

## BOOK REVIEW

Lawrence Freedman, *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 248.

In March 2014, the international community faced one of the most serious crises since the end of the Cold War. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Crimea, which had been part of Ukraine, was now part of the Russian Federation territory. Shortly after, Russia's unexpected invasion of the Crimean Peninsula was followed by an armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine between pro-Russia separatist rebels and the Ukrainian forces. The actions were condemned by the Western states, Russia being sanctioned for breaching international law. The conflict that emerged seemed to be a turning point for Russia's relations with the West and a reminder of how fragile the peace could be. The crisis not only isolated Russia on the international scene but also raised the political temperature across Europe, causing NATO to look to its own preparedness for war and the need to shore up deterrence.

Lawrence Freedman, Emeritus Professor of War Studies at King's College London and author of *Strategy: A History* (2013), *The Future of War: A History* (2017), presents in his new book, *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy*, the Ukraine conflict through the lens of political and military strategy. He provides a brief history of the Ukraine conflict in the context of the various tensions that have developed in and around the former Soviet Union region since the end of the Cold War. Exploring the problems of strategy, Freedman has tried to discover

how the actors involved in the conflict identified their objectives, how they sought to achieve them, and to what extent were they successful.

The book opened with a theoretical discussion about the main strategic concepts developed during the 1950s and 1960s that continue to influence the strategic discourse nowadays. Concepts like „crisis management“, „deterrence“, „coercive diplomacy“, „limited wars“ and „economic sanctions“ are analyzed in the first chapter. This overview of the theory of strategy sets the tone for the case study of the Ukraine conflict that is examined in the next three chapters. Beginning with the origins of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Freedman explores the triggers of the conflict, the battles that erupted in Donbas, how the Western powers reacted after President Putin annexed Crimea, and the broader international context that influenced the dynamic of war from late 2015.

After the apparent successful annexation of Crimea, President Putin was seen as a strategic thinker who was prepared to use the military as well as diplomatic and economic means to pursue his agenda. Before the crisis in Ukraine, Putin seemed to have the upper hand in relations with the West. In 2013, when U.S. President Barack Obama held back after Bashar al-Assad crossed a prior „red line“ by using chemical weapons against the Syrian population, Putin came up with the idea of cooperation between the U.S. and Russia to remove Syria’s chemical weapons peacefully. Russian President made it clear that he could get Assad to cooperate, but the U.S. had to refrain from bombing Syria. The diplomatic way-out proposed by Moscow allowed the Kremlin to show off its coveted great power status, strengthen its position in the Middle East, and portray Obama as an indecisive leader who draws „red lines“ and does not respect them.

At the same time, as Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich was about to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union, Putin used economic coercion toward Kyiv and applied extensive customs controls to all imports from Ukraine. His threats convinced the Ukrainian President to suspend the preparations for signing the Association Agreement with the EU and move toward Russia's sphere of influence. When the Euromaidan protests erupted and Yanukovich fled from Ukraine, Russia looked at what was left in its toolbox. Support for an armed attack and the fragmentation of Ukraine seemed to be the last resort in stopping Ukraine's Westward shift.

Freedman questions the idea that Putin was a „first-class strategist“ who managed successfully the Ukrainian crisis. According to the author, the Russo-Ukraine conflict is a story of situations made worse, with moves that failed to achieve what was intended or else resulted in unintended and damaging consequences.<sup>1</sup> For Putin, the most striking evidence is that he couldn't change the political trajectory of Ukraine. On the contrary, Ukraine continued its Western aspirations. Besides that, Putin's actions led to Russia's isolation on the international scene and harmed the economy. These outcomes showed that Russia didn't have a long-term strategy. Instead of playing „geopolitical chess“ and thinking several moves ahead of the opponent, Putin was playing „geopolitical judo“ which is about immediate tactics, not a long-term strategy.

Trying to understand if the Russian strategy was innovative and successful, the author looked at the whole range of instruments applied by Moscow in its pursuit of maintaining Ukraine in Russia's security orbit. As was

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 164.

seen throughout the crisis, Russia acted out of a sense of threat. Its hasty decisions and the apparent lack of strategy created a prolonged conflict in Eastern Ukraine in which Russia gained hardly an advantage.

The conflict in Ukraine has been seen as a test for modern warfare. The information campaign and cyber-attacks that were used as coercive practices by Russia reflected the new features of the war. In his book, Freedman describes the moments in which Moscow used modern technologies not only against Ukraine but also against Western democracies. From spreading fake news in Europe through its media outlets like *Russia Today* and *Sputnik* to the interference in the American presidential elections in 2016, Russia tried to undermine Western governments and expose their vulnerabilities. However, these practices didn't outweigh the use of regular forces on the battlefield. As a result, the conflict over Ukraine is a reminder that hard power never quite goes away and that the use of force is still critical when setting borders and changing political regimes.

Founded on three pieces of articles about the crisis in Ukraine written by Freedman while the fighting was going on in the Donbas region, the book is a compelling and concise analysis of the Russian-Ukraine war. Although the author doesn't claim expertise in either Russia or Ukraine, his knowledge of the history of strategy and his ample research on the subject made „*Ukraine and the Art of Strategy*” an essential book for those who want to understand the impact of the strategy in a conflict that seems to change the post-Cold War international order.

**Ștefania-Teodora Cocor**

**Richard Ned Lebow, *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2010, pp. 287.**

*Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War* by Richard Ned Lebow was published for the first time in 2010 at Cambridge University Press, and it is a scholarly work made up of 295 pages on the subject of international relations. It deals with the frequency and characteristics of the wars that occurred in the last four centuries and analyses the reasons and risks taken by the combative parts, in relation to the realist theory of war, the rationalist theory, and the theory of the transition of power, using as arguments multiple historical examples. The book is divided into three parts: the previous literature's analysis and critical remarks referring to war and its causes; a short review of the author's international relations theory and six claims about the type of states that are more likely to start a war, using as an example an analytic table of the causes, participants and outcome of the wars that occurred since the seventeenth century up to that date; and the probability of war in the future, taking into account fundamental underlying motives like fear, interest, honor or standing. In the end, an *Appendix* states the original data used in the book, and there is also a bibliographical list and an *Index* of names and keywords.

Richard Ned Lebow is an American Professor of International Political Theory in the War Studies Department of King's College London, born in France on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1942 and raised in New York. He studied at the Universities of Chicago, Yale, and New York, where received a Ph.D. diploma in Political Science in 1968. He is also a Bye-Fellow of Pembroke College, University of Cambridge,

and James O. Freedman Presidential Professor Emeritus at Dartmouth College, a Fellow of the British Academy, and a recipient of honorary degrees in France, Greece, and the U.S. During his over sixty years-long academic activity he has written 40 books and over 400 scholarly articles, enriching with his studies the fields of international relations, comparative politics, political theory, political psychology, history, and philosophy of science.<sup>2</sup>

The original contribution that this book brings to the area of political studies is exactly this analysis of the emotional reasons for war, the author proving through his statistics that the main causes of conflict are neither the realist fight for security, nor the antagonism between two great powers advocated by the transition of power theory, or the rationalist material interests. Instead, in most cases, all of these aspects fall second to more temperamental reasons like the fight for standing or seeking revenge which scholars almost completely ignore.

When it comes to the definition of war, international law distinguishes between civil war, fought between two parties inside the borders of the same state, and interstate war, waged between the governments of two independent countries. Nevertheless, this classification does not include conflicts without a declaration of war or fights between political units that haven't been recognized as states by their adversary or by other actors. However, war is different from other forms of violence because of its political aims and its organized form. Modern war is based on the state as a sovereign political unit that holds a monopoly over the use of force on its territory. So, we cannot speak about modern war before the seventeenth century when the concept of a sovereign state

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Ned Lebow's website, URL: [Richard Ned Lebow](#), accessed: 12.07.2022.

was established, the difference between intra - and interstate violence was made, and war and peace were legally defined as such. Lebow adds to this the condition that one of the parties should have suffered more than 1000 battle deaths in a war.

Historically speaking, combat is less frequent nowadays due to “the advanced economic development, the increasing destructiveness of war, the spread of democracy, growing trade and interdependence among developed economies, international institutions and norms and widespread disgust with war as a practice”.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the best reason to still go to war and win the support of public opinion is national security. Such a decision triggers people’s feelings: the fear of an aggressor, the seeking for revenge, defending, or gaining honor. For example, American public opinion, otherwise strongly anti-war, considered the American interventions in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq precisely on behalf of national security. Here we can also include the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine.

One of the most common reasons for which states went to war over time was to seek territory as a guarantee of security, certain economic interests, or standing. Following the steps of ancient philosophers like Plato or Aristotle, Lebow deems spirit, appetite, and reason as the fundamental drives of human behavior. To all of these, the author adds three fundamental emotional reasons that proved over time to be a basis for war: fear, interest, and honor. However, we must bear in mind that in the real world, all of these elements are present and mixed, and the degree of these variations gives the original character of every

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *Why Nations Fight: Past and Future Motives for War*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 6.

conflict. Lebow believes that spiritual reasons are too little taken into account by contemporary philosophy or social science, although they are always present, being the basis of the human lust for power, affirmation, and prestige. While it is true that states or governmental institutions lack reason or emotions, the people who run them often project their psychological needs or personal ambitions onto their political units and influence their performance from this point of view.

The author defines spirit as “an innate human drive, with self-esteem its goal, and honor and standing the means by which it is achieved.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time, rank is the position that somebody has in a hierarchical order of statuses, which should be proportional to the amount of honor, privileges, and responsibilities that it brings. Appetite is the lust for material possessions, with cooperation being the path to meeting these interests. In an ideal liberal modern world, the possible conflicts that would appear would be nonviolent and based on the general mutually agreed rules. The reason should be the element that educates and tempers passions, which determines the actors to choose cooperation in foreign policy and compromise for a partial mutual win, rather than a full one-sided victory. Fear is rather emotional than spiritual, it is a feeling hard to control, born out of imaginative exaggeration and imbalance, which creates an immediate need for security that could lead to irrational actions. A world based on fear is extremely irrational, suspicious, conflicting, and full of situations that can easily go out of control.

Contrary to the previously discussed theories of war, the propositions that Lebow makes at the end of his argumentation are meant to summarize the most important factors that would determine a state to resort to military

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 69.



confrontation: the most aggressive states are “rising powers seeking recognition as great powers and dominant great powers seeking hegemony”<sup>5</sup> (for example, France under Napoleon I or Nazi Germany) which rarely go to war against each other, but when they do, they ally with at least another great power (Seven Years War, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905); rising powers usually target a declining great power, a weaker third party or another great power which is perceived as temporarily weak (Russia’s eighteenth-century victories against the Ottoman Empire or Prussia’s successful challenge of Austria in 1866); “hegemonic wars are almost all accidental and the result of unintended escalation”<sup>6</sup> (First World War), miscalculation of chances having most of the time deeper causes than insufficient information; weak and declining powers quite often initiate wars against great powers in order to avenge themselves and almost inevitably lose (the nineteenth-century Ottoman attacks on Russia).

To conclude, from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, war has gotten to a peak of destructive potential due to the invention of nuclear technology, but is currently less occurring. Beginning as a way of social practice for kings or aristocracy, war became a subject of concern for the whole population after the development of the modern nation-states, but it was still economically and technically limited throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Beginning with the nineteenth century, public opinion disagreed more and more with the idea of war and foreign occupation over a local population. However, it took us two world wars with tens of millions of victims, acute cultural and intellectual consequences, as well as other decades of Cold War, full

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95.

of ideological international tension that burst into armed conflict only in a few isolated regions of the world, to accept the idea that it takes more than the absence of war to preserve peace and security. Although, as Lebow says, “throughout the twentieth century and into the current one, honor, resentment, vengeance, and sheer malice were – and remain – powerful motives in international affairs,”<sup>7</sup> the destructiveness of war and the general disagreement with this practice led to a general drop in their number nowadays. The book ends on an optimistic note for the future, taking into account the growing development and understanding of security as a concept and all of the lessons that humanity should have learned from its tragic past experiences.

**Roşoga Cristina**

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26.

**Daniel Tudor, *Coreea de Sud: povestea unui fenomen economic, politic și cultural*, București, Editura Corint, 2022, pp. 440**

Daniel Tudor is a writer, entrepreneur, and former journalist from Manchester, U.K. He worked for *The Economist* from 2010 to 2013 as Korea Correspondent, writing about North and South Korea. Tudor graduated with a BA in philosophy, politics, and economics from Oxford University and acquired an MBA from the University of Manchester's Business School. Among his writings, the most controversial book is *North Korea Confidential* published in 2015 and translated into Romanian in 2020, a book which ultimately brought him threats from North Korea's regime. Among other papers, he wrote *Korea: The Impossible Country* (2012), *A Geek in Korea* (2014) and *Ask a North Korean* (2018). He worked as an advisor to the international press to the Moon Jae-In administration between 2017-2018.

*Korea: The Impossible Country* represents the latest book translated into Romanian and published by the British author. After 10 years since printing, *Korea: The Impossible Country* has been translated for Corint Books by Sorin Șerb. This book is about "the poorest, most impossible country on the planet" upon its foundation, according to an advisor to its third president. It is about "the second Asian miracle" and the "Han River miracle", the unknown Republic of Korea overshadowed by its brother, the so-called Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Divided into five parts, plus an introduction and an epilogue to shape and conclude his ideas, Daniel Tudor's book explains the mentality of a nation and

the contemplative nature of Korean people. He begins with a short introduction, basically *a brief history of Korea*, from Antiquity to the present, and goes on with the first part. Every part has 6 chapters, each of them debating a principal subject. For instance, in *Part I: Foundations*, the main theme is the belief system, starting from shamanism thinking, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and proceeding with political views, capitalism and democracy. In the second part, *Cultural codes*, the key issue is the Korean terminology, fundamentally some words in the Korean language like *Jeong*, *Chemyon*, *han* and *heung*, and, of course, some archetypes like competition, “from Clan to Nuclear family” and Neophilia. In the third part, *Hyun-shil: cold reality*, the accent is on the true face of the world and the politics of dictatorial and democratic regimes, from the Korean War to the present. In the fourth part, *In the hours not spent working*, the leading term resides in the everyday activities, the living space and divertissement. The last part, *More of “us”, and less of “them”* is about the awareness of self, nationalism and modernization at the core of Korean thinking. To sum up his conclusions, in the *epilogue*, Daniel Tudor points out some negative aspects about South Korea, like the tragic rate of suicide and depression, or the rank on the “Satisfaction with Life”.

Tudor is a *maestro* in writing down ideas about society, mentality, and human acts. In his book, South Korea becomes an important actor on the international scene and is a part of a bigger puzzle in Asia. Today, the Republic of Korea is not only a *dragon* but also a force within East Asia. It is the counterpart of Japan and China, and its supremacy is still ascending. The author explains *why* Korean people are acting like *aliens*, permanently active and working, without rest. They have few hobbies, and their vacations will last a few

days rather than weeks. Despite their wealth, Koreans are never satisfied and happy. Having overcome civil war and starvation and gone from a defeated land and colony to an advanced, modern, and democratic country through determination and stubbornness, South Koreans are worthy of sitting back and resting. But this seems to be, in a Korean manner, impossible.

From the 1950s onwards, the Korean mindset changed. In a world full of poverty, the main theme became *competition*. It was necessary to be competitive as a child, as a parent, as a politician, or even as a whole country. To survive, Koreans needed to focus on developing human skills and then put them to endless use. To dig themselves out of their horrific situation, the nation's youth had to be educated as well as possible, and as adults, they had to work as hard as possible. Even General Park Chung-Hee, the dictator of South Korea between 1961 and 1979, was obsessed with statistics: the export volume, inflation data and the rate of education. Everything must be compared. Even today, journalists and politicians make constant reference to the position of South Korea in world GDP ranking tables. Though it may seem strange, South Korea as a country must own the first place in everything. To a greater extent, children too are very competitive. In an elitist country, even in their first years of existence, a child must be the first in their class, and the first in their school. Education is the only way to be successful in life. And this is, ironically or not, the real cause of unhappiness, mental problems, and suicide.

The author Daniel Tudor considered it mandatory to illustrate both the internal and external political life of South Korea and the impact of political events on Korean people. The structure of the book makes it accessible for an unknowing reader to enter the world of Korean culture and to understand some

valuable Korean paradigms. Thus, the book *South Korea: The Impossible Country* or *Coreea de Sud: povestea unui fenomen economic, politic și cultural* becomes an agent in shaping some precious judgements about The Republic of Korea as an independent and wealthy country.

**Maria-Magdalena Viorean**

**Pierre-Jean Luizard, *Le piège Daech. L'État islamique ou le retour de l'Histoire*, Éditeur La Découverte, Paris, 2015, pp. 187**

Written in 2014, released at the publishing house from Paris, *La Découverte*, the book *Le piège Daech. L'État islamique ou le retour de l'Histoire* stands as an elucidatory reading not only on the terrorism and Islamic State issues but also on the contemporary history of the Arab states. The author of this book is Pierre-Jean Luizard, a French historian and researcher specialized in the religious and political problems in the Middle East. Currently, he holds the position of research director at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris. Aside from *Le piège Daech*, Luizard published works like *La Question irakienne* (2002) and *Laïcités autoritaires en terres d'islam* (2008), as well as articles for the French press.

The book *Le piège Daech* (full title in English: *The Daesh Trap. The Islamic State or the Return of History*) is Luizard's best-known work and was awarded *Prix Brienne du livre géopolitique* in 2015, a prize given for the books that succeed in explaining complex and topical subjects. Therefore, this is a popular history book, even though its arguments are backed up with scientific evidence such as historical documents.

*Le piège Daech* was translated and published in Romania at Polirom in 2016 as part of the Hexagon collection. It can be found under the title *Capcana Daesh. Statul Islamic sau reîntoarcerea Istoriei* and it is available both printed and electronic.

The book is structured into six chapters, two dedicated to the Islamic State, one to the contemporary history of the Middle East starting with the

Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the remaining three were kept for a few Muslim countries. Among those countries, the attention falls mostly on Iraq and Syria, while Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are approached in relation to the evolution of the first two. Iraq and Syria are treated separately, each with their own chapter, because at that time they were directly threatened by the IS which even conquered strategic points from both.

To prove that the success of Daesh is not based just on strategic reasons, the author presented a brief version of the contemporary history of the Middle East. The memory of betrayal from Sykes-Picot is exploited by radical Islamic propaganda in sending anti-Western messages. This way, Arab nationalism and unity are promoted in spite that Pan-Arabism is a pipe dream, as the author shows. Due to political and especially religious and ethnic factors, the Middle East will never be able to provide a unified Arab state. Moreover, those weak points make the perfect instruments through which the IS secures its power.

The author's hypothesis according to which Daesh feeds on the weakness of the Arab states has two dimensions: political and religious. Both are strongly connected and that caused problems throughout the past. For example, the British made sure that Iraq would be led by the Sunni Muslims who represent the religious minority in the country, and so, the majority, the Shia Muslims, were led by the minority. Because of this, the Sunnis were not supported inside the country, but outside of it by the British. The strategy of the United Kingdom to empower the minority worked well: the authority of the Iraqi leaders depended on foreign will. The power balance changed after the 2003 invasion when Saddam Hussein was overthrown and the old political class was replaced with Shia Muslims. The majority took hold of the power and so the West lost its



loyalties. In addition, the Shia revenged the Sunni for the long time in which their political rights were taken away. The Shia government implemented repressive policies and crushed the Arab Spring uprisings. This is the background in which the IS, whose members are Sunni, popularized its ideology and persuaded the Iraqi Muslim minority to fight on their side. The state lost its citizens to extremist movements.

I think the explanation given for the quick rise of the Islamic State in 2013 is founded on solid grounds as it regards the history of Iraqi society's problems. The corruption and social inequality (in human rights, and living standards) based on religious differences affected the security of Iraq, especially in confrontation with the radical movements that promise a better future to those persecuted.

Although the years following the book's release proved there are limits to the Daesh forces and that the author's pessimistic prognosis did not become reality, the question about the meaning behind Western actions still stands. Aside from the stalemate and the impossibility of self-governing in the last centuries, the Middle Eastern states became the subjects of Western missions that lack political objectives. The author sees frailty and hostility in the Western coalition's actions in relation to the Middle Eastern people, considering the radical Islamic propaganda too.

Muslim states are also condemned. This is the case for Turkey led by Erdogan who did not take measures against the IS, in fact, he even encouraged the threat. He hoped that if Daesh expanded in Syria, the country would be weakened and Bashar al-Assad would lose his power. The Kurds, one of Erdogan's targets, would have been affected too by the Islamic State's actions.

But the winner from this strategy turned out to be the IS, while Turkey entered into a time of isolation from both Arab and Western states.

I agree the book *Le piège Daech. L'État islamique ou le retour de l'Histoire* by Pierre-Jean Luizard accomplished its goal: it shed light on the context in which Daesh assured its quick rise. The author succeeds through accessible writing to introduce the reader to the history of the Middle East and its political, religious, and ethnic aspects. Together, they build the main hypothesis of the book: the Islamic State could obtain victories due to the Arab states' failures.

**Alexandra Veronica Moldovan**

**Mihai Manea, *Consiliul Europei. Politică și predarea istoriei în Europa*, București, Editura Nomina, 2018, 176 pp.**

Since its creation in 1949, the Council of Europe has promoted human rights and freedoms, the consolidation of democracy, political dialogue, and cooperation between states in the social, economic, and cultural sectors. Intending to have a united Europe, in which the inclusion and acceptance of diversity are some of the key elements in the growth of the individual, the Council of Europe has been involved throughout the second half of the 20th century, continuing until now, in the development of different levels of education in Europe, especially in teaching history.

The importance that the Council of Europe has given to history as a subject in European schools is motivated by history's potential to influence the masses. Depending on its nuances, history can be a tool for division or unity among nations and peoples. Considering this feature of history, the Council of Europe understood that, to have a society that knows the European identity and finds itself in it, history becomes a mandatory discipline within the education systems and fundamental for the development of European citizens.

Mihai Manea, professor of history, Ph.D. in the history of international relations and European studies, member of the National History Commission, and president of the Romanian History Teachers Association (APIR - Clio), is the author of scientific, methodical works and articles in periodicals dealing with various aspects of history. His work, "*Council of Europe. Politics and the teaching of history in Europe*" aims to identify and highlight the Council of Europe's notable

efforts in teaching history at the European level. Reiterating the need for history, a field that has become vast following its constant research, to be studied in order for people to acquire knowledge and understanding about themselves and others, the author appeals to all the meetings, seminars, projects, and symposiums supported by the Council of Europe during the 20th century and until now. The paper investigates the evolution of the requirements of history teaching according to time and social, political, economic, etc. circumstances, observing the adaptability to which the discipline of history has been subjected during seven decades. Thus, starting from the transnational and international character of history, it becomes a priority factor in developing young people who get historical and civic education through it.

In the book's first part, the author analyzes the connection between history and political science, demonstrating that, in its interdisciplinarity, history defines political science. At the same time, in an interdependent relationship, history takes shape and meaning thanks to political sciences. History creates a broad palette of study, and through its connection with the other social sciences, there is an interest in researching fields such as economics, psychology, sociology, philosophy, etc. The author continues by presenting the constant concern of the Council of Europe about the way history is taught in schools, stemming from history teachers' propensity for subjectivism.

Until 1989, the Council of Europe was concerned with transforming history into a discipline that led to uniting people, developing inclusive mindsets, and being open to diversity and understanding. By creating joint working groups between pre-university and university education teachers, researchers, and specialists, the Council of Europe led to the rapprochement of different cultures

and ways of seeing history to reduce subjectivism, capable of arousing animosity among young people. With the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, the Council of Europe saw the need to teach history with the aim of spreading and consolidating democracy in the states now on this path.

The 1990s are described as focusing on the concept of national and European identity, aiming to make a connection between the two. That is why, during this period, through its meetings, the Council of Europe aims to treat sensitive or controversial topics of history and popularise the idea of European history and the role of the history teacher to preserve truthfulness and objectivity in the reporting of facts. At the same time, in the understanding of historical events, it is proposed to use a multiperspective approach, a method by which students are familiar with multiple perspectives by analyzing historical sources and including them in the historical narrative.

The teaching of history is divided in these years by strictly chronological themes, such as the Bolshevik Revolution or the Holocaust, with the aim of aligning the information and teaching methods of these events without being radicalized by subjective factors. Also, the Council of Europe facilitates the transformation and integration of former communist states into the democratic vision. It gets involved in regulating the study of history (especially in textbooks) - from a deeply ideologized discipline to one of the multiple perspectives.

In the last part of the work, the author Mihai Manea reviews the documents issued by the Council of Europe as a result of its projects, which also include the views on education and history teaching in the 21st century.

The 3rd millennium brings new challenges to the topic under discussion - the intensification of globalization and interdependence, terrorism and radicalism, migrations, and digitalisation. All this leads to the need to readjust the history teaching process according to the necessitate for intercultural dialogue, moving towards studying history from a social and cultural point of view.

The history teacher is thus seen as an "agent of the formation of the young generation", people with an analytical spirit and critical thinking, inclusive and open to diversity. In the 21st century, such training becomes possible thanks to new technologies and the multiplication of sources of analysis, a broadening of the spectrum of history, interest is developing in the study of the role of women in history, the history of diversity in which cultural differences are also promoted. After 2010, the attention of the Council of Europe focused on history taught as a sum of changes and interactions between people and cultures. History is seen as a discipline of thinking rather than memorisation.

Even though the evolution of history in European schools has been transformative and adapted to the requirements, the author mentions that, in some respects, the Council of Europe has maintained its position on some ideas. National history can only be studied within European and universal history. The discipline must present events from all points of view (even social, economic, and cultural). Moreover, history is also essential in direct relation with democratic citizenship, respectively with the development of an inclusive mentality, and promotes, above all the debate, the exchange of ideas between people.

**Maria-Corina Preda**

**Mark Galeotti, *Putin's Wars: From Chechnya to Ukraine*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2022, pp. 384**

To comprehend the brutal war initiated by Russia against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, Mark Galeotti published, shortly after the outbreak of the conflict, a comprehensive and insightful analysis of Vladimir Putin's military campaigns. The author is a British scholar and expert in Russian and European security affairs. He has written extensively on topics related to Russian politics, organized crime, intelligence, and military affairs. Mark Galeotti is known for his insightful analyses and commentary on Putin's regime, and he has authored numerous books and articles on the subject.

In the 1990s, Russia confronted a myriad of daunting challenges. Its economy was plagued by inefficiency, endemic corruption, widespread alcoholism, and pervasive apathy. Moreover, the nation was confronted with a series of pressing security issues. In this turbulent context, Russia was haunted by a deep-seated fear of insecurity that harkened back to its historical struggles. Moreover, when the Soviet Union disappeared and was replaced by the Russian Federation, the status of a great power vanished. The humiliation of the USSR's collapse and the feeling of encirclement were exacerbated by the Eastern enlargement of NATO, aggravating even more Russia's sense of insecurity.

Putin regretted the collapse of the Soviet Union and was resolute in his determination to reverse it by expanding Russia's borders, prioritizing the nation's survival and territorial integrity. In response, Vladimir Putin focused on strengthening Russia's military capabilities and implementing reforms within its

armed forces, viewing these actions as essential for ensuring the country's security and reinstating its stature as a global power. This initiative was predominantly funded through revenue generated by Russian fossil fuel exports. Through a militarized foreign policy, an expanding security apparatus, and ongoing modernization efforts within the military, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has thrust the Kremlin into the forefront of global geopolitics. Putin saw the restoration of military power as a cornerstone of national security, with the strategy of emphasizing national identity playing a pivotal role.

Moscow's strategy has been to instigate and perpetuate frozen conflicts, beginning with Transnistria in the 1990s, followed by Chechnya, then Georgia in 2008, and extending to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions—collectively referred to as the Donbas—in eastern Ukraine, near the Russian border. These conflicts have allowed Russia to station armed forces in the post-Soviet region, known as the "near abroad," and assert its influence. This region serves as a key arena for pursuing Russia's vested interests and is effectively under the control of the Russian Federation, showcasing the pivotal role of the Russian military as a tool of foreign policy. Russia's objectives include maintaining economic and political dominance in the region, as well as ensuring control over its military potential.

Russia perceives itself as perpetually under threat, facing challenges both domestically and internationally. Consequently, Russia believes it has the right to respond to these perceived threats, whether they originate from internal or external sources. The narrative emphasizes the importance of unity among Russians to confront these challenges effectively.

The author emphasizes that there is no **Gerasimov Doctrine** in Russia and Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed



Forces, is not a war theorist. He is credited by the West as the architect of Russian "hybrid warfare," a strategy that integrates traditional military tactics with non-military methods such as disinformation and cyberattacks to create favorable conditions for military operations. This approach has been colloquially termed the "Gerasimov doctrine." While the term "Gerasimov Doctrine" is widely used in Western discourse, in Russia Gerasimov himself has stated that there is no official doctrine bearing his name.

Mark Galleotti pointed out that in Ukraine, Russia overestimated its military power and underestimated the evolving nature of modern warfare. The traditional approach of relying on sheer numbers of troops and outdated equipment proved inadequate in the face of precision munitions and advanced technologies. The adaptability of armed forces to the changing landscape of warfare, characterized by advancements in technology, will ultimately determine success in future conflicts.

Putin's aggressive military actions have tried to project Russia's military power into its strategic neighborhood. From interventions in Georgia, Crimea, and eastern Ukraine to military involvement in Syria, these actions have demonstrated Russia's willingness to assert its influence and protect what it perceives as its sphere of interest. However, while these ventures have bolstered Russia's image as a military player, the full cost and consequences of these actions have yet to be fully realized. The immediate gains in terms of territorial control or political influence have been accompanied by significant long-term challenges and potential ramifications. One key aspect is the economic burden associated with sustaining military operations and supporting annexed territories. The costs of maintaining a military presence, providing economic

assistance, and addressing infrastructure needs in these regions can strain Russia's already struggling economy, especially when combined with international sanctions imposed in response to its actions. Moreover, Putin's wars have exacerbated tensions with neighboring countries and strained Russia's relations with the West. This has led to increased isolation diplomatically and economically, limiting opportunities for cooperation and development. Additionally, there are internal implications to consider. Military engagements and geopolitical ambitions may distract from pressing domestic issues, such as economic reform, social welfare, and political stability. Furthermore, the glorification of military prowess and expansionist policies can foster a sense of nationalism and militarism within Russian society, potentially perpetuating a cycle of conflict and aggression. In sum, while Putin's wars have demonstrated Russia's military capabilities and temporarily advanced its strategic interests, the full costs and consequences of these actions have yet to be fully realized. The bill for these endeavors, in terms of economic strain, diplomatic isolation, and domestic challenges, may come due in the future, posing significant risks to Russia's long-term security and stability.

**Mihaela Mustățea**