

*Motto: "Opinions are free, but not mandatory"—I.L.Caragiale*

## EDITORIAL

### From the Editor

*Constantin IACOBÎȚĂ*



On April 1, 2019 a debate dedicated to “Contemporary Israel between History and Geopolitics” was hosted by the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (NSPAS) in Bucharest.

The event was organized by the “Theodor Hertzl” Center for Israeli Studies from the Faculty of Political Sciences/ NSPAS and had, as keynote speaker, HE David Saranga, the Israeli Ambassador to Romania. The speaker list also included Mr. Cristian Parvulescu (PhD), the Dean of the Faculty of Political Sciences (FPS), Professor Liviu Rotman, director of “Theodor Hertzl” and Mr. Dan Korn (PhD), Honorary Professor at NSPAS and former member of the Knesset. The Audience included specialists in the field, students and so on.

Ms. Liliana Popescu (PhD), the FPS Pro-Rector, moderated the discussions and played an active, important role.

HE Ambassador David SARANGA, who spoke Romanian perfectly during his speech as well as the dialogue with the other speakers and the audience, set the stage by presenting the regional context and main threats from an Israeli perspective.

And, relevant for the entire debate, the Ambassador was keen to underline that any discussion on Israel should definitely go beyond the “Palestinian problem”.

Nevertheless, as Mr. Saranga himself later admitted and Professor Rotman warned in the beginning of his intervention, the “Palestinian problem” rose and stood as main subject (of debate). Moreover, it fuelled lively exchanges of ideas and opinions.

From an observer’s perspective and prone to inherent personal subjectivity the debate highlighted, among other:

- remarkable openness and honesty, especially from an Israeli Ambassador who undoubtedly spoke not only professionally, including on the “Palestinian problem”;
- unanimous recognition of the need and urgency of a commonly agreed solution. Starting, among other, from the truth that history cannot be changed, the speakers discussed a range of eventual options/ solutions – two states, one state, confederation, status quo and so on.

A two state solution prevailed in level of stated support, even if most speakers agreed on the complexity and difficulty of any effort to describe its content, and disagreement on the timing (for such a solution) was high. On the opposite side of the scale were mentioned opinions, on the Israeli side, ranging from postponing a solution to a “non-solution”;

- any solution to the “Palestinian problem” offered by the Trump administration was credited with few chances, even if details were still to be known. And the reasons for this scepticism related to each of the three sides. As for the American side, most speakers expressed distrust in the current leadership as well as its ability to formulate and promote a viable solution. The Palestinian camp was described as opposed in principle to any initiative from the current American administration, divided and with no real/ positive prospect of succession to the current Palestinian Authority leadership (a successor to Mahmoud Abbas). As far as the Israeli camp, the following were added to the divisions enumerated above: the likely negative results (from a two state perspective) of the April 9 elections for the 21<sup>st</sup> Knesset; lack of activism from the Arab component of the Israeli society (reduced polling turnout, with direct effects on chances to determine a larger government, eventually – and ideally – one of national union).

The elections for the 21<sup>st</sup> Knesset have once again reconfirmed the strong position of Netanyahu’s party in any negotiations for a new government. Moreover, it reconfirmed the low level of participation of the Arab minority (around 50%, 13 points lower than in the last elections) which translates in fewer seats in the Knesset.

These given, and as Ambassador Saranga forecasted (while underlying that the opinion was personal), chances for a change in the status quo are slim and the prospects distant.

While not necessarily ending with conclusions, the debate offered to participants and especially to students in audience at least two main thoughts/ desiderates otherwise directly and clearly exposed by Dr Cristian Parvulescu and Ambassador David Saranga respectively:

- identifying and developing a partner (of dialogue) where none exist apparently, but there is sufficient desire to overcome the impasse;
- activism/ civic and political participation, individually and collectively, as way and instrument to promote and achieve desired freedoms and rights.