


Foreword

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Dear Readers of the *International Studies Journal*,

It is a great pleasure to present this issue of *International Studies: Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, organised by the Faculty of International and Political Studies of the University of Lodz in Poland. The first article is written by Dmytro Drozdovskyi at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Shevchenko Institute of Literature, Kyiv, Ukraine, with the title *Cultural Orientations of the Politics of Education in Ukraine (2010–2013): Ideology Strikes Back*. It departs from the political context of 2010–2014 and the many reforms taken in the educational system in Ukraine which included institutional as well as policy changes and challenges. The discussion over the law *On Higher Education* became very intensified with a political contextual debate over American and European educational norms and values vs. an anti-West and more post-Soviet orientation, where the political domination at the time strived for closer relationship to Russia,

but with limited ideas over how to solve the challenges related to people's political orientations and the Ukrainian identity.

The following article, written by Sirvan Karimi from York University, School of Public Policy and Administration and the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies in Canada, on *The Democratisation Failure in the Middle East: Causes and Prospects*, addresses socio-political conditions that have cultivated a negative environment to democratisation in many Middle Eastern countries. The lack of democratic norms and values in the region is explained in terms of historical leftist actors against imperialism with hostility towards liberal norms and values, limited industrialisation, and the existing cultural and religious competitions and often anti-democratic loyalties.

The third article of this volume is developed by Toni Mileski from the Saints Cyril and Methodius University of Skopje in North Macedonia and Daniela Pachemska from Organised and Serious Crime Department, Ministry of Interior in North Macedonia. Their article on *The Geopolitical Context of Migrant Routes and Its Impact on Organised Crime in the Republic of North Macedonia* explores the challenges of migrant routes and illegal migration often connected to organised crimes from Asia and Africa to Central and Western Europe. Over the last years, the intensification of migration flows through the Western Balkan countries has had serious impact on socioeconomic, political, and security realities in the region as well as on human rights. The analysis explores illegal migration and related organised crimes, and identifies how the geopolitical context of migrant routes impacts illegal migration and organised crimes in the Western Balkans and North Macedonia. It also shed lights on how military conflicts and the lack of security, besides limited socioeconomic conditions, are triggering factors to the migration flows.

The Fourth and following article, written by Mufassir Rashid from the KRF Centre for Bangladesh and Global Affairs (CBGA) in Bangladesh, studies *The Political Economy of the Kafala Abolishment in Saudi Arabia*. It shed lights on the controversial Kafala system and the recent announcement to end the system due to, among other things, the Saudi Arabian political will to limit its economic dependency on oil and promoting a new more diversified economy. The Saudi Vision 2030 is a major reform aimed to boost industrialisation and a growing service sector as aspects of a more diversified economy in a post-Kafala setting. The Vision 2023 points in a new socioeconomic orientation in Saudi Arabia, although the abolishment of the Kafala system has not included domestic workers leaving the country with a new economic strategy based on current political-economic concerns, but with still inhumane practices for unskilled domestic workers.

The fifth article is co-authored by Laura Schreiner and Valerie Kastrup from the Department of Sports Science at Bielefeld University, Germany, as well as by

Jochen Mayer from the Department of Sports and Exercise, University of Education Schwäbisch Gmünd in Germany. The article titled *Sport for Development and Peace in the United Nations: An Empirical Study on the Development of the Role of SDP in the UN in the Context of the Closure of the UNOSDP* seeks to analyse why it was decided in 2017 that the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) will be closed as well as what effects this decision had on Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) in the United Nations. Based on the background that sport for decades has served as an instrument to promote peace, health, and gender equality within development policy projects, this study examines how the role and relevance have developed in a post-UNOSDP context, identifying controversies over tasks and accomplishments as well as issues of legitimacy.

The last article of this volume is authored by Daniel Silander from the Department of Political Science at Linnaeus University, Sweden. This article scrutinises the role of the European Commission in times of crisis by focusing on *Europe 2020: The EU Commission and Political Entrepreneurship*. This study adds to a large bulk of studies on entrepreneurship within Economics by conceptualising political entrepreneurship and the potential role that political actors may have when being entrepreneurial in the political arena. This study explores what role the European Commission took in a time of financial crises in 2008 and onwards, and what measures the Commission pushed for to promote a smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. The Europe 2020 Strategy was a symbol of how a political institution, such as the European Commission, became politically entrepreneurial in a time when EU member-states faced serious challenges and was politically paralysed by domestic economic struggles.

Finally, in addition to six well-written and highly interesting articles, this volume includes an interview on *Today's Ukraine* (interview was conducted on 28th of March, 2022) with Professor Dmytro Drozdovsky, academic fellow of the Department of Foreign and Slavic Literatures of the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and managing editor-in-chief of the *VSESVIT* magazine of world literature and translations. It is followed by the paper *A Few Outlines on Contemporary Ukrainian Lyrical Poetry under Fire Attacks*, developed by Yurii Kovaliv, a Ukrainian poet and professor at the Department of History of Ukrainian Literature, Theory of Literature and Literary Creativity of the Taras Shevchenko Institute of Philosophy of KNU, Ukraine.

I wish you all a pleasant reading!