Cold War based on the observation that a majority of political actors in the western world (including here both the European Union and the United States) have embraced the global geopolitical model after 1989, opposed to a growing number of critics (mainly scholars, but also citizens) questioning the efficacy and consequences of this geopolitical scheme in terms of *Realpolitik*, American Exceptionalism and, especially, Euroscepticism.

In this respect the paper investigates the form of Euroscepticism, developed by political scientist Robert Kagan, which concerns the renewed impact of the pre-global ideology of *realpolitik* to the detriment of the postmodern concept of

international politics, the failed geopolitical expansion of the EU project, and the reaffirmation of American exceptionalism, with a more effective grip on current geopolitical fluctuating geometries. Against this theoretical background, the paper puts forward the phrase “geopolitical euroscepticism” and engages in an investigation of its meanings.

“Exit: The Particle of an Entrapment”, by Viorella Manolache reinterprets the work of Claus Offe, *Europe Entrapped* (the author included an analysis of this work in the *Encyclopedia of Fundamental Works of Current Political Philosophy*, also published by the institute in 2016) and emphasizes its consequences with regard to the evaluation of Brexit. In this theoretical framework “exit” becomes a specific political philosophy and political reality particle, generating disruptive stimuli for the European architecture (see the discussions around *Frexit*, *Spexit*, *Nexit* etc.). The author shows that “Brexit claims for itself an emergency status, indicating that Europe is not only lured but also stagnantly maintained in crises/traps (in the private sense of Claus Offe) which, paradoxically, it self-creates.” In this perspective we identify the profile of the *crisis of exit* setting in motion a “secondary philosophy which no longer teaches about life concepts but, in exchange, initiates a pedagogical enterprise based on secondary intellectual virtues – clarity – a grasp of the material and communicability” (the philosopher’s reaction to *Brexit*), and a specific and worrying reaction of a parting of the ways with philosophy, or, at least, with the “burden of pondering deep questions”, *radically* orienting politics to rapid answers, quickly addressing and eliminating the difficulties of the hour. The interpretation identifies a *frozen* dimension related to a sentiment of imminence in the cases of Grexit and Brexit contradicted either by the frozen concrete developments, in the case of Grexit, or minute evolutions, in the case of Brexit. The *heated* dimension is described starting from the debate between Žižek and Tsipras. The *hot* dimension is analysed using the dialogue between Thomas Assheuer, journalist and co-author of the book *Was wird aus der Demokratie?, What Is Going to Happen with Democracy?*, which received the Prize for Political Book in 2000 and Jürgen Habermas).

“Neo-liberalism, Identity and Brexit”, by Ian Browne, identifies the main determining factors for the Leave vote, ranging from the delicate issues correlated with national identity and regional identity to these regarding individual sense of self-worth and identity. The author approaches the changes in the conceptions of identity which have occurred in England over the last 35 years, triggered by neo-liberalism. In the light of the consequences of neo-liberalism the paper discusses the fact that besides the changes taking place in economics, there are paradigmatic changes dramatically influencing conceptions of what constitutes a person and of what constitutes public, social and national life. Starting with the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, the entire life in the UK was significantly transformed, in terms of regional distribution of prosperity and poverty: the areas in the North and Midlands, the traditional areas of manufacturing and heavy industry, experienced poverty, unemployment and a sense of social exclusion, becoming the central reality, creating a group of people who saw themselves as having been “left behind” by 21st century Britain, while in London and in its immediate vicinities

in the South East a wave of prosperity created a group committed to the continuation of the existing state of affairs, which included continued EU membership.

The paper emphasizes that “conceptions of identity depend as much upon material circumstances, on how prosperity and inequality are distributed in a society, as they do upon ideas and values. As a result of the economic changes wrought by neo-liberalism, the old conceptions of identity, incorporating the ideal of the English gentleman, did not survive. Although the Leave vote was ostensibly about immigration and loss of sovereignty, what lay behind these concerns were a sense of dissatisfaction with what was seen as the damage done, both to the material basis of people’s lives and to the old values and ideas of what it was to be English.” Thus, the main contributors to the Leave vote are identified: the feeling of exclusion and powerlessness, the awareness of regional inequality in terms of unequal regional prosperity and the disconnection of politicians from the national and regional realities and from the impact of the forces of globalisation. Within this context, the EU represented for the people of the UK the closest illustration for international and transnational forces which had reshaped their lives in negative ways, as a promoter of globalization. An aggravating aspect is identified in the forced choice nature of the referendum (a simple in or out vote), which provided the opportunity for the voters to pass a verdict on everything that had gone wrong over the past 35 years, more than the conventional political choice occasioned by the General Elections. This negative vote was one given to the entire neo-liberal paradigm, to its policies and to its consequences as much as a verdict against globalisation and against the failure of the EU mechanisms to deliver relevant answers and solutions to the current national problems in the UK.

“Brexit and the future of the European project – possible scenarios” by Lucian Jora also investigates Brexit, which is taking place at a time of severe political, financial and military difficulty. The loss of the UK is a sizable loss for the EU: an important member state with important international connections and military capabilities. The repercussions from the loss of a country representing 10 per cent of EU’s population and more than 20 per cent of its GDP have to be considered. The study emphasizes that Brexit demonstrates the appeal of arguments calling forth national feelings, which operate with immediate impact in comparison to the economic arguments, although in economic terms the consequences of Brexit cannot be other than negative. Meanwhile, both the “European idea” and the “European Project” are undermined by the unprecedented negotiations attendant upon the withdrawal of an important member state. The two territories (not states) which left the European Communities under very specific circumstances – Algeria in 1962 due to its independence from France, and Greenland in 1985 – did not generate a similar impact. If, for many Europeans, the EU remains a stabilizing force counter-posed against their own deficient democracy and corrupt political class, the situation generated by Brexit has the negative effect of raising the question the very core of legitimacy and it raises the serious danger of contamination for other EU member states, already experiencing important Eurosceptic movements (Denmark, Sweden, Austria and Netherlands). The study

concludes that Brexit is bringing about a dangerous fragmentation of the Western Europe, which is beneficial to the Russian geostrategic interests.

“Rethinking The Euro Med Policy: A Cooperative Approach in an Increasingly Transforming Region”, by Lotfi Sour approaches the role of the EU in the Mediterranean region. The EU construction of the MENA region is interpreted in terms of regional integration and institutional integration through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and the subsequent Union for the Mediterranean (UFM). However, the study also considers the critical Arab Spring assessment of these policies developed by the EU. Against this background the EU project of the MENA region has experienced several difficulties. The study identifies and interprets in this respect the internal uprisings, the breakdown of states, the growing influence of Islamism on the political scene, the civil war, the popular movements and in particular the instability generated by the geopolitical power struggle. The fragmentation of the region continues despite the institutional efforts towards integration by the EU and goes beyond the image of a “changing neighbourhood” that represented the working foundation for EU integration policies. In this respect the investigation calls for the readjustment of EU policies in the region, reassessing the Southern side of the Mediterranean area in response to the new domestic, regional and global challenges that MENA is currently experiencing. A positive signal to this end is identified in the Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity tending towards a redefinition of a new framework for EU-Mediterranean relations, overcoming the inconsistencies of the past. The only sustainable path for Mediterranean policy appears the one that reconsiders EMP, ENP, or the new ENP in terms of the interests of the EU as a whole in terms of partnership and not in respect of its individual member states norms, values and interests.

“The Position of ‘Unity’ between theocracy and theodemocracy in the Political Thought of Imam Khomeini”, by Bogdana Todorova, approaches the Islamic Revolution brought about by Imam Khomeini as a structure that has as a core axis “unity”. The idea of an Islamic community brings to the fore the imperative of overcoming insularity and differences and suggests the need for a transformation in thought, in practice and in the conception of national identity, in order to conceive the Iranian nation in new manner. The modern Islamic nation should be also united and ethical, harvesting the fruits of a modern Islamic culture and reinforcing this culture in return. This theocratic perspective situates its modern elements in the context of logic, intelligence and individuality. However, these modern elements are accepted and understood in the light of Islamic canons. This way logic becomes Islamic logic, intelligence becomes Islamic intelligence and individuality becomes specificity. The path toward the ideal society is founded on Islam and its teachings. This path is closer to M. Heidegger’s perspective where we are all actors on the stage of God, but is far from the idea of individual responsibility in a Godless world defended by Fr. Nietzsche. The study emphasizes the fact that since Iranian democracy is a relatively recent phenomenon in comparison with the longer time frame for Western democracies, we can

consider that although it does not share the definitions and importance granted to the liberal values such as individualism and secularism it shares the importance granted to the sovereignty of the people. This sovereignty has at its core the will to pursue a Shi'a historical process implying the return of man to Allah, both at the individual level and at the level of the community as a whole. This political reality is democratic in terms of placing the accent on the will of the people described as an authentic and theocratic will for sovereignty. In this perspective, the label "authoritarian theocracy" is not considered accurate.

The analysis considers that it is too early to determine that, since these advances toward an Islamic democratic and modern democracy are just beginning and they lack a well-established terminology and a communication interface which would increase the relevance of a comparison between Western democracies and Islamic democracy. The concept and the terminology of this revolutionary social contract which places unity and solidarity at the foundation of the political model are going to be clarified in the light of the current difficulties brought about by the reform of the structures of power and by the implementation of democratic principles, which are going to contradict, at least partially, the religious, principles, practices and traditions. The paper concludes by emphasizing the validity of Khomeini's concept of this new social contract founded on unity and solidarity for all human beings. The paper links the future of Iran and Islamic democracy with the most important aim: to form a united, ethical "ideal society" and establish modern Islamic culture – a culture in which science accompanies morality and politics accompanies justice, as a goal for the young generation.

This thematic issue does not aim to cover the sources comprehensively, the forms of manifestation and the outcomes of political uncertainty, but rather to illustrate some of these forms of manifestation, and to clarify certain specific phenomena, wary of the temptation towards offering quick and simplistic answers, especially in our world spiralling away in an hurried chase for solutions, resolutions and outcomes.

Henrieta Anișoara Șerban
Bucharest, the 28th of December, 2016

SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dungaciu, Dan (coord.), *Europa după 25 de ani*, Bucharest, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, 2014.

Giddens, Anthony, *Runaway World: How Globalization Is Reshaping Our Lives*, London, Profile Books, 1999.

Iordache, Ruxandra, Dungaciu, Dan, *Furtună perfectă în Europa*, Bucharest, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, 2016.

Labiș, Nicolae, *Lupta cu inerția*, Bucharest, Editura Tineretului, 1958.

Preda, Marin, *Moromeții*, Bucharest, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1955.

Virilio, Paul, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, New York, Semiotext(e), 1977.