

From the Editor

In 2004, when the EU and NATO dramatically expanded eastward, there was a widespread Fukuyamian feeling that led many to hope Europe was finally united, and that peace and security had been ultimately attained in this part of the world. Eleven years later, such thinking seems wishful and rosy. The challenges confronting Europe nowadays are such that no one can be perfectly sure Europe will not disintegrate into disorder in the foreseeable future.

There are deep cracks threatening the foundation of the whole European house, such as the refugee crisis, stemming from bloodshed in the Middle East and elsewhere, mismanagement of the Schengen agreement and the euro zone, the growing influence of far-right and far-left political forces in most of the EU Member states, and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. However, despite the actual prominence of these cracks, there is an acute need to consider more profound premises of this all-embracing turbulence. For exactly this reason, the twentieth annual conference of Central European Political Science Association Conference, *Security Architecture in CEE: Present Threats and Prospects for Cooperation*, convened September 25-26, 2015 in Vilnius. Selected papers by participants in this conference (namely, Attila Ágh; Klaudijus Maniokas, Darius Žeruolis, and Sabina Karmazinaitė; Dovilė Jakniūnaitė; and Jacek Czaputowicz and Kamil Ławniczak) have been published in this volume. Together, with respective submissions from Jan-Erik Lane and Adomas Pūras, they form a comprehensive collection of timely articles that touch on some of the key issues that threaten to intrinsically destabilize the order in Europe and beyond.

To introduce the volume further, **Jan-Erik Lane** focuses on the gradual disentanglement between political parties and voters in Western Europe. By analysing this evolving process, Lane applies explanatory schemes of French sociologist Alain Touraine on increasing individualization in postmodern society and of the rational-choice approach. One might speculate that these signs may lead to even stronger repercussions in the much younger Central and Eastern European democracies. **Attila Ágh** reveals that political parties in this region have a negative penchant for establishing hegemon roles—a tendency that may seriously impair the responsibility and effectiveness of governance in these countries. Against this background, one can better grasp the complexities of the Europeanization of Lithuania since its access to the European Union, the topic explored by **Klaudijus Maniokas, Darius Žeruolis, and Sabina Karmazinaitė**. According to their findings, while Lithuania still has not developed into a full-fledged open-access regime, the most serious state capture attempts have so far been thwarted and economic progress has been considerable. Nevertheless, a lack of badly needed public sector reforms in Lithuania certainly makes stagnation, or even a setback, possible. A discussion of Lithuania's development would be incomplete without an account of geopolitical threats from neighbouring Russia. **Dovilė Jakniūnaitė** investigates the evolution of the relationship between Russia and Lithuania during the decade spanning

from 2004 to 2014. Her analysis is followed by a rather straightforward conclusion: despite new opportunities to improve Lithuanian-Russian relations since Lithuania joined the EU and NATO, Lithuania and Russia are clearly in a deadlock and the mutual distrust between the two countries may have even increased. Growing geopolitical tensions in Central and Eastern Europe also point to the importance of international relations (IR) as a discipline in the region. In this regard, IR scholars in Poland are researched by **Jacek Czaputowicz and Kamil Ławniczak**. Results of the most recent survey of scholars in this field are examined by Czaputowicz and Ławniczak, who delineate both differences and similarities between IR scholars of other countries and those of Poland—a country that may have the capabilities and ambition to play a leading foreign policy role among new EU member states, and in doing so, could dictate a regional trend. Finally, **Adomas Pūras** wraps the volume up by also inspecting the development of political science—or more particularly, of European studies. Pūras links the European Union's strategic discord to the strikingly different interpretations of Jean Monnet's thoughts and actions offered by Monnet's biographers and scholars of European integration.

The times in Europe and beyond are truly interesting, if not thrilling. And yet, the aforementioned challenges to peace and security signify the roles of both politics and the study of politics in sustaining development despite unsettled conditions. For this reason, the journal will continue to approach these issues in other volumes to contribute to a better knowledge of them.

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Best reading to all of you,

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Editor-in-Chief