

Interview with Cristian Preda: “We Wanted to Emulate Western Political Science Journals”*

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Which were the ambitions of Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review journal when it was created? What were the sources of inspiration (if there were any)?

The idea of this journal belonged to Professor Daniel Barbu. Its aim was written on the back of the fourth cover: to elucidate “the big political issues” which Romania was confronting in the context of the changes in Central and Eastern Europe. This purpose was formulated starting from the (presumptuous, after all) inducement that the “issues of old and new democracies had become convergent.” It was, in a certain sense, a prophetic idea: indeed, the journal was being published immediately after the second round of presidential election between Ion Iliescu and C. Vadim Tudor, and a year before France’s Jacques Chirac opposed J.M. Le Pen.

There wasn’t just a single source of inspiration: I believe Daniel Barbu had in mind the history journals published by the Romanian Academy, but also the French or American political science journals which he was reading and quoting in those times; I was impressed by the ephemeral journal *La Pensée Politique*, published in the first half of the 1990s by three of the professors whom I worked with at EHESS (Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales), Marcel Gauchet, Pierre Manent, and Pierre Rosanvallon. The last two were also co-opted in the journal’s first editorial committee, which would deserve a detailed analysis.

I will limit myself to three remarks: it is good to know, firstly, that to the editorial committee were invited scholars whom we admired, such as Norberto Bobbio or Giovanni Sartori, the second being also a visiting professor of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest (FSP-UB) during

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those years and offering the journal two extremely precious articles; secondly, FSP-UB' collaborators in various projects were co-opted as well, such as Jean-Michel de Waele (ULB), Adriano Giovannelli (University of Genoa), Dominique Colas (IEP de Paris) – who later coordinated Alexandra Ionescu's PhD, or Neagu Djuvara, who had been teaching at our faculty in its first years; finally, the committee also included institutional officials of the moment, such as the Rector of the University of Bucharest, Ioan Mihăilescu, and the Dean of the Faculty, George Voicu, who left the journal once he realized his only intellectual concern at that moment – his quarrel with Gabriel Liiceanu and Nicolae Manolescu – was not a “policy” of the journal. To put it shortly, the strategy assumed by *Studia Politica* was the imitation of Western political science journals, by means of associating it with the political science professors with whom we – either Daniel Barbu or myself – had been interacting during the first post-communist decade.

What role played the journal in the professionalization of political science in Romania?

Studia Politica tried to differentiate itself from other journals which were focused on analyzing the political phenomenon, and which started to be published around 1991 – 1992, *Sfera politiciii* [*The Sphere of Politics*], *Polis*, and the *Romanian Journal of Political Science*, the journal crafted by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi – which were either political commentary journals, or a blend of classical or contemporary authors' translations and institutional analysis articles. Some of the FSPUB members – Dan Pavel, Stelian Tănase, Camil Pârveu, Laurențiu Ștefan – had been involved in these projects: I had myself contributed with translations or articles popularizing political ideas to *Sfera politiciii* and *Polis*. We even initiated, around 2003-2004, a similar endeavor through *Repere*, a publication translating articles from *Le Débat*, *Esprit* and *Commentaire*, from which we had obtained free copyright.

With *Studia Politica*, things were very different: it was intended as an academic journal. It complemented the books series published in collections like *Societatea civilă* [*The Civil Society*] and *Polis* at Humanitas, or *Societatea politică* [*Political Society*] at Nemira, which were inventing a political science bibliography in Romanian. Bear in mind that we are talking about a period in which the access to bibliographic resources was limited by the penury of Romanian libraries, and the continent of online books and articles had not been discovered yet.

The professionalization emerged, on the other hand, by following the tri-lingual structure of political science studies at FSPUB: *Studia Politica* was publishing mainly articles in the three teaching languages – French, English,

and Romanian. The first numbers of the journal demonstrate the anchoring of this discipline in history studies, political philosophy studies, and to a lesser extent, law studies.

How do you see the evolution of the journal after twenty years?

There are important changes. The first observation is the disappearance of two of the journal languages, French and Romanian. Indeed, the first journal issue of 2001 comprised nine articles in French, three in Romanian, and two in English. Today, English has imposed as a single language of the domain, and *Studia Politica* also took over this “trend”.

Twenty years ago, the journal was structured as follows: the first section hosted one or more articles with “a long-shot” or written by a “great name,” like Manent or Sartori; a second section grouped thematic articles, a third section accommodated the articles received by the editorial board which could not be subsumed to a theme, and a fourth section offered polemical texts. This ensemble did not look bad at all, even though the journal functioned on the principle of “can you just send us an article to publish?”; today, as far as I understand, any personalized invitation has been abandoned, because we live in an age fascinated by anonymized peer reviewing.

Another difference is made by book reviews: in the early days, the journal featured approximately fifteen books reviewed per issue, with the purpose of informing the public on the latest publications, but also to evaluate “the Romanian production,” with the idea of tracing the limits of the native scientific community. Nowadays, book reviews are unpopular, because they cannot be translated in valuable points for financed research projects. I was surprised to see recent *Studia Politica* issues in which there were only four book reviews, some of them for books published three or four years ago.

At the beginning, the four yearly volumes covered approximately 1200 pages. The adaptation to the new exigences of the scientific community has imposed the decrease of the page numbers per article, and the downsizing of the entire ensemble.

Anyway, the two decades of the journal are a success: many of those who have made the journal are respectable authors, specialized in important political science fields or sub-fields.

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