

highlights many of the on-going challenges confronting those wishing to close the EU's democratic deficit.

Josette Baer (ed.), *From Post-Communism toward the Third Millennium* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011)

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From Post Communism toward the Third Millennium is a collection of contributions whose origins are different in style and content. The main aim of the book can be found concisely within the last part of the title 'toward the third millennium'. It offers a consumptive panorama after a period where most of the political transitions in the area were either resolved or had reached a conclusion defined by the membership in NATO or the EU, or had simply come to a standstill.

The book offers to this purpose a sort of requalification of the term Eastern Europe (p.7) in order to differentiate it from Central Europe, the fate of which is signed in fact by the integration in the above mentioned supra-national organizations. As the editor puts it, the whole post-communist Europe must be divided in three regions consisting of the Visegrad Region, the South Eastern region or the Balkans and the 'hegemonic or imperial region' of the post soviet countries (p.21). The back bone of the book are the contributions made by the editor, Josette Baer, who has signed the introduction and a chapter on transition in Belorussia, while other authors origins are mainly from the countries considered in the volume. The book offers a panorama of case studies concentrated mostly on three general lines: political transition or missing transition; ethnic identity and political developments; and economic transition and development. Apart from the theoretical prospective, the books is enriched by the case studies the authors have included. From this perspective, the book offers a valuable tool for understanding the political contexts and evolution in some of the countries of the chosen area. The book consists of a foreword and an introduction that give the reader a brief panorama and a theoretical prospective from which the text can be read. The long introduction by Baer defines the theoretical boundaries in which the cases are considered while trying to introduce the reader to the specificities of the region, especially in relation to the wave of colored revolution which affected the post soviet area in the mid 2000's (p. 13).

The book is so sub-divided across three broad lines with two or three chapters each. The first contains two chapters on Ukraine, authored by Walzenbach and Kuzyk, which offer, respectively, a comparison of the European governance system and transformations within the country, while the second one points mainly to the quest

on national or missing national identity as a potential facilitator on the political developments.

The second part of the book offers a heterogeneous panorama of three contributions which are difficult to be justified under the title of the second part 'Aspects of Nationhood –or its Absence'. This part contains in fact a review of the theoretical aspects of political psychology by Nenad Markovic who tries to explain the relationship and the combination of nationalism with mentality (intended by the author in terms of ethnic stereotypes and the consideration of the other) . The analysis is highly theoretical focusing (p. 111) on the methods used to manipulate the stereotypes, as a way of not only defining the national identity, but also as a potential tool of triggering violence and hatred among different ethnic groups (p. 123).

The fourth chapter is a political and historical account of the study of religion in Bulgaria by Daniela Kalkandijeva . It tends to give an overall account of the role of religion, in the stereotyped vision of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, as one of the main factors in the making of the Bulgarian national identity. Kalkandijeva offers not only an account of the way in which the study of religion is carried out but also puts forward some of the main trends in the development of such studies in today's Bulgaria (p. 143). The third chapter of the second part on Belarus (p 145) from Baer is probably the most valuable piece of the whole volume. It analyses the evolution of the Belarusian political system, pointing out the absence of transition in the country and its relation to the fate of what the author has previously defined as the 'hegemonic imperial region' of the former Soviet Union. In fact, the first part tries to put forward a crucial concept, which explains the peculiar evolution of Belarus since the end of the Soviet Union, namely the concept of a 'neo-soviet' style regime. This kind of regime (p. 151) is mainly based on a post authoritarian conception of power, with a 'guided transition toward capitalism' (p. 152). Belarus represents, in this way, one of the most complete examples of "post-sovietism" as long as it retains and bolsters most of the features of the past regime, like a centralized economy or as an absence and refusal of political and ideological freedom.

The third part of the book is dedicated to the economic reforms in Russia. Overall it tries to remain in line with the theoretical prepositions exposed in the introductory part, concentrating mainly on the relation between the individual and the state. Rybakov's contribution on health care (p. 181) analysis one of the paradoxes experienced in many east European countries where an apparently free health care system is accompanied by private arrangements between doctors and patients. Malinka's contribution instead concentrated on the paradox of state guided capitalism in Russia and the difficult consolidation of the small and medium enterprises, which according to the author, could redress the social balance in the country (p. 243).

As explained in the introductory note, the book is the seventh work out of a nine volume series published on the basis of annual conferences held by the University of Fribourg concentrating on topics relevant to the Eastern European region. As such, the book suffers somewhat from the difficulty of putting together a coherently edited work, considering, too, the fact that a considerable portion of materials were presumably gathered from the 'Interdisciplinary Studies on Central and Eastern Europe' project. Furthermore, the book suffers from a visible degree of heterogeneity in the choice of the arguments presented. This heterogeneity is manifested in two crucial moments: that of the delimitation of the area under scrutiny, namely Eastern Europe and the selection of the arguments as in the case of the contribution of Kalkandijeva in the chapter on the study of religion in Bulgaria or the one on Nationhood and Mentality which are "miss fitted" in the volume. The theoretical delimitation of the term Eastern Europe, that the editor proposes in the introduction, should have eliminated the chapter on Bulgaria. As the parts on Ukraine and Russia seem to fulfill the initial prepositions of the book, the central part of it on 'Aspect of Nationhood - or its Absence' is highly heterogeneous in terms of the cases presented.

Nevertheless, from a global perspective, the book represents a valuable tool for understanding and studying the area in question, with special value brought by the chapters on Belarus or Ukraine, which provide an adequate picture of the difficulties of transition not only in terms of the international position of the countries in question, but also in terms of their national identities and the passivity of the civil society.

David Altman, *Direct Democracy Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

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Democracy, both conceptually and practically, has remained a subject of debate for centuries. Though ancient Greece is regarded as the birth place of democracy, there is disagreement over the nature, meaning and practice of democracy worldwide. Etymologically, democracy referred to direct popular government by assembled citizens. This kind of democracy came to be known as "direct democracy". In practical terms, Greek democracy was simple. People would assemble, discuss and votes would pass on a simple majority. This was made possible owing to the small number of citizens in the polity as well as simplicity of issues at the time. Distinctively, Greek democracy emphasised community autonomy as opposed to individual autonomy. Yet, the issue of inclusiveness in this democracy was