

BOOK REVIEW

Ian Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period*, Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002, 212 pp.

Ian Nish is an expert on Japanese studies and a teacher at the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he teaches international history. *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period* published by Praeger Publishers in 2002 is one of the many books the author published on Japanese history, of which several are worth mentioning: *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931-1933* and *Studies in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902-1923)*. As can be clearly seen, Ian Nish is a significant voice in Japanese foreign policy and bilateral Anglo-Japanese relations.

Containing 212 pages and 9 chapters, with a preface and an introduction, a conclusions section, a bibliography, and separate chapters for notes, abbreviations, and index, the book follows the development of foreign Japanese policy from 1919, the end of the Great War and the birth of a new international order, up to 1943 and the Great East Asian Conference. Chapters are ordered chronologically, detailing the problems of the Paris Peace Conference, Washington Treaty negotiations, Sino-Japanese relations up to the Great Depression, implications of the economic crisis and the realignment of Japanese foreign policy, departure from internationalism, rapprochement to Nazi Germany in the anti-communist struggle and ending with the disaster that was the Second World War.

The author's intent is to shed some light on interwar Japanese foreign policy in an academic environment heavily influenced by European ideas and interpretations. The 1920s and 1930s in Japan were not marked by Europeans in any way, Ian Nish noticed that this itself is a root cause for the chain of events that were triggered in the Far East. In any case, treating the 'interwar' Japanese foreign policy is not even a correct term when it comes to Japan, as for Japanese historiography, the interwar period is defined by the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 and the China incidents in 1937, a time frame larger than what the West usually conceives as being interwar. Even so, admitting that he is a European treating the international situation from an Asian point of view, Ian Nish manages to touch on areas that were previously not so well researched.

Great Powers and their relations with the Far East in general and Japan, in particular, are a central point of Nish's historical narration, especially when it comes to some important international agreements such as the Washington Conference of 1922, the London Conferences of 1930 and 1936, the Manchurian Incident of 1931, negotiations regarding China rights throughout the 1920s, but also when it comes to the increasing international isolation, in treaties signed with Germany in 1936 (Anti-Comintern Pact) and 1940 (Tripartite Pact), but also in the non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union in 1941. But even when discussing the Great Powers, Nish adopts a Japanese perspective, explaining the interests, hopes, and desires of the Japanese side during the negotiations.

Ian Nish does not offer a new perspective to interpreting Japanese foreign policy in the interwar period, following the classic line of thinking, which includes a weak Emperor, a Foreign Ministry incapable of imposing its will, and an increasingly stronger army. However, I consider that novelty comes in

analyzing foreign policy from the interpretations that the author gives when analyzing militaristic and expansionist policies. Unlike the critical attitude that many authors have when discussing Japan's 'active' policy, which in turn decreases the quality of analysis by adding an element of moral superiority, Nish adopts a neutral attitude, explaining rationally the line of thinking and ideals of Japanese leaders had when implementing certain politics.

Regarding bibliography, one can notice a rich Anglo-American literature regarding the subject, including a series of papers contemporary to Nish's book, from which the author took inspiration in his research, which shows his active interest in the subject. At the same time, Nish uses local sources in Japanese, enriching his book by adding a perspective that is difficult to access usually by a primarily western audience due to language barriers. This book is addressing to the large public as well as specialists willing to improve their knowledge on this particular topic. Ian Nish's book is welcomed as a much-needed counterweight to the profoundly American point of view on Japanese foreign policy. A reader may see Japanese foreign policy in a different and much more complex light than before, beyond the usually mentioned US-Japanese or British-Japanese bilateral relations. The increased importance that Nish puts on China correlates with the interest that Japanese leaders were having in this particular region. In fact, Sino-Japanese relations represent a central piece of this book because of the deep ways in which China influenced Japanese thinking and politics regarding Asia.

Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period is an extremely valuable and important book on understanding the causes of Japan's departure from internationalism in the 1930s, as well as on analyzing the complexity of factors that led to the Second World War. Offering a Japanese perspective, this book can

be linked with others regarding the history of the Asia-Pacific region, such as 'The History of US-Japan Relations from Perry to the Present' by Makoto Iokibe or 'After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921-1932' by Akira Iriye. But it can also be correlated to books regarding other aspects of Japanese politics such as 'Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941' by Michael A. Barnhart or 'The Japanese Empire: Grand Strategy from the Meiji Restoration to the Pacific War' by S.C.M. Paine.

Thanks to the access to original Japanese sources and English sources alike, Ian Nish's book masterfully explains the decisions which stood behind a course of action that the Japanese leaders well understood cannot be followed without bringing about the total destruction of Japan. It is a book recommended to all those who study the roots of the Second World War or to any study regarding the evolution of international relations in Asia-Pacific, treating in an objective and academic way the international arena from a Japanese perspective from 1919 to 1943.

Adrian Mocanu

Yael Tamir, *Why Nationalism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2020, 224 pp.

Yael Tamir was born in 1954 at Tel Aviv (some sources state that it was Ramat Gan, a city located east of the municipality of Tel Aviv). With a BA in Biology and an MA in Political Science from the Hebrew University, she also holds a PhD in political philosophy from the University of Oxford. She is a philosophy lecturer, joined the Labour Party, has been appointed Minister of Immigration Absorption and elected in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) in 2003, also member of different committees. Professor Tamir is the President of Beit Berl College and an adjunct professor at the Professor is the President of Beit Berl College and an adjunct professor at the Blavatnik School of Government, Oxford University.¹

The author presents in her book „Why Nationalism“, first published in 2019, a resolution to the existing social, economic, educational and political crisis. The book’s second edition was published in 2020 and has a preface by the author herself. Here Tamir emphasizes the fact that during the current SARS 2 Covid-19 pandemic, which affected most of the spheres of our lives, extremist and nationalistic voices became louder. Her thesis is that a revised and moderate nationalism would represent the only way to balance all inequalities and to solve the current crises that are sweeping the human society.

The book is divided into four parts summing up 21 chapters. The line of argument crosses the whole book. In the first part, she is depicting how after WWI the idea of nationalism started to regain ground, while by the end of WWII

¹ <https://jewishstudies.ceu.edu/yael-tamir>

it started being replaced by liberalism and globalism, especially in the West. Once liberalism started to gain more voice on the international political scene, it also opened the door to globalism. This has caused more damage than good and widened the gap between wealthy individuals and countries and those with fewer opportunities. It also restricted state control and therefore affected individuals “without pedigree”, making their educational and social ascent more difficult.

In the second part, the author reiterates the purpose of the book and also emphasizes the benefits and positive aspects of nationalism without denying its flaws. In each chapter, she presents how individuals’ lives have been improved over time once nation-states have been created and nations formed. While admitting that this is a construct, an imperfect one, Tamir enumerates the positive changes nationalism had had from a psychological, educational, material, and cultural perspective. She states that it is important to nurture nationalism, this duty falls both on the state and its citizens.

In the chapters of the third part, the faults of globalism, of liberalism are exposed and enumerated. The author argues that once these ideologies replaced nationalism, the nation-state started falling apart and failed its citizens. Once the liberal global economy kicked off and imposed itself on the world scene, the masses of working people were constrained to draw the losing card. She explains how liberals and social democrats, once established in the seats of power, forgot their duty to constantly renew nationalism.

In the fourth part, Tamir’s vision of a “New Social Contract” is presented in detail. A reformed nation-state’s political approach should be the answer to the economic and identity crisis that affected the majority of the global

population. Solving these issues should also help mitigate the existing social problems. She proposes four guiding principles. The first is to put one's country first, bearing in mind that others have the same right and responsibilities. The second would be that given the fact that no nation-state population is homogenous, ethnically, religiously, or culturally, the place of minorities in that nation should be secured. Thirdly the author suggests equally distributing the burden or "imperfection" of any decision that has been taken democratically within the nation-state. Last but not least, a constant nurturing and reviving of the sense of political and social optimism correlated with collective pride should be practiced on a habitual basis. For this Tamir suggests a *mélange* of ideas and principles borrowed from different schools of thought.

In conclusion, the book's message is to take out all the best that can be found in the idea of nationalism and the nation-state. While keeping this in mind, we should borrow any principles and strategies from any other political agenda or ideology, in order to reform human society for the wellbeing of the majority.

Andreea Nicolau

Mary Elise Sarotte, *Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*, London, Yale University Press, 2021, 567 pp.

„What if you let your part of Germany go, and we agree that NATO will not shift one inch eastward from its present position?“. These were the words that have been spoken in February 1990 by the American Secretary of State James Baker to the leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, which paved the way for a new fight for the security of post-Cold War Europe. A justified response to the challenges of the 1990s and the demands of the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, NATO enlargement provoked new animosities between the United States and Russia, which became a feature of the new international order that emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Mary Elise Sarotte, a professor of history at John Hopkins University, a researcher at Harvard's Center for European Studies, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and author, among other books, of *„The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall“*, examines in his most recent book *„Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate“*, the tension between Washington and Moscow upon the backdrop of the unpredictable political landscape of the 1990s. The 1990s was a complex decade that witnessed the astonishing collapse of an empire, the birth of new Eurasian states, the rise of visionary leaders, the redefinition of the possible realm of democratization, disarmament, and a market economy, but also open the door to new expressions of authoritarianism and ethnic cleansing. It was a critical decade that set the tone for geopolitics in the post-Cold War period.

The effects of American and Russian decisions during that crucial decade influence the relations between the two superpowers even today. The verbal exchange between James Baker and Mikhail Gorbachev created a controversy in the decade that followed. According to the transcript of the meeting, Baker said: „Would you prefer to see a united Germany outside of NATO, independent and with no U.S. forces, or would you prefer a unified Germany be tied to NATO, with assurances that NATO’s jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward?” The Soviet leader replied that any expansion of the „zone of NATO” was not acceptable. And, according to Gorbachev, Baker answered, „We agree with that.” This dialogue would be pointed out every time Russia wanted to remember to the American officials that they are part of an agreement barring NATO from expanding beyond its eastern Cold War border. In her book, Mary Elise Sarotte seeks to clarify the misunderstandings that have arisen around the moment that happened before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Based on interviews, transcripts of summits, documents, briefings, memorandums and secret recordings between the White House and the Kremlin recently declassified, Sarotte’s book uncovered new stories and write a diplomatic history from the perspective of what is happening today.

The strategic choices that American and Russian leaders have made over the years and the importance of these decisions for Euro-Atlantic security are the main themes of the book. It investigates East-West diplomacy in three parts. Part I is covering the period between 1989-1992 that opened with the fall of the Berlin Wall and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. A time when the reunification of Germany and the future of NATO were the biggest concerns of the leaders like Helmut Kohl and George H. W. Bush. Part II explores the years

1992 – 1994 when the U.S. – Russia relations started to develop a mutual understanding through the personal relation between President of the United States Bill Clinton and President of Russia Boris Yeltsin. At the same time, those years saw the beginnings of a resurgent and unstable Russia because of its use of military force in Chechnya and the attempted coup d'état against Yeltsin in Moscow. Finally, in part III the author analyzes the period between 1995 – 1999 when NATO began its expansion in the former communist states of Central Europe and new tensions arose in the bilateral relations.

Trying to discover why the relations between Moscow and Washington deteriorated so badly after a period of much promise, Sarotte presents with an analytical and neutral style how the new order based on cooperation after the end of the Cold War has led, a decade later, to a new demarcation line between states members of NATO and non-NATO members states. The American leadership had a determination not only to keep NATO alive but also to expand it after the end of the Cold War. At first, in 1994, they implemented a security partnership named the Partnership for Peace that would be open to the neutral and non-aligned nations as well as the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, including Russia and Ukraine. It provided a framework for enhanced political and military cooperation for joint multilateral activities, without extending NATO security guarantees, and paved the way for the states interested in becoming members of the North-Atlantic alliance. For some Clinton Administration officials, this program has been more like a waiting room until Central and Eastern European states would be accepted as full NATO members. Furthermore, as Russia became more aggressive due to its external intervention and oppression of political opponents, the US started to rethink its strategy.

The consequences of the decision to integrate the Western Alliance in Central Europe were not sufficiently considered by the American officials, according to the author of *„Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate“*. The accelerated open door policy of NATO obscured options that might have sustained cooperation in U.S. – Russia relations. The problem does not lay in the decision to enlarge NATO, but in how this enlargement happened. It seemed that Western leaders prioritized the safeguarding of Eastern Europe over the task of accommodating Russia. Although the Alliance expansion became a success, it is a success that came with a price. Now, NATO stretches from North America, Iceland, and Greenland to the United Kingdom, Europe, and the Baltics, covering nearly a billion people. But, at the same time, created animosities with a former adversary and a clearly demarcated front line, Ukraine and other post-Soviet states being in a gray zone.

That grey zone is at the moment a space where tensions and conflicts occur and where it became evident that the NATO expansion had its limits. One of those limits was Ukraine. By discovering and analyzing all the interactions from the past decades, the Russian invasion of Ukraine seems to be a sort of backlash waiting to happen. The earlier clashes between Washington and Moscow, which decreased trust and reduced both sides' openness to cooperation, created a cumulative effect of tensions ready to strike someday.

The choices that America and Russia made led the overall course of U.S. – Russian relations onto a trajectory that fell well short of post-Cold War hopes. All periods after the Cold War in which the two states saw each other as possible adversaries were followed by periods of cooperation in which a reset of relations was attempted. Now, maybe more than ever, the prospects of future cooperation

are diminished. Looking at the origins of these tensions between the U.S. – Russia that started to develop soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mary E. Sarotte writes a well-documented book, taking into account current concerns and the legacy of these events for the dynamics of today's international relations. „Why did the United States decide to enlarge NATO after the Cold War, how did the American decision interact with contemporary Russian choices, and did that interaction yield the fateful decline in relations between the two countries?“ are the questions to which relevant answers are given in her work.

Adherent to the principle of the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce that all history is ultimately contemporary history, Sarotte shows that the events from the early 1990s are still ongoing. The significance of what was said at that time is constantly brought up in the present debates, along with idea that the Russian was tricked by the U.S. regarding NATO enlargement. Seeking to debunk some of the myths that have been created over time, „*Not One Inch: America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*“ is a book that clarifies the never-ending biases about NATO and Russia relations after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Ștefania Teodora Cocor

Nicolae Ecobescu (ed), *România: Supraviețuire și afirmare prin diplomatie în anii Războiului Rece, Trei decenii de relații româno-americane, Documente II, 1973-1978*, Editura Fundația Europeană Titulescu, Bucharest, 2015, 741 pp.

Three Decades of Romanian-American Relations is one of the most important collections of diplomatic documents on the Romanian-American relationship during the communist regime in Romania. The European Titulescu Foundation has published a series of books and collections of documents, 7 volumes in number, dealing with the topic of Romania, survival, and affirmation through diplomacy during the Cold War, from 1945 to 1985. The last three collections of documents, entitled *Documents I* (1955-1972), *Documents II* (1973-1978), and *Documents III* (1979-1985), deal with the subject of Romanian-American relations throughout the period between 1955-1985.

Of the 146 sources in the collection of documents, more than 70 are transcripts of talks between various representatives of Romania, either Nicolae Ceausescu or Romanian ambassadors to Washington, and representatives of the White House, or US presidents. These are influential and particularly important personalities who played a decisive role in Romania's assertion in international relations, especially after 1968, when Nicolae Ceausescu condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops. The collection of documents also contains 9 letters, 21 notes of talks and discussions, 14 telegrams, but also a few isolated documents, such as memoranda, joint statements signed by the President of Romania, and the Presidents of the United States, joint information, and communiqués. All these documents, which appear in the table of contents and which make up this collection, reveal to us the way in which the two states maintained good diplomatic relations.

The communist regime, a bureaucratic regime par excellence, left to posterity thousands of valuable primary sources, which disclose how the communist personalities of the time related to the national environment and to the events that took place in Romania but also to the international environment and the problems stringent from the decade 1970-1980.

Documents II (1973-1978), a collection of documents of great importance in terms of research on Romanian-American relations during the Cold War, presents documents and extracts from documents, one of the most prosperous periods of Nicolae Ceausescu in the plan of international relations, a period that culminated in obtaining the "most-favored-nation clause" (1975), granted by the United States to socialist Romania. From the most pressing issues that prevented US officials from granting this preferential economic treatment in relations with Romania, the issue of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which is also an important point in US relations with the USSR, and which concerns the emigration of Jews from communist states, until the granting of the "most favored nation clause" for Romania, the documents presented in this volume are representative for outlining a broader perspective on the importance of the Romanian state in terms of international relations, at a time when, in Romania, democratic values were replaced by Soviet communist principles. Despite this, the collection of documents that I chose to analyze brings to the fore the importance that the representatives of the democratic world, in this case, the United States of America, gave to Romania, to this "dissident" country from the communist camp, a communist regime that did not agree with the policies dictated by Moscow.

This image of Nicolae Ceausescu appeared and developed in 1968, from the moment he condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the troops of the

Warsaw Pact, until 1988 when Romania lost its preferential status in relations with the United States and implicitly the “clause to the most favored nation”. During all this time, Nicolae Ceausescu received special treatment in relation to the other democratic states, making numerous visits to France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, and also the United States of America. In this review, the documents allocated numerous pages to the visits made by American officials to Bucharest (August 2-3, 1975, President Gerald Ford's visit), but also to the visits made by officials from Bucharest to the United States (December 4- 8, 1973, visit by Nicolae Ceaușescu, at the invitation of US President Richard Nixon, June 11, 1975, visit by Nicolae Ceaușescu, at the invitation of Gerald Ford, April 12-17, 1978, visit by Nicolae Ceaușescu, at the invitation of Jimmy Carter).

The broad topic of the collection of documents deals with very different issues, from transcripts of interviews given by Nicolae Ceausescu to representatives of US publications in Bucharest (Strobe Talbott, *Time magazine* -March 15, 1973, Nicholas Ludington, Permanent Representative in Bucharest of the *American Associated Press* -November 30, 1973, Seymour Topping, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the *New York Times* -December 1, 1973, Alvin Toffler, American Sociologist and Publicist-March 28, 1978, Khaterine Graham, coordinator of the *Washington Post* group of journalists - July 8, 1977, John Paul Wallach, journalist of the *Hearst Newspapers Press Trust* - March 28, 1978), numerous discussions with the Chairman of the Board of the Chase Manhattan Bank, David Rockefeller (January 29, 1973, December 7, 1973, August 28, 1974, April 17, 1978), talks with American senators (Edward Kennedy - December 5, 1973, Hugh Scott - April 19, 1974, Edward Kennedy, Dale Stuard de Hann, Jerry Marvin Tinker-May 4, 1977,

Harrison Williams-August 22, 1977, Adli Stevenson-January 10, 1978, Alan Cranston, Ted Stevens, Abraham Ribicoff, Jacob Javits- April 13, 1978, George McGovern -13 July 1978, Claiborne Pell- 20 November 1978), in talks with representatives of American companies (E.H. Boullioun, President of *Boeing*, March 15, 1973, Bucharest, Donald Kendall, President of *Pepsi*, June 5, 1974, Bucharest, Maurice Templesman, President of *Leon Templesman*, July 17, 1974, Mangalia, C.B. Branch, President of *Dow Chemical* - September 17, 1974, Bucharest, Robert E. Hage, Vice President of *McDonel Douglas Aircraft Corporation* - October 31, 1974, Bucharest, Leon Rubin, President of *Atlanta* - March 4, 1975, Bucharest , Albert Goore, Chairman of the Board of the *Island Creek Company* -June 27, 1975, Bucharest, Michel Friberg, President of the *Continental Grain Company* -July 16, 1975, Bucharest, Milton Rosenthal, Chairman of the *Engelhard Mienrals Company* -September 24 1975-Bucharest, George Gellet, President of *Atlanta Corporation* -February 4, 1977, Bucharest).

Another very important issue that has been the subject of numerous discussions between Nicolae Ceausescu and various representatives of the Jewish delegations in the United States and the Jewish World Congress, the issue of Jewish emigration from Romania, has been addressed, on the one hand, in the following discussions: with the US Jewish delegations, December 7, 1973, with Nahum Goldmann, President of the World Jewish Council, September 24, 1974, with Israel Miller, Representative of American Jewish Organizations, June 11, 1975, with David Bloomberg, President of the Jewish Organization B'nai B'rith, 4 November 1978, with Klutznik Philip, President of the World Jewish Congress, 17 April 1978 the talks between Nicolae Ceaușescu and Charles Vanik, one of the authors of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, human rights, and Jewish activist,

talks held on different dates: October 24, 1975, and March 31, 1978, in Bucharest. The logic of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, adopted by the 1974 Trade Act, signed by US President Gerald Ford in January 1975, which extended from the issue of emigration to the issue of human rights, kept the Bucharest administration on constant alert, has been the subject of much discussion, as we have seen above.

This collection of documents also contains the texts of agreements and declarations signed between Romania and the United States of America, including the "Joint Declaration on Economic, Industrial and Technical Cooperation between Romania and the United States of America" (December 5, 1973).), "Romanian-American Trade Agreement" (July 25, 1975), an agreement accepting the granting of the "most-favored-nation clause" for Romania, "Declaration of the President of Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu, and of the President of the United States, Gerald Ford, visit Romania "(August 3, 1975), and" Joint Declaration of the President of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Nicolae Ceausescu, and of the President of the United States of America, Jimmy Carter "(April 13, 1978).

Documents II (1973-1978), this collection of documents on Romanian-American relations during the Cold War, provides an overview of how Nicolae Ceausescu was perceived, and implicitly the Romanian state, internationally, by one one of the most important powers in the world, the United States of America. Documents from this collection lead me to draw the following conclusions.

First of all, the important number of documents included in this collection, as well as in the other two, leads me to conclude that the importance given by the United States of America to Romania was considerable.

Secondly, the various personalities who visited Romania, from the President of the United States to secretaries of state and senators, journalists, and presidents of American companies, increased the prestige of Nicolae Ceausescu, and implicitly of Romania, in terms of international relations.

Thirdly, the topic of discussions, from exclusively economic discussions, focused on collaboration between the United States of America and the Socialist Republic of Romania, in all fields of economics, discussions on the problems of the international system (the conversation between Nicolae Ceausescu and Henry Kissinger about the message brought by the Romanian delegation from Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestine Liberation Organization (December 5, 1973) a note of the Ceausescu-Ford discussion on the international economic crisis caused by rising oil and raw material prices (August 3, 1975), transcript of the discussion between Nicolae Ceausescu and Charles Vanik on the situation in the Middle East (October 24, 1975), on discussions on human rights issues and their observance in Romania, made Nicolae Ceausescu's opinion important and necessary in the whole context of the time. *Three Decades of Romanian-American Relations*, published by the European Titulescu Foundation, is one of the most important sources that a historian must consider in order to study Romanian-American relations during the communist regime, due to the complexity of the documents present in this report collection, but especially to the importance that the national and international academic environment offers,

in the context of the publication of this collection of documents, being published in other languages, not only in Romanian.

Dănuț Vasile

Tim Marshall, *The age of walls: How barriers between nations are changing our world*, Litera, Bucharest, 2020, 288 pp.

Over the past twenty years, boundary walls and fences have been erected worldwide, and no continent has been spared from the reinforcement of national borders. At least sixty-five countries, or more than a third of the world's nation-states, have built barriers along their borders to protect themselves. Border walls and fences have been used by the nations to separate them, protect trade routes and repel illegal migrants and refugees, defining the beginning of the 21st century. They were and still are perceived to be strategic, defensive, or demographic “filters”, erected for security purposes.

When the Berlin Wall has torn down a quarter-century ago, there were 16 border fences worldwide. Today, there are seventy-seven border walls all over the globe either completed or under construction, which means five times as many as when the Berlin Wall collapsed. The end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall appeared to be the end of an old world articulated around borders and state sovereignty territories. That new path was well-demonstrated by the European Union project of the single market, border-free travel, and the single currency, the euro.

By the end of 2015, over 1 million asylum seekers have arrived in Europe, many fleeing the civil war in Syria and being in need of international protection. The fear of massive illegal immigration has fuelled a new wave of wall-building worldwide, not only in Europe, although they have not proven wholly effective in fostering security. On the contrary, these walls don't discourage illegal migration but bring much suffering and death, the Mediterranean is considered the most deadly route to enter Europe. Many reasons such as demographic pressures, political persecution, human rights abuses, economic poverty, and food insecurity continue to push people to undertake risky journeys in search of protection and economic opportunities from their countries to neighboring countries, and further onward to countries outside their region.

Tim Marshall, BBC and Sky News foreign correspondent for thirty years, war correspondent in Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, in

the book *The age of walls: How barriers between nations are changing our world*, published in Romania for the first time in 2020 by Litera Publisher, does not limit himself to listing them and to describe its characteristics. He goes beyond, investigates in-depth, and tells the reasons that led to the construction of what Marshall calls "walls" but which are, in reality, barriers, fences, and divisions of all kinds.

Tim Marshall focused on those divisions that illustrate the best the problems of national identity in a globalized world, or the effects of mass migration on the wealthy nations (for example, the United States and the European Union), and how nationalism can be perceived as a force of unity, and at the same as a division line (China, the United Kingdom, Africa), and finally, the links between religion and politics that divided nations (Israel and the Middle East).

Nowadays, both authoritarian and democratic regimes appeal to building walls. The claim by Donald Trump shortly after assuming the U.S. presidency in 2017 that "a nation without borders is not a nation" is, therefore, no coincidence. The Trump administration insisted on the narrative of building a wall on the border with Mexico, giving more grounds for these types of constructions, thus more legitimacy. Since then, the *border wall issue* has returned to play a central role in international relations and domestic politics.

Marshall recalls that physical divisions represent a reflection of the cultural, religious, and ideological divisions - the great ideas that guided our civilizations and gave us an identity and a sense of belonging - such as the Christian schism, the splitting of Islam into two factions, or the two systems closer to our days, fascist and democratic regimes of the XX Century.

Faced with several threats, such as financial crisis, terrorism, armed conflict, refugees, illegal immigration, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor, people become more attached to their identity groups. In the era of internationalism, nationalism has not completely disappeared. The fear of everything that is or represents the other is accentuated and in the end, it all

comes down to the concept of **us** and **them** and to the "walls we build in our minds", even before making them become real, physical. Even these invisible barriers are often just as effective as the real ones. We need to become aware of what has divided us, and what continues to divide us, to understand what is happening in today's world. And that's exactly what Tim Marshall did in the book. Our ability to think and build gives us the possibility to fill the spaces divided by the walls with hope, in other words, to build bridges.

Marshall criticized the idea of "totally open borders", although it might seem a tool that could end poverty in the poorest countries. On the other side, such a theory would devastate the migrant's countries of origin, at the same time, would fuel the right-wing parties to gain significant ground almost immediately in the wealthy nations. The end of the nation-state and national borders is far. However, globalization, the emergence of federal superstructures such as the EU, the rise of city-states, and, lately, the boom in cryptocurrencies like bitcoins could tell another story.

This book places the reader in front of an undeniable reality of the human being and invites us to reflect on the great themes and the many ideologies that divided us, hoping that all will end up uniting the world although their original purpose was to divide us.

In 1989, an important barrier, the Berlin Wall, fell, ushering in what appeared to be a new era of openness and internationalism. In the wake of the enthusiasm of those moments, some intellectuals came to predict the end of history like it did Francis Fukuyama. In the summer of 1989, in the article *The end of History?* Fukuyama's argument was that, with the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union, the last ideological alternative to liberalism had been eliminated and the entire world was heading toward a liberal order. It was a misunderstanding, as Marshall himself points out, because "the history does not end". Never. The thousands of kilometers of walls and fences unfortunately built or leftover since then offend our sensitivities and demonstrate our inability to

resolve differences, representing a sad and blatant demonstration of our helplessness. As long as illegal immigration remains one of the central topics in international politics, new walls will be constructed to hamper migration flows.

Mihaela Mustăța