

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 21st 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

document further at the end of the book is the genesis of this historical ballast into the new European and Euro-Atlantic identity: Did the entry of these countries into EU and NATO influence the relation of the two institutions towards the Russian Federation? And, another question we would like to find an answer is: what is the recent and less recent history of the relations between the three Baltic countries themselves? What are the nuances of their bilateral relations and their relationships, including by being part of various regional and international coalitions, at world's level? Are they acting united (in comparison with Estonia and Lithuania, Latvia, for instance, adopted a more pragmatic relation with Russia, maintaining a certain level of normality of the bilateral relations), according to the same regional interests – among which, the most important, consolidating their security situation in relation with Russia?

The first years of the EU and NATO memberships of the three Baltic States registered an intensification of the tensions with the Russian Federation. The causes were determined by different assessments of past events. For example, the 9th of May represents for Moscow the date of the capitulation of Nazi Germany to the Soviet Union the “Victory Day”, and for the three states the end of their independent statehood. The Red Army is considered a “liberator” in the post-Soviet historical narrative, while for the Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian public opinion it's qualified as an “occupier”. On the other hand, with different nuances, in all the three countries, coming to terms with the Holocaust was belated by the predominant focus on asking the international institution for a global condemnation of the communist crimes. But, we want to add, this is not a specific situation of the Baltic States, but characterized in different degrees the entire former communist space, aspects not covered or mentioned explicitly by the authors of the chapters included in the volume.

The sophisticated process of post-communist/post-Soviet national identity genesis is not the exclusive domain of the Baltic States. The same process, with more dramatic consequences is still taking place in the Russian Federation, from the point of view of the repertoire of the memory politics. An extensive analysis of the last two decades of the process would offer to the reader more elements for a comprehensive landscape of the situation. In situation of deep political, social and economic crisis, the appeal to a glorious past is the last resort for restoring the coherence at the society level. If those aspects were explicitly described in the case of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the studies are deficient in explaining the resorts of the “Baltic” reactions as counter-arguments to nationalist and nostalgic discourses of the Russian elites. Moscow's vocal opposition to the idea of EU and NATO enlargement to its borders created frequently, in our opinion, the base for an amplified reaction from the part of the concerned states. During the last 10 years, Moscow's position towards the two organizations didn't change and can be observed easily regarding the situation from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova,

countries yet in process of dramatic democratic transformations. Another negative point in the volume is the lack of information regarding the existence – or not – of coherent and sustainable initiatives of “soft power” policies, aiming to replace the political dissent by a dialogue among elites regarding the need of a reconsideration of the historical conflicts. Are there any initiatives at the level of historians or cultural personalities from the Baltic States, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other hand, aiming to solve through dialogue and reconciliation the aspects generating conflict? Is there any pressure from the part of the elites towards dissipating the historical and memory-related issues from the political discourse? The reader is not provided any quantitative data or opinion polls regarding the general interest of the public on questions concerning these aspects. We don’t know, either, how the role played by the media from these countries in perpetuating the national misunderstandings and nurturing the bilateral conflicts. The preponderant focus on qualitative analysis is a serious limit to a broader approach of the memory processes and impedes the critical evaluation. And this situation might raise questions regarding the limits of the theoretical choice: before building a constructivist theory, we require a serious deconstruction of the concepts and of the context we are intending to operate with.

But beyond some information and methodological limitations, the book represents a useful resource for academics and students of foreign policy and international relations and EU recent history, more specifically. It offers part of the picture of a current situation, to be evaluated and re-evaluated during the various stages of the creation of the European identity process.