

IV. BOOK REVIEWS

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DIGITAL HUMANISM REIMAGINED: BETWEEN ALGORITHMIC THREATS AND THE PROMISE OF AN ETHICAL GLOBAL AI GOVERNANCE

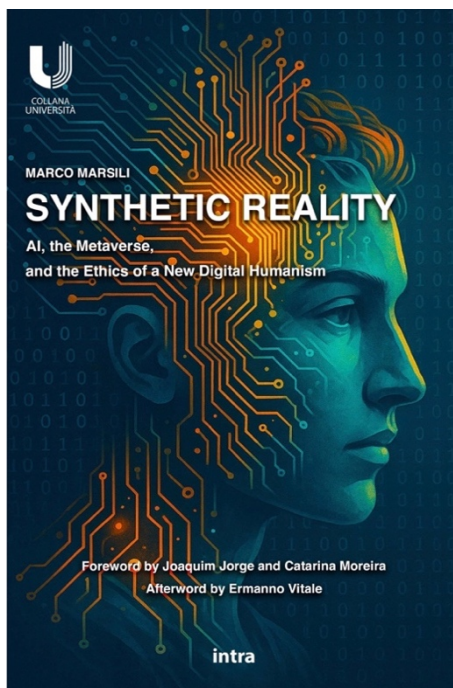
Edina Lilla MÉSZÁROS*

Book review of Marsili, M. (2026). *Synthetic Reality. AI, The Metaverse, and the Ethics of a New Digital Humanism*. Pesaro: Edizioni Intra. 135p. ISBN 979-12-5991-825-3.

Keywords: *digital humanism; global AI governance; metaverse; ethics; digital authoritarianism; regulatory framework.*

As noted by numerous researchers, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a pervasive phenomenon and an unavoidable aspect of our everyday life. It is not merely an in-vogue concept and a significant topic of public discourse, but a technology that significantly impacts and shapes diverse domains including employment, consumerism, science, warfare, decision-making, logistics, education, agriculture, public administration, culture, healthcare, media, recreation, and the list could continue. Some scholars are even speculating about a groundbreaking technological revolution taking place in the 21st century, poised to remodel the core framework of human society. It is widely assumed that artificial intelligence will play a crucial role in this transformation (Fuchs, 2022: 1-2).

Even though, pundits usually trace back the origins of the concept Artificial Intelligence to the 1950s, highlighting the pioneering works of Turing and McCarthy, they acknowledge that the aspiration for a systemic approach to understanding intelligence precedes contemporary times, discussed in the earlier writings of Rene Descartes, Louis Leon Thurstone, Francis Galton etc. (Paaß, Hecke, 2024: 10; Shafik, 2026: 2). While the British mathematician, Alan Turing is recognized to have laid down the theoretical basis for AI, developing the Turing test assessing a machine's cognitive capabilities in 1950, the coining of the concept itself is attributed to John McCarthy, the author of the LISP programming language, at the Dartmouth Workshop in 1956 (Paaß, Hecke, 2024: 10; Abhivardhan, 2024: 131; Wood, 2024: 15; Shafik, 2026: 3). Conversely, despite AI contouring as a self-standing



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discipline in the 20th century, the idea to generate artificial beings is not a modern aspiration but rather an enduring human ambition, deeply rooted in human history and mythology. Since antiquity, mankind has been preoccupied with ideas bringing into life artificial creatures endowed with intelligence by their inventors (Paaß Hecke, 2024: 15).

As other disciplines, AI also boosts with a significant number of branches, such as (Gregić, Lesinger, 2024: 437):

- *Problem-solving* aimed at formulating search algorithms within specific problems domains;
- *Knowledge representation* referring to the process of data storage and constructing a knowledge base with the capacity of integrating various forms of know-how;
- *Automated reasoning* involving the development of programs grounded in logical principles;
- *Planning and acting* envisaging the identification and implementation of the most optimal objectives;
- *Reasoning in uncertain environments* employing paradigms of probability and utility for the development of decision-making systems;
- *Learning*, directed towards developing algorithms enabling different types of machine learning;
- *Natural language processing* engaged in activities facilitating human-computer interaction by enabling speech recognition and automated translation;
- *Computer vision* tackling challenges in visual perception;
- *Robotics*, incorporating a wide range of aforementioned disciplines in physical machines.

Although widely acknowledging the positive effects of AI fostering the progression of human society and enhancing the quality of life in the 21st century, both specialists and laymen draw attention to the hidden dangers and potential risks associated to its headway. While experts are more focused on resolving technical vulnerabilities, problems in algorithms and systemic failures, the average citizens are concerned about the dimensions of AI directly influencing their existence through privacy breaches, job displacement, risks to economic frameworks, societal manipulation and even mental health issues. Additionally, the arising ethical preoccupations and blind spots, misinformation and various state and non-state actors exploiting the opportunities offered by Artificial Intelligence in order to threaten democracies, polarize societies, erode the trust of citizens in public institutions, have prompted the need for establishing adequate legal and regulatory frameworks (Shafik, 2026: xxiii-xxviii, 14). These legal frameworks are absolutely imperative on regulating the research in the field of AI and its societal impact, putting pressure on states and international organizations to enact AI legislations (Shafik, 2026: 16-20; Abhivardhan, 2024: 58; Paaß, Hecke, 2024: 412). While the need for an AI legal framework is well acknowledged across many decision-making levels, a consensus remains elusive, with countries such as the US, China, India or Canada pursuing divergent agendas, not to mention the supranational approach of the EU (Shafik, 2026: 187-194; Fuchs, 2022: 155; Prenga, 2024: 32-33). For instance, the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is regarded as a model on how privacy can be protected while enabling the proper application of AI, some authors even arguing in favour of its extension and accommodation in tackling the negative impact of emerging

technologies such as facial recognition, predictive policing and political campaigning informed by data analysis (Wood, 2024: 159).

Undoubtedly, the progress of AI has brought many benefits to mankind, promoting innovation in various fields such as transportation and education, the elimination of human errors and risks by enhancing diagnostic accuracy in healthcare, also making things more efficient through automation. Nevertheless, it has also resulted in the emergence of a varied plethora of challenges. For example, the consolidation of digital surveillance didn't only lead to safer cities and environments by reducing crime and strengthening community cohesion, but has also given more power to dictatorial regimes to curtail human rights and democracy, therefore establishing actual digital authoritarianism. Authors further argue that the advent of AI and digital automation has enhanced our lives, yet simultaneously introduced greater risks, like "digital warfare, digital fascism, [...], racism and hate speech online, electronic waste and unsustainable digital economies, the exploitation of precarious digital workers, digital dictatorships, digital inequalities and divides", fake news and deepfakes etc, turning contemporary societies more inhumane (Fuchs, 2022: 45-46). Ideas that a few decades ago seemed a fantasy, representing the main synopsis of books and Hollywood movies forecasting terminators and machines taking over authority from humanity via a rapid, calculated, and technological apocalypse, nowadays are closer to reality. Humanity being threatened by digital domination, digital capitalism and the violation of privacy, calls for the establishment of clear rules and boundaries. *Digital humanism* emerges as a solution cited in the specialty literature countering digital devastation, -domination, -exploitation, and digital dictatorship advocating for its widespread adoption in both academic and public discourse (Fuchs, 2022: 46-47). According to the prominent UN specialised agency, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization) AI and algorithms must prioritize and serve human interest not the opposite, highlighting the imperativeness of the development of digital technology and policies grounded in human rights, democracy, inclusiveness, diversity and ethics (DigHum, 2026; UNESCO, 2026).

In this context, Marco Marsili's book is an excellent academic contribution, shedding light on how these major technological advancements in the field of AI and the metaverse make notable anthropological shifts, thus demanding the establishment of a renewed ethnical framework grounded in respect for human dignity and commitment to democratic rule and accountability. Investigating how AI, synthetic reality and algorithmic governance are reshaping human experience lies at the very core of the monograph. The author while combining technical critique and humanistic inquiry within his research, also concurrently transposes insights from different fields, starting with law, philosophy, geopolitics, cognitive science and political theory. The monograph is structured around five main pillars and ten consecutive chapters. The work debuts with a preamble and an introductory section and concludes with an afterword, rather than rigorous scientific conclusions. The researcher does not only rely on the analysis of contemporary AI ethics and legislative frameworks, but borrows consistently from the works of prominent philosophers, like Arendt, Bachelard, Baudrillard, Nietzsche or Jonas, the book acting as a bridge, connecting philosophical inquiries with insights about current technological developments (Marsili, 2026).

The first part of the monograph comprising the initial three chapters is dedicated to offer a compelling historical and theoretical foundation, guiding the reader through several stages of AI evolution, starting with the early utopian visions about the internet, and concluding with the assessment of contemporary algorithmic infrastructure. The

reader acquires valuable insights into the Internet, beginning with its embryonic form, the ARPANET, tracing its evolution until its newest developments, the Web3 and the Metaverse. Here, the author formulates a serious critique on behalf of Web3, which despite promising free internet and a higher level of decentralization, instead has evolved into a reproducer of novel forms of control. According to Marsili, the concept of free internet has shifted towards surveillance capitalism and platform power, remaining just a utopian myth. Furthermore, the author highlights the potential adverse consequences of the tools that have arisen from Metaverse designs, including VR, AR, and MR on fields such as politics or warfare for instance, formulating concerns related to ethics, digital rights, manipulation and even autonomy. In the second part of the book the writer gives voice to well-founded preoccupations related to the potential degenerate nature of Artificial Intelligence. DeGen AI as cited, explores AI's dual nature, both the innocuous, beneficial and the harmful one, Marsili even drawing attention to addressing situations when AI chatbots have encouraged suicide to its users, persuading them towards self-sacrifice for example for the sake of climate change. In the authors' view, we cannot speak about enhancing the efficiency of AI without ethical constraints, thus calling for the establishment of a well-grounded legal framework at global level. Marsili underscores the trailblazing role of Europe/European Union in this regard, in his opinion the EU "becoming a global legal laboratory for the regulation of artificial intelligence and digital platforms", listing the GDPR, the Digital Services Act and the AI Act as the pillars of a cohesive regulatory framework (Marsili, 2026: 50). Marsili is even contemplating on the formulation of an authentic digital constitution. The third part of the book, emphasizes the necessity of educating the machine, introducing the concept of 'algorithmic pedagogy', analysing the development of AI through the lens of a pedagogical process. Creativity, hallucinations and the intriguing complexity of collective understanding occupy a central position within this section, the writer pinpointing the acuteness of cognitive sustainability, namely the necessity of preserving human autonomy in the face of potential overdependence on artificial intelligence. The penultimate, fourth section, reiterates the European Union's role as a global legal powerhouse for the governance of AI and digital platforms, further delving into its regulatory leadership, the EU advocating for a governance approach centred on humanity (human-centric governance model), dignity, ethics and accountability. The line between digital sovereignty and human sovereignty is thin, akin to the foundational ethical principle of liberal democracy "your freedom ends where the freedom of others begins," namely digital sovereignty must be anchored in human sovereignty. Beside the legislation established by the EU in this regard, this section familiarizes the reader with the regulatory AI frameworks set out by eminent UN and international institutions and agencies, such as UNESCO, OECD, ITU, Marsili lobbying not just for the creation of a global alliance for the ethical use of AI, but also for the involvement of the Global South countries as well in shaping AI governance (Marsili, 2026: 81-84). The last part of the book brings forward future scenarios, the author cautioning against possible harmful geopolitical ramifications resulting from the influence of AI, emphasizing disinformation, digital authoritarianism and algorithmic power. These novel challenges pose a great risk, targeting the erosion of democratic societies and values. Based on the recommendation of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on AI, Marsili promotes the idea of establishing of a Global AI Council and a clear shift from non-binding regulations to an enforceable worldwide constitution for AI. This book is highly recommended as an essential reading for scholars, politicians, laymen, and

everyone interested in the future of artificial intelligence, as well as in comprehending the boundaries of digital sovereignty and digital humanism. Well-grounded theoretically and philosophically, and without resorting to scaremongering or apocalyptic rhetoric, Marsili's book is aimed at providing its reader both a cautionary message and a guide: a warning about the hidden dangers behind cognitive manipulation and ethical decline, and a guide towards reaching digital humanism anchored in dignity, accountability and global partnership.

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THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE NEW DYNAMICS OF GLOBAL SECURITY

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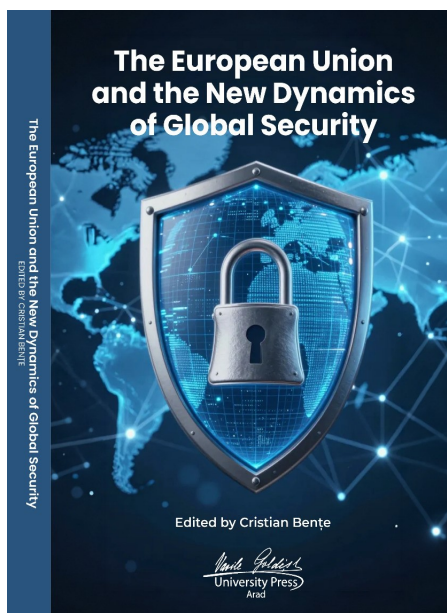
*Lois LAZA***

Book review of Bențe, Cristian (ed.) (2025). *The European Union and the New Dynamics of Global Security*. “Vasile Goldiș” University Press – Arad, Trivent Publishing – Budapest. ISBN: 978-630-6728-46-6.

Keywords: *European Union, Security studies, Geopolitics, Hybrid threats, Emerging trends.*

In an increasingly interconnected and rapidly evolving world, recent global assessments point to shifting patterns. According to the 2025 Global Peace Index report (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2025), recent years have seen a gradual decline in peacefulness, with conflicts becoming more internationalised and more numerous. Additionally, the World Social Report 2025 identifies economic insecurity, inequality, and weakening social cohesion as interconnected trends that are reshaping societies globally, while calling on renewed policy approaches centered on fairness, shared security and solidarity (United Nations, 2025).

The collective volume under review offers a nuanced and multilayered exploration of contemporary security, moving decisively beyond traditional, state-centric, and militarized understandings of the concept, providing a detailed evaluation of emerging challenges. Across its seventeen contributions, the volume gives a broad analytical framework in which geopolitical competition, technological transformation, social dynamics, and human vulnerability are deeply intertwined. Rather than treating security as a fixed condition, the volume conceptualizes it as an evolving process shaped by power transitions, governance choices, and various other factors, presenting the EU’s increasingly multidimensional security environment in 2025.



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THEMATIC OVERVIEW OF THE VOLUME AND ANALYTICAL REFLECTIONS

Part I - Global Geopolitical Shifts and Emerging Threats

Adrian Toma opens the first part of the volume with an analysis of the dynamics between China and the West through the lens of the Thucydides' Trap, which describes the heightened risk of conflict when a rising power challenges an established hegemon. The author presents that the contemporary competition is driven by economic competition, diplomatic manoeuvring, and hybrid conflicts rather than direct conflict, China's strengths are found in its intricate industrial infrastructure and the shift towards innovation, while the global landscape could be shaped by variables such as emerging power centers and the EU's growing political and military assertiveness. This is supported by other research, including Nye's argument that in the twenty-first century, power is increasingly exercised through soft power, economic and institutional domains, agenda-setting, and the mobilization of intangible resources, as war is no longer the primary arbiter of outcomes (Nye, 2011: 7-15).

Following this systemic perspective, the next contribution shifts toward China's security governance framework, examining a coherent counterterrorism policy grounded in legal principles, cooperation, and the strategic use of emerging intelligence technologies. The article highlights a holistic approach that combines firm sanctions with preventive measures and root-cause mitigation, rejects double standards, intensifies dialogue and advances bilateral anti-terrorist exercises. Additionally, the author mentions the growing role of Large Language Models (LLMs) in leveraging large volumes of data to support coordinated and effective prevention and responsive actions.

The concluding analysis of the first book section also addresses Artificial Intelligence (AI), exploring how it increasingly shapes the global security landscape by enhancing facial recognition, surveillance, and data analysis, while also being exploited by non-state actors for propaganda and operational purposes. Mereanu Vitia's findings highlight intensified technological competition and the growing complexity of threats, arguing that effective AI deployment requires robust legal and ethical frameworks to balance innovation, operational efficiency, and the protection of fundamental rights. On the topic of emerging technologies and the challenges they present, the articles in the book offer a coherent and normatively grounded discussion, putting an emphasis on legal frameworks and ethics. Other research also points to the need for strong ethical frameworks addressing data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and fairness, which must be developed immediately due to the quick integration of AI into industries including healthcare, banking, and communication (Radaliev, 2025: 3).

Part II - The European Union as a Security Actor

The second part debuts with an article written by Aurora Lupaş which examines diplomacy and security as mutually reinforcing parts of contemporary international relations, emphasizing their interdependence in an era shaped by cybersecurity risks, disinformation and hybrid warfare. Her findings show how negotiations, alliances, mediation, information exchange, and defence diplomacy contribute to stability, while comparing Romania's role with EU approaches, revealing both convergence and divergence. Across several contributions, the volume implicitly engages with the psychological and sociocultural dimensions of insecurity, drawing attention to the less visible barriers that complicate the peace-building process. In doing so, it moves beyond purely strategic or institutional explanations of conflict, highlighting how collective

perceptions, social narratives, and accumulated psychological strain shape political attitudes and constrain the space for compromise. Other research showcases this, highlighting how societal and psychological factors are obstacles, and continuous violence may result in a recurrent pattern of conflict: “by increasing the psychological distress of the civilian population and magnifying threat perceptions, particularly collective threat, leading to increased support for the ethos of conflict, and consequently to decreased support for political compromise” (Canetti, Elad-Strenger, Lavi, Guy & Bar-Tal, 2017: 103).

The subsequent analysis indicates a need for recalibration of the balance between fundamental rights protection and security requirements within the EU. Anca-Florina Morosteş emphasizes the importance of human security in the context of contemporary challenges and exposes the fragility between personal liberty and collective order, underscoring proportionality during sanitary emergencies. Her research highlights how although EU law provides solid protection for human rights, it remains vulnerable to exceptionalism and fear-based governance, requiring human dignity to be reaffirmed as a normative foundation of European law. Human security has the potential to resonate strongly with the current situation. The concept, which emphasises the individual, has arisen as an addition and alternative to conventional state-centered approaches. The UNDP defines it, mentioning how “Human security is people centred. It is concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities and whether they live in conflict or in peace” (United Nations, 1994). Human security, though difficult to define precisely, rests on two core principles: shifting the focus of security from the state to the individual, and adopting a comprehensive view of insecurity that recognizes the interconnection of multiple threats (Gilder, 2021: 494), highlighting its relevance in the framework of the book. The explicit engagement with human security constitutes one of the volume’s valuable contributions, particularly in light of the current shift towards a more strengthened protection of fundamental rights. In an era marked by exceptional measures and occasional fear-based governance during crises, the emphasis placed on safeguarding human dignity emerges as both timely and necessary.

The second part concludes with two articles that highlight how security governance in the EU increasingly intersects with territorial and energy dynamics. Nicoleta Lăşan presents a global rise in population density in border regions, which can be economically, socially, and culturally marginalized, making cross-border cooperation essential for European security, despite funding and bureaucratic shortcomings. Irina Ionela Pop demonstrates how the war in Ukraine reshaped the EU’s energy landscape, accelerating diversification away from Russian fuels, boosting investments in solar, wind, and hydrogen technology. The need for coherent integration of short and long-term energy and climate strategies is one of the recommendations in this analysis.

Part III - Regional and Societal Security Challenges in Europe

The first piece of research from the third part argues that inland waterway transport is increasingly promoted at the EU level due to its lower logistics costs, environmental efficiency, and capacity to decongest road and rail networks. Florentina Chirodea and Ioana Lucia Bordeianu’s findings reveal how the Gdańsk-Galaţi waterway is a strategic yet postponed project with significant geo-economic and geopolitical potential for Romania and the EU, despite persistent financial, regulatory, and political constraints. The volume turns to energy security as a key dimension of contemporary

stability. This shift is particularly relevant in the current context, as European societies and economies are increasingly relying on energy resources and their supply networks to sustain everyday life and economic activity (Gujejian, 2023: 53). Energy security therefore extends beyond technical or commercial concerns, as energy resources can be located in politically unstable regions, where control over supply may become a tool of geopolitical influence. Additionally, according to the literature, defence strategies must incorporate both transport and electricity generation infrastructure in the current security environment because doing so lessens reliance on outside energy sources and provides security (Iancu, 2024: 28), confirming the thesis that can be found in the book. This concept emphasises the need for a paradigm change in modern strategic thinking, where security must now take into account vital aspects of contemporary society like energy and accessibility, rather than solely military considerations. While not an energy infrastructure per se, the Gdańsk-Galați waterway holds indirect relevance for energy security by supporting the transport of energy-related goods and enhancing the efficiency and resilience of the European supply chain. By addressing this corridor, the contribution adds a valuable geo-economic and infrastructural perspective, illustrating how transport connectivity intersects with broader debates on security, resilience, and strategic autonomy in Europe.

Two articles from the volume jointly frame migration as both a barometer of social change and a structural security challenge for the EU. The Romanian case (during 2007-2017) analysed by Vendelin Francisc Glazer highlights a sustained rise in temporary and permanent emigration, largely driven by economic rationality, with long-term losses in human capital and unrecovered public investment in education. Cristian Bențe's research reveals how at the EU level, migration simultaneously generates opportunities and intensifies border management pressures, political polarization and social cohesion debates. The author's observations present how the securitization of migration has improved operational control, but also exposed persistent tensions between security imperatives and human rights obligation, shaping the contemporary security landscape. As a phenomenon that stems from both necessity and aspiration, migration unfolds at the intersection of vulnerability, policy, and power, making it inherently difficult to address. As other research also supports, securitization policies strongly illustrate their inherently conflicting nature, including the deaths of thousands of migrants and the challenges associated with their assimilation (Jaskulowski, 2019: 710).

The scholarly contribution of Ruslan Șevcenco presents the political landscape of Moldova, showing how Russian propaganda has become increasingly destructive for the country. Soviet-era economic narratives are used, promoting Russia and disseminating messages through media, public figures and cultural platforms.

Ban Emilian examines the deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities in Romania, finding how social and professional integration must become a collective mindset. The contributor demonstrates that investing in mental health services, community-based support, and social inclusion of persons with disabilities strengthens public order by fostering social cohesion and reaffirming human dignity as a core societal value.

Part IV - Communication, Culture, and Technology in European Security

The analysis of intercultural communication in the EU done by Speranța Sofia Milancovici opens the last section of the book. It reveals how this type of communication is a structural necessity amid linguistic fragmentation, cultural stereotyping and digital

divides that constrain cooperation and social cohesion. The author used case studies from Brussels, Tallinn and the HEICOMP project, and demonstrated how initiatives such as Erasmus+ and intercultural training mitigate barriers, positioning intercultural competence as a core future capacity.

Dima-Laza Ramona Stăncuța's research examines the fascinating intricacies of non-verbal communication, highlighting how innate and culturally acquired European gestures shape political and diplomatic interaction. The article details communication components, including microexpressions and other gestures, underscoring their growing relevance in a visually oriented era. Dima-Laza illustrates cross-national differences and diplomatic hand gestures and reveals body language as a powerful, culturally contingent tool of political influence and human understanding. As a researcher also reminds in his research, the quote of sociologist Goffman "the gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps in fact the fullest things of all" (Wong, 2021: 354), supporting the importance of researching non-verbal communication. As Wong hypothesizes, when political leaders interact face to face, their encounters are structured through ritualized practices, ranging from attire and greeting to spatial arrangement, which shape how authority, respect, and relational intent are interpreted (Wong, 2021: 354). This line of analysis highlights the broader importance of examining security with an interdisciplinary approach, closely connected to psychology, in order to capture the full complexity of political and diplomatic engagement.

In the closing sections of the volume, Andrea Peterlicean observes how Romanian political actors construct online political identities through multimodal strategies combining visuals, text, and interaction. This article shows how informal imagery and inclusive language are some ways in which credibility and approachability is built, while populist performances emerge, and how digital engagement further cultivates parasocial relationships, fostering trust and loyalty.

The last two pieces of research converge on language as a strategic enabler of European progress and resilience. Raul Pașcalău argues that effective bioterrorism preparedness depends on precise cross-cultural and multilingual communication, strengthening cooperation across public health, diplomacy and intelligence communities. In the last article of the volume, Laura-Rebeca Stiegelbauer describes AI's capacity to enhance language education in the EU, reinforcing linguistic diversity while requiring ethical safeguards and coordinated policy action to translate technological potential into sustainable security and educational gains.

CONCLUSIONS

Taken as a whole, the collective volume *The European Union and the New Dynamics of Global Security* succeeds in articulating a vision of security that is neither static nor confined to traditional strategic registers. Instead, the volume invites the reader to approach security as a layered and evolving condition, shaped simultaneously by geopolitical shifts, institutional responses, technological acceleration, and deep human vulnerabilities. Its main contribution lies in assembling a plural and interdisciplinary conversation that reflects the complexity of the security environment in which the European Union is currently situated. One of the volume's notable strengths is its capacity to move swiftly between systemic analysis and case studies, demonstrating how abstract power dynamics are translated into tangible societal and psychological effects. By putting together discussions of competitions between great powers and technological innovation with examinations of migration, energy dependence, communication

practices, and social inclusion, the volume tells us how contemporary insecurity is rarely the product of isolated threats. The volume's relevance lies in its ability to frame security as a multifaceted and interdisciplinary concern, offering analytical tools that remain applicable beyond the specific cases discussed. Its actuality is accentuated by the current European and global context, marked by a certain degree of geopolitical uncertainty, rapid change, and a need for adaptability, all of which demonstrate that the volume's insights are particularly timely.

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REPUBLIC MOLDOVA'S EU ASPIRATIONS AND ROMANIA'S STRATEGIC SUPPORT

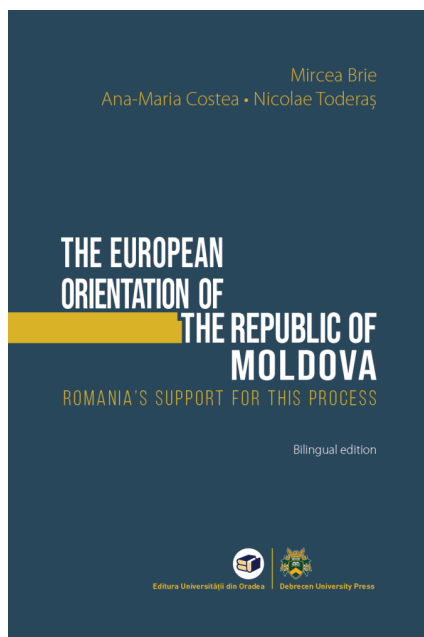
*Andreea VLADIUC**

Book review of Mircea Brie, Ana-Maria Costea and Nicolae Toderaș, *The European orientation of the Republic of Moldova. Romania's support for this process / Orientarea Europeană a Republicii Moldova. Demersuri de sprijinire din partea României; bilingual edition*, Editura Universității din Oradea / Debrecen University Press, Oradea/Debrecen, 2025, 218 p., ISBN 978-606-10-2446-9, ISBN 978-963-615-260-4.

Keywords: *European integration, Republic of Moldova, geopolitics, international relations, European Union.*

The volume *The European orientation of the Republic of Moldova. Romania's support for this process*, coordinated by Mircea Brie together with Ana-Maria Costea and Nicolae Toderaș, represents a solid and timely contribution to the field of international relations and European studies, addressing a topic of major strategic importance: the European integration of the Republic of Moldova. The work is situated within an academic and political context characterized by accelerated regional transformations, offering a relevant analysis of how this state seeks to redefine its external positioning in relation to the European Union. Through its coherent structure and argumentative rigor, the volume goes beyond a merely descriptive presentation and proposes an in-depth analytical approach, centered on the interdependencies between internal and external factors influencing the European trajectory of the Republic of Moldova.

The authors succeed in highlighting the complex and non-linear nature of the integration process, emphasizing that it cannot be understood solely through the lens of institutional reforms or legislative alignment, but must be analyzed in correlation with regional geopolitical dynamics and developments within the international system. In this regard, the volume provides a multidimensional perspective in which political, institutional, and security dimensions are addressed in an integrated manner. Furthermore, the work stands out through its ability to connect the theoretical level with



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the practical one, highlighting both the conceptual foundations of European integration and its practical implications for the Republic of Moldova.

Moreover, the analysis proposed by the authors is supported by the use of appropriate methodological tools, which allow for a nuanced evaluation of the opportunities and challenges associated with the integration process. Thus, the work not only explains recent developments but also contributes to understanding possible directions of development in the medium and long term. Through this approach, the volume becomes not only a relevant academic resource but also a useful instrument for decision-makers involved in the formulation and implementation of public policies in the field of European integration (Brie, Costea and Toderas, 2025).

One of the main strengths of the work lies in contextualizing the European integration process within an international environment marked by instability and geopolitical competition. The authors emphasize that recent developments, particularly the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, have led to a significant reconfiguration of the European security architecture and have directly influenced the European Union's enlargement policy (Brie, Costea and Toderas, 2025). In this sense, the integration of the Republic of Moldova can no longer be analyzed exclusively from the perspective of technical criteria but must be understood as part of a broader geopolitical process in which regional security and stability play a central role.

This interpretation is also supported by other contributions in the specialized literature, which highlight that the Eastern Partnership was initially conceived as an instrument of gradual rapprochement, but recent developments have given it a much more pronounced strategic dimension (Brie, 2017). At the same time, the European trajectory of the Republic of Moldova must be understood in the context of the limitations of European Union policies in the eastern neighborhood. The literature shows that the effectiveness of these instruments is often constrained by geopolitical factors and by the limited capacity of partner states to implement consistent reforms, which leads to an uneven and sometimes reversible integration process (Delcour, 2011). At the same time, the relationship between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union must be analyzed in the context of dual pressure: on the one hand, the European aspirations of the political elite and of a significant part of the population, and on the other hand, the persistent influence of the Russian Federation in the region (Goreainov and Brie, 2018).

The European integration of the Republic of Moldova is strongly influenced by the regional geopolitical context, characterized by competition between the European Union and the Russian Federation. Studies show that states in the eastern neighborhood operate within a contested sphere of influence, being subject to divergent external pressures, which complicates the integration process and limits the effectiveness of European policies (Popescu and Wilson, 2009). The work also analyzes in detail the stages of the European integration process, from participation in the Eastern Partnership to obtaining candidate status, offering a coherent chronological and conceptual perspective on the evolution of relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union.

The authors emphasize that the Eastern Partnership represented an initial institutional framework through which the Republic of Moldova was anchored in the European Union's neighborhood policy, facilitating the initiation of a gradual process of political and economic rapprochement. In this context, the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) are presented as essential instruments of Europeanization, contributing to the harmonization of national legislation

with the *acquis communautaire*, to trade liberalization, and to the progressive integration of the Moldovan economy into the European market (Brie, Costea and Toderaş, 2025). Therefore, the Eastern Partnership should be analyzed not only as a technical framework for cooperation but also as an instrument with increasingly evident strategic implications. Recent developments in the region have led to a redefinition of this mechanism, which increasingly reflects the geopolitical interests of the European Union and the need to strengthen security in the eastern neighborhood (Brie and Solcan, 2025; Korosteleva, 2016).

The authors highlight that these mechanisms have had a significant impact on the institutional and economic modernization of the Republic of Moldova, stimulating reforms in key areas such as justice, public administration, competition, and market regulation. At the same time, the DCFTA has facilitated the reorientation of trade flows toward the European Union, reducing economic dependence on the eastern space and strengthening interdependence with EU member states. However, the work draws attention to the fact that these advances are neither uniform nor irreversible, often being affected by internal political fluctuations and by the limited capacity of institutions to implement consistent reforms.

The process of European integration of the Republic of Moldova can also be analyzed through the concept of Europeanization, which implies not only the formal adoption of European legislation but also profound transformations at the institutional, political, and normative levels. In this sense, Europeanization involves the internalization of the values and rules of the European Union, being a complex, long-term process influenced both by the internal dynamics of the state and by external pressures (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005).

In this regard, the process of Europeanization is characterized by the authors as incomplete, fragmented, and subject to persistent structural constraints. These include institutional fragility, the politicization of public administration, high levels of corruption, and the lack of continuity in reform policies. It is also emphasized that, despite an advanced normative framework, the effective implementation of reforms remains deficient, generating a gap between assumed commitments and concrete results.

In addition, the authors underline that the Europeanization of the Republic of Moldova is influenced not only by internal factors but also by the external geopolitical context, which introduces an additional degree of uncertainty and vulnerability. Thus, the integration process does not follow a linear trajectory but is marked by periods of progress and regression, reflecting both internal political dynamics and external pressures. Through this approach, the work provides a realistic and nuanced interpretation of European integration, highlighting its complexity and its deep conditioning by multiple factors (Brie, Costea and Toderaş, 2025).

Among these, political instability occupies a central place, being characterized by frequent changes of government and pronounced polarization. This instability limits the state's capacity to implement coherent reforms and affects the continuity of public policies. Similarly, the specialized literature highlights that the lack of political consensus represents one of the main barriers to European integration in Eastern neighborhood states (Brie, 2022).

Corruption and institutional fragility are also analyzed as major obstacles to European integration. The authors emphasize that high levels of corruption undermine citizens' trust in state institutions and affect the credibility of the Republic of Moldova in its relations with the European Union (Brie, Costea and Toderaş, 2025). In this context,

strengthening the rule of law and reforming the judicial system are presented as essential priorities. These conclusions are supported by recent research showing that Europeanization is closely linked to the capacity of candidate states to implement profound institutional reforms (Putină and Brie, 2023).

Another essential element analyzed in the work is the Transnistrian conflict, which continues to represent a major challenge for the European trajectory of the Republic of Moldova. The authors highlight that this frozen conflict is not merely a territorial issue but has profound implications for the functioning of the state and its capacity to advance in the European integration process. The lack of effective control over the Transnistrian region limits the full exercise of sovereignty and affects the coherence of internal policies, while also generating uncertainties in the external relations of the Republic of Moldova (Brie, Costea and Toderaş, 2025).

From a geopolitical perspective, the Transnistrian conflict is interpreted by the authors as an instrument of strategic influence, allowing the Republic of Moldova to be maintained in a zone of ambiguity between East and West. The presence of external interests in the region contributes to the perpetuation of the status quo and hinders the identification of a durable solution. Thus, the conflict becomes not only an internal issue but also a factor of regional instability, influencing the European Union's perception of Moldova's capacity to meet accession criteria. Moreover, the authors underline that the existence of this conflict also affects the implementation of reforms, as political and administrative resources are often directed toward managing this situation. At the same time, the conflict generates additional vulnerabilities in areas such as energy security, border control, and the fight against cross-border crime (Brie, 2021; Brie, 2016).

Beyond the Transnistrian region, the work also highlights the role of other areas with distinct geopolitical characteristics, such as the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (Orjuhovschi and Brie, 2025). In this region, the geopolitical orientations of the population differ significantly from those promoted at the central level, reflecting the existence of deep internal cleavages within Moldovan society. The authors show that these differences are not only political in nature but are also influenced by identity, economic, and cultural factors, which contribute to the fragmentation of public opinion regarding the state's foreign policy direction (Brie and Goreainov, 2026).

This diversity of geopolitical orientations highlights the difficulty of building a national consensus around the objective of European integration. In the absence of such a consensus, the process of Europeanization becomes more vulnerable to internal political changes and external influences. Therefore, the authors suggest that managing these internal divisions represents an essential condition for advancing the European trajectory of the Republic of Moldova, requiring the strengthening of social cohesion and of a shared strategic vision (Brie, Costea and Toderaş, 2025).

In this complex context, the relationship between Romania and the Republic of Moldova is presented as a key factor in supporting European integration. The authors argue that Romania has played a constant and active role in supporting Moldova's European trajectory, both through political support at the European level and through the transfer of expertise and best practices (Brie, Costea and Toderaş, 2025). Romania's experience in the accession process is considered a relevant model that can be adapted to the specificities of the Republic of Moldova.

The transfer of public policies represents an important mechanism in this regard. Previous studies highlight that Romania has contributed to the modernization of the educational and administrative systems in the Republic of Moldova, facilitating the

process of Europeanization (Toderăș, 2012; Solcan and Burea, 2026). This institutional cooperation is essential for strengthening administrative capacity and for preparing accession negotiations.

From a methodological point of view, the work stands out through the use of relevant analytical tools, such as comparative analysis, SWOT analysis, and scenario planning. SWOT analysis provides a balanced perspective on the situation of the Republic of Moldova, highlighting both strengths, such as international support and pro-European orientation, and vulnerabilities, including institutional fragility and economic dependencies (Brie, Costea and Toderăș, 2025).

Scenario planning represents one of the most interesting elements of the work. The authors propose several development scenarios, ranging from an optimistic one, which foresees the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union by 2030, to pessimistic scenarios that involve stagnation or even blockage of the integration process (Brie, Costea and Toderăș, 2025). This approach reflects the high degree of uncertainty that characterizes the contemporary international environment and highlights the importance of adaptability in public policies.

In addition, the authors pay particular attention to the security dimension, including new risks generated by the cyber environment. In the context of European integration, cybersecurity becomes an essential element, and the Republic of Moldova must strengthen its capacity to respond to these threats (Costea et al., 2024). This perspective highlights the multidimensional character of the integration process, which is not limited to economic or institutional aspects.

The work also has an important applied dimension, the authors formulating concrete recommendations for supporting the Republic of Moldova in the process of European integration. These include accelerating reforms, strengthening democratic institutions, and improving public communication. In this regard, the importance of increasing citizens' level of information and combating disinformation is emphasized, as this can affect public support for European integration.

However, it can be observed that the analysis pays relatively limited attention to the role of civil society. Recent research shows that the development of civil society is essential for strengthening democracy and supporting the European integration process (Putină and Brie, 2023). The active involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society can contribute to increasing transparency and to monitoring reforms (Costea and Brie, 2025).

In conclusion, the work coordinated by Mircea Brie represents a complex and well-grounded analysis of the European integration process of the Republic of Moldova. Through its multidimensional approach and the use of diverse analytical tools, the volume succeeds in highlighting both the opportunities and the challenges of this process. At the same time, the emphasis placed on the role of Romania offers a relevant perspective on regional cooperation and the transfer of expertise. The work thus constitutes a valuable resource both for the academic environment and for decision-makers involved in the elaboration of public policies.

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