**Review of the Book
"Poveștile hărților.
Istorie și geopolitică
în țări ale uniunii
europene" [The
Stories of the Maps.
History and
Geopolitics in
European Union
Countries], Author:
Cristian Sandache,
Lumen Publishing
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Abstract: The book "Poveștile hărților. Istorie și geopolitică în țări ale Uniunii Europene" [The stories of the maps. History and geopolitics in European Union countries], authored by Cristian Sandache, was published in 2016 by Lumen Publishing House from Iași, Romania. It is part of the publishing house's book series on "social development". From the very beginning, its title leads us to the challenge of penetrating and getting to know the mechanism of social development in the European Union around the year 2016.

Keywords: *history, geopolitics, European Union, Cristian Sandache.*

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Although about five years have passed since the publication of the volume, the themes addressed and presented in this book still finds its social relevance for the contemporary period. The author, Cristian Sandache, uses the method of exposing the intersections of the main forms of social manifestation in the main countries of the European Union. It is a book of analysis and historical and geopolitical presentation of the European Union around the year 2016.

The cover graphic, which outlines the content of the text presented in the book, is extremely suggestive, drawing the map of the European Union with the coordinates that make up the borders of this union. This book offers, from the first contact that the reader has with the subject of the topic presented by Cristian Sandache, an extremely pleasant reading, but also gives the reader the opportunity to get in touch with the social realities of certain countries in the European Union, which are paradigmatic in their structure and manifestation within this organizational structure of Europe.

Cristian Sandache's work spans two hundred and twenty pages and is structured in twelve chapters, which address a separate theme for each chapter of the paper. The author of this book was born on September 1st, 1967, in the city of Galați in Romania. He is an associate professor at "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania, Faculty of History, Philosophy and Theology. He is the author of fourteen books, twelve of which are published as a sole author. In addition, he has published over a hundred articles and specialized studies. A large part of the research carried out by Cristian Sandache is recognized worldwide, being published in specialized journals with international indexing or being included in the catalogs of libraries in countries such as: USA, France, Germany, Spain, England, Canada.

This work reaches its literary and cultural value by offering enthusiasts of knowledge of local histories their interpenetration through various historical events that have taken place over time. Cristian Sandache is a specialist in the field in which he writes, having graduated university studies in history in 1992 at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi. He obtained a PhD in history, specializing in the history of international relations, at the University of Craiova, under the guidance of professor PhD Valeriu Florian Dobrinescu. Cristian Sandache's research area is in the field of contemporary Romanian and universal history, with an important emphasis on the analysis of the Romanian and European authoritarian and totalitarian phenomenon, the history of international relations and geopolitics, but also by observing the specifics of different cultures upon whom he focuses his research.

The book subjected to this analysis is one of the author's most recent volumes. Along with this one (Sandache, 2016a), also in 2016, at the same publishing house, Lumen from Iași, another book by this author was published (Sandache, 2016b), with the title: "Politics, propaganda and war. Romanian society in the years 1940 - 1944". The first book written by the author, together with Gheorghe Buzatu and Corneliu Ciucanu, was published in 1996 and is entitled "Radiography of the Romanian Right-Wing 1927-1941" (Buzatu et al., 1996). We can see that since his debut, through the works written, Cristian Sandache wants to print a detailed analysis over a certain period of time. In the case of the book we are analyzing, the author focuses on the state of the structure of the European Union in 2016, providing a coherent and objective analysis by presenting the functional paradigms of certain states that are part of this structure and that combine common interests and objectives .

Strating from the argument that initiates the composition of this work, the historian Cristian Sandache becomes questionable about the duration of the viability of the European Union in terms of how it can consolidate the projects and structures upon which its standards have been established over time. He passes all these criteria of analysis through the filter of history, which must objectively notice these aspects and go beyond the nuances of the official texts through which certain aspects are presented. By his status, the historian must eliminate any subjective ideological or doctrinal trace with which certain historical events are presented.

The main objective and, at the same time, the purpose of this work is the author's desire to capture and identify the situation of some countries in the European Union, in terms of the historical heritage they have accumulated over time and that have been configured by events that shaped the history of each country from the European Union.

He emphasizes certain ethnic or geopolitical features but does not stop here and wants to expose the relationships that intersect these particular cases and present the particularities of these countries, wanting to "collect", as a point of originality, the interethnic interpenetration of the states in the Union European. The paper has an essayistic structure, considering that the contemporary reader no longer has the necessary availability to approach abstract notions, which would require a long time for documenting and assimilating the acquired knowledge.

This approach is a significant addition to this paper, while also providing the specific originality with which the author managed to attract interest in this topic from many readers. It is a postmodern way of writing

history, which promotes reading and providing contemporary knowledge of issues from a historical or geopolitical point of view.

Cristian Sandache says about the contemporary reader that, when he reads, he needs action, color, life. He needs a story to describe his idea and to get acquainted with it, using an attractive version. When referring to the word "map", the author gives a meaning or association to the word "country". By deciphering the past and the specifics of each country, we manage to look at its future and what it can offer in the perspective of international relations between countries (Sandache, 2016, p. 9).

Together with him, by using the method of professor and writer Cristian Sandache, we will go through our journey along the content of the chapters that make up this paper. As I described at the beginning of this review, the paper is structured into 12 well-structured and extremely balanced chapters in terms of the content it offers. The story prepared and presented by Cristian Sandache begins with the title of the first chapter: "A difficult marriage: Belgium". Is this title appropriate for Belgium? What are the perspectives from which Belgium is presented?

First, Belgium is described as a state with a strategic position within the European Union. The author offers the reader a historical presentation, highlighting the main historical events that define the past, but also the perspectives of this country in the European Union. What can be seen from the critical apparatus of this chapter is the seriousness in selecting important authors who can provide valuable information about the history and characteristics of this people. We will not insist on presenting the details found in the first chapter, but we will present the main ideas related to the importance that Belgium has in the structures of the European Union.

Belgium's foreign policy is reflected in the characterization of internal tensions between the Flemish and Walloon communities, which create a risk of secession. The author describes this existing tension, which can be an extremely influential factor in the composition of the European Union. The description stops in the twentieth century, by presenting prominent personalities who contributed at that time to the history of Belgium, while recalling the influence that the well-known Leon Degrelle had in the establishment of the state (Sandache, 2016a, p. 13). Among the less emphasized aspects are those concerning the position and role that Belgium has in the European Union in the contemporary period. But, from the point of view of the historical presentation and the structure of this work, the events succession is very well chosen and the main moments in the history of this people are highlighted.

The second chapter presents to us a topic that deals with "Frustrations of the past: Bulgaria". If the marriage in the first chapter is influenced by the factors and internal struggles born in the historical past of the Belgian people, about Bulgaria we can say that it is characterized by the fact that in this country there is a lack of clarification throughout history regarding the response to the question where Bulgaria is placed geographically: Europe or Asia!? To argue this point, the author appeals to and presents, in an original note, the past of the Bulgarian people. From the manner of presentation we can see that this order was not chosen at random, because, as a general theme, the chapter is about the inner tension of manifestation inherent for the specificity that the past had for this people.

The journey through the "maps" of the countries that make up the European Union follows in the succession of the author's presentation, with Cyprus. Chapter III is called "The other Greece: Cyprus". The author wants to highlight the characteristics that to a greater or lesser extent differentiate them from the Greeks. The world of Cyprus, in terms of international relations, is in close contact with Russia and the Arab countries in that area. Compared to Greece, from a geopolitically point of view, Cyprus adopts the policy of "unified defense", through which it is in a very close, if not fraternal, connection with Greece. The author emphasizes important events in their history, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A nuance of inadequacy is left by the fact that the author's interventions on these topics end relatively abruptly.

From the southern part of Europe, we set out on our journey to the northern part of Europe, which is the content of Chapter IV, entitled: "Heroism and prudence. The Finnish case". Finland is considered a successful country in all respects. It is a country with a turbulent and extremely noisy history, but which knew how to handle every episode in its history. The historical framework is presented, with the main episodes in the history of this people. It is interesting to note that the identity of the Finnish people has often been attributed or associated with that of the Russians or Swedes. But, each time, the Finns managed to keep the originality of their identity.

The situation in Greece is the subject that forms the content of the fifth chapter of the book. The burden inherited from ancient Greece seems to weigh more and more on the contemporary Greeks. The author then makes a parallel with this period, just as well documented and which guarantees the reader the seriousness and good documentation that results in the content of this book. The title of the fifth chapter is: "Difficult integration: Greece". Of course, when we talk about the Greek people, we

can recall several periods in its history regarding the aspect of authority that emanates from their rich past. As in the case of other countries, the emphasis is on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially since 1821, when Greece gained state independence. This is a very interesting aspect in the discourse of the author when he talks about Greece, as he also presents the image that Greece has created within the European Union, saying that it adopts an extremely difficult dialogue with other countries, which is a novel vision.

We remain in the southern part of Europe and are being presented with the case of Italy, which is included in Chapter VI of this paper, entitled: "The splendid loneliness of the South: Italy." The paradox of the unification of Italy is rendered through the work of the Italian writer Giuseppe Tomasi, who highlights the diplomatic peculiarities that are manifested by Italy. He appeals to a local historical fact, in which the Sicilians hardly adapted to the new Italy. This case represents the discrepancies that existed between various regions of Italy. Cristian Sandache describes the period of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as in the case of the other countries presented. We can say that we observe the finesse and attention to detail of the professional historian, who comparatively presents these areas of Europe, but refers to the same periods of time and thus the analysis becomes extremely valuable.

Chapter VII aims to present "Tiso's Slovakia - current echoes". When preparing the historical presentation of the Slovaks, the author of this book goes back to the beginning of the 11th century, when the foundations of this country were laid, but also provides some current data on the geographical borders of Slovakia and the specifics of the population, all with extremely varied and scientifically sustainable historical arguments. Slovakia has a history that intersects in a beautiful line of dialogue of historical events with other countries that are now part of the European Union. After showing the beginnings and genesis of this people, the author goes back to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, to provide a balanced comparative description of the situation of other countries presented in previous chapters.

Nostalgia is attributed to Hungary in the eighth chapter of this paper, which highlights the historical past, but also the characteristics that shape the period of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries for our neighbors. The author begins with the decision and judgments of June 4, 1920, when reference is made to the Treaty of Trianon, when a reconfiguration of the borders of the Kingdom of St. Stephen was carried out. The author also mentions the Asian and tumultuous origins of this

people and the tragedies they have gone through over time. He also presents their Christianization, an event from which certain points of intersection and influence with certain countries around Hungary can be observed. Cristian Sandache also appeals to the influence of certain Hungarian personalities, such as Petofi Sandor or Ady Endre, when presenting the history of this people.

Chapter IX refers to another people, which is characterized by the very title of this chapter by the label proposed by the author: "The pride of being a Catholic: Croatia". Croatia is one of the "youngest" countries of the European Union, but with a rich history, tense at certain moments, which the pages of history books have recorded. The historical presentation of the Croats descends towards the first part of the tenth century and gradually passes towards the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which fall under the magnifying glass of the author's interests of analysis and presentation. Within this people we can highlight the deep connection they had with other peoples and the way in which the dialogue with them took place, but also their religious affiliation, which contributed to decision-making in certain historical periods.

In the tenth chapter, the author briefly presents the period of the last two centuries in the history of France, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in terms of the general theme of the book. When addressing certain themes, the author refers, through certain examples, to historical periods other than recent history. Certainly, the history of the French people is extremely rich and would require a lot of attention, but Cristian Sandache keeps his analysis limited to the established theme, which outlines the objectives and purpose of his research.

From this succession of presentations made by the author of the book, the case of Spain could not be avoided, following the title: "The bullfight of history: Spain". This approach is included in Chapter XI. The author also presents some geographical features of Spain, which can be included both in the European continent, but also reaches the northern part of Africa. The author starts from a short historical presentation, wanting to familiarize the reader with the historical, geographical and cultural specifics of Spain, in order to reach the general theme established for the entire work.

With a small subjective trace of the author, from the point of view of approaching the theme of this book, the case of Romania is also presented, in the last chapter of this paper. He refers to certain personalities of the twentieth century, through which he approaches the subject of the book. The social life of Romanians from the period chosen for analysis is also presented. Although he is part of this people, the objectivity of the author

can be observed, who leaves only a few traces of subjectivism during this chapter. Certain historical periods are presented, with their characteristic events, but also the particularities of the Romanian provinces, which generated the vision and originality of the Romanian society from the 20th and 21st centuries.

The book concludes with a selective bibliographic list, which was used to accomplish this work.

A number of issues could be further explored in a possible future edition, including the fact that the author does not provide some final conclusions after the presentation of the chapters that I have described above. Among the general positive aspects, we mention the fact that the book is a well-documented work, consisting of balanced essays and timely topics. The approach is an original one, very easy to read and understand, although the topic is extremely general and extended subjects are approached. We recommend this work to all those who love history and international relations, but also as a cultural and historical encyclopedia for the history of the European Union.

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