

**Nidhi Trehan and Nando Sigona (eds.), *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe: Poverty, Ethnic Mobilization, and the Neo-liberal Order* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)**

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Romani communities throughout Western, Eastern and Southeast European countries experience poverty, socio-economic marginalization with additional increasing intolerance and discrimination by the majority population. The marginalization involves exclusion from labour markets, exclusion and segregation within the education system, difficult access to services including healthcare services, extreme forms of spatial segregation; in a word, exclusion from the right to exercise active citizenship. In addition, Romani people experience very concrete security issues such as: police brutality, racism, intolerance and violent outbursts against them. With Romani issues on the rise one cannot help but wonder what politics and policy actions are taking place around those issues. Who is creating the politics, what are the roles and degrees of influence by internal movements within the Romani constituencies as well as external influences? Many of these questions are addressed in Nidhi Trehan's and Fernando (Nando) Sigona's *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe*.

The book offers rich collection of essays treating various dimensions of the Romani politics starting with a human rights framework, gender, national and international politics, in particular European politics of the Roma and for the Roma, all the way to country-specific challenges and particularities. The essays address the structural as well as societal difficulties and challenges faced in the implementation of politics and policy both at European Union level and at a national level. Through the analysis and interviews with individuals, the book gives us an insight of how circumstances regarding the Romani issue developed and how they evolved—how politics was created and under which circumstances. Along with the politics the term Roma underwent series of deconstructions and with it the context carried by the term was transformed, influencing politics and vice versa. The book takes the reader to another realm—beyond the grass-root level analysis, beyond the anthropology/ethnology of the Roma—revealing to the reader the 'body politics'. The theoretical framework and starting point of analysis is neo-liberalism as a predominant order in the political systems of the countries that are being analyzed. One of the most striking analyses in this book is the depicting of the situation and state of Romani non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Very rarely one can find such insightful representation of the role and the actual shortcomings of the NGO sector in post-1989 Eastern and Southeast European countries. The analysis presents the donor-driven, internally competitive and unaccountable world of Romani NGOs. With certainty the arguments can be extended to the rest of the NGO sector

including both Romani and non-Romani NGOs. The structure of the Romani NGOs is often hierarchical and even more so in comparison with other types of NGOs. The greatest problem however is the lack of accountability of NGO leaders towards their own constituency: the Romani people that they represent. There exists a paradox in the NGO sector that has been cleverly noticed by the editors – organizations (NGOs) promoting democracy without being democratic in its own self-governance. In this respects, number of chapters of this book would be very useful to the reader who would like to learn more about the development and current state of the NGO sector in Eastern and Southeast European countries.

The country-specific chapters of this book represent the spectre of various Romani communities living in Western, Eastern and Southeast European countries – each of them carrying their own burden and facing different priority issues. The chapters on Romania and Slovakia are looking at the Romani politics within those countries prior to joining the European Union; while the chapters on Spain, England and Italy are representing the countries' responses (or lack of) towards the needs of the Romani communities. The interview with two Romani human rights activists, Avdula (Dai) Mustafa and Gazmen Salijevec from the Roma and Ashkali Documentation Centre (RACD) from Kosovo provides a fresh perspective on the current situation of minorities in Kosovo, in particular the Roma and Ashkali communities that can be quite eye-opening for the reader.

The book draws a sense of urgency upon the Romani issue; however, it does not address who will be the main carrier of Romani politics in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. In one of the chapters, the interview with the Hungarian Member of European Parliament of Romani background, Viktoria Mohacsi, it is argued that the world does not need another collection of good practices and success stories of policies and projects concerning the Roma; however, one can to argue that success stories, whether they are personal or community- wide can be very inspiring. Therefore, the reader would not mind to see some examples – chapters depicting good practices and progress that has been achieved in some of the countries – members of the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. Furthermore, the reader could benefit from a comparative analysis of the Romani politics within the older EU member states (such as France, the northern countries), new EU member states (ex. Bugaria) and countries yet to join the EU (ex. Macedonia).

Trehan's and Sigona's book of essays can be a very useful reading material not only for scholars researching the contemporary Romani question, however also for European and national policy-makers and policy analysts. It provides an insight into the current state of affairs and represents the challenges that lay ahead. One can consider this book as volume one of a series of analyses that will examine the

Romani issues in depth and will take the reader further on into the complexities of the Romani discourse and reality.

**Eiki Berg, Piret Ehin (eds.), *Identity and Foreign Policy. Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2008).**

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For Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, both the EU and NATO integration processes were considered as the ultimate guarantee of a definitive status quo in the European and trans-Atlantic community. As members of the two main international organizations, the danger of possible aggression from the part of the Russian Federation was significantly diminished. But, instead of a likely normalization process of the relations between each of the three Baltic States and the Russian Federation, the regional foreign affairs agenda registered consistent moments of tension. How the situation might be explained using the current repertoire provided by theories of international relations.

The volume *Identity and Foreign Policy. Baltic-Russian Relations and European Integration*, edited by Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin, is the result of a project with the same name funded by the Estonian Science Foundation, developed between 2006 and 2008, aiming to explore the influence of identity over the behaviour of states in the domain of foreign policy. The relation of the three Baltic States with Russia might offer, in the opinion of the contributing authors, a starting point for further analysis about the complex interactions amongst memory, identity and international relations at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The authors of the ten chapters are academics from the region, offering insightful and first-hand accounts of the events they are covering, the diversity of the approaches being undertaken by the variety of their professional backgrounds – political science, history, international relations. The studies balance analysis of facts and episodes taking place after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with theoretical insights and evaluations.

The chapters neither intend to challenge the present-day design of international relations nor to propose innovative approaches. The theoretical framework is provided exclusively by the constructivist paradigm, according to which for understanding international relations we have to better know the social relations and the history of the societies and communities interacting. In our case-study, the weight is epitomized by the long history of conflict between each of the three countries, on one hand, and Moscow. What the reader would be curious to