

Politics of Visibilities in the Modern European World

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ABSTRACT

Grey Cecily, Lady. *Politics of Visibilities in the Modern European World.* The paper is a reflection over the book: Wolfgang Sassin, Oleg Donskikh, Alexandre Gnes, Sergey Komissarov, Liu Depei. *Evolutionary Environments. Homo Sapiens - an Endangered Species?* Innsbruck: Studia Universitätsverlag, 2018. 362 p. ISBN 978-3-903030-60-2. In the article, the author propounds her main observations on discussing European political ideologies offered in the book. Today's European politics is demonstrated to be either demise or temporary slowdown of the mutual European dream that led to the bright anticipations of EU in 1990s. Current failing of this dream causes great instabilities in continental Europe and United Kingdom. It may be one of the reasons of Brexit as well. Finally, some points of critique of the book, are discussed.

Key words: European Union, EU future, globalisation, contemporary European history, post-human values, European dream, Brexit, England, UK referendum, European cultural crisis

РЕЗЮМЕ

Грей, Сесили, леди. *Политика видимостей в современном европейском мире.* Статья представляет собой размышления над книгой: Wolfgang Sassin, Oleg Donskikh, Alexandre Gnes, Sergey Komissarov, Liu Depei. *Evolutionary Environments. Homo Sapiens - an Endangered Species?* (Эволюционные среды. Homo Sapiens - вымирающий вид?) Innsbruck: Studia Universitätsverlag, 2018. 362 p. ISBN 978-3-903030-60-2. В статье автор излагает свои основные мысли по поводу обсуждения европейской политики, предложенного в книге. В книге продемонстрировано, что данная политика есть ничто иное, как гибель или временное замедление общей европейской мечты, которая в 1990-х гг. привела к позитивным ожиданиям в отношении ЕС. В настоящее время провал этой мечты вызывает большую нестабильность как в континентальной Европе, так и Соединенном Королевстве. Также он может являться одним из причин Брекзита. В заключение приводится обсуждение некоторых спорных, с точки зрения автора, моментов книги.

Ключевые слова: Европейский Союз, ЕС, глобализация, современная европейская история, постгуманистическая сущности, европейская мечта

THE WORLD OF VISIBILITIES

TO WHICH EXTENT MAY WE CONSIDER THE MODERN POLITICS a politics of visibilities? I assume, we have to do that as far as the modern world may be presented as a world of ephemeral things.

Today's world is a world of visibilities to the degree that in modernity corresponded to the world of the things tangible. It is no surprise that in the modern time, the politics is transforming to the politics of visibilities, when a sign or simulacrum begins to play a more important role than a law, decree, order, warrant, instruction or agreement (Bieber et al. 2018, 450, 454; Kabalan 2018, 37, 44; Steiner, Landwehr 2018, 473). A something fundamental is likely to have changed in the very politics, but also in its apprehension by people, since in our days Twitter diplomacy, political prankship, couch wars, counter-terrorism struggle being translated over the Internet &c, came into being and started to be welcomed by both elites and masses.

Jean Baudrillard in his *America* (1986, chap. 1–2) and *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1991, 25–26, 28) did not appear the first one who conceptualised this commonplace maxim but one of the wittiest. He writes:

Our task is not to be subdued to the likelihood of any information, any image, whichever they are. Not to try to restore the truth, we have no means for that, but not to allow them to deceive us... To be meteorologically susceptible to any silliness and lies as to a bad weather (Ibid, 11).

In this epigraph, the French thinker summarised the main idea of politics of the new type. Any information in our days ceases to be a set of facts about the events that took place, but transforms to a complex system of visual, text and sound simulacra. In these simulacra, political elites put the meanings that they deem proper to put, for the purpose of governing the consciousness of the billions living on the planet Earth.

Creating the visibility is becoming a complicated political technology in itself (Wüllenweber 2014). The reality of making political illusions is gradually superseding a desire to find applicable political ways of solving the most urgent issues and problems of the globalised humanity (Easley 2017). The era after the end of WWII is being constantly named an epoch without wars by the mainstream European mass media. The UN is being repeatedly praised by them as an organisation that contributed greatly to this achievement. This eulogy, however, does not take into account a bitter truth that the UN, an international organisation that was devised and created more than seventy years ago, was not able to prevent even one of more than seventy serious military conflicts, which took place since the end of the Cold War (Baudrillard and Derrida 2015, 41). As Ian Morris (2014, 174) notes, the UN Security Council is transforming to a place for twaddling without any possible constructive outcome. This is just one of a plethora of numerous examples of changing the modern politics to the politics of visibilities.

Great pains have been taken in as well thoughtful academic literature on history and

political analysis as successfully defended doctoral theses – not to mention innumerable journalist attempts and witty however provocative post-modernist reviews such as Baudrillard and Derrida's ones mentioned above – to identify and conceptualise the means, techniques and procedures of this transformation of politics to the politics of visibilities. The creation of Morgan le Fay's castles in modern politics, consisting only of images intended for the final consumer, an ordinary citizen and voter, becomes a complex political technology and gradually replaces the legal approach, when each political initiative is long weighed, and then carefully implemented (Bostdorff 2017, 700–701; Sakwa 2012, 15; 2017a, 22; 2017b, 11, 17–18; Shakleina 2018, 45, 48).

For example, Trump is clearly more concerned with how to capture himself in a beautiful fairy tale for TV screens than with a real negotiation with Syria, North Korea or Iran (Apango 2018; Gülden-zopf and Voigt 2016; Magcamit 2017; Rockman 2016). For Trump, the stylish and fashionable launch of already-expired American "Tomahawks" aimed at Syrian forces made on 7 April 2017 shot by TV cameras was more important than any real actions against Bashar Assad. The missiles flying to the positions of governmental troops in Syria for a short period of several days became the most popular PC monitors wallpapers. As a showman, Trump understands that a picture (image) of politics, carefully designed and staged, will provide him with the votes at the next President election much more effectively than his real success in the foreign policy (Hochschild 2016; Kokoshin 2017; Nikitin 2018; Tretyakov 2018; Wimberly 2018). It is difficult to imagine that Reagan or Bush the Elder would have given their orders and decrees to the attention of their subordinates through the Internet, a box in the social network Twitter, available for the common public. However, Trump seems to use just this method of notifying America and the world about his current and future plans. Russian President Putin is closely in line with the devotion to the politics of visibilities in Syria. Recently he made the world aware of missile mass launch from the vessels located in Caspian Sea and directed towards IS¹ positions in Syria. The launch took place at night, and beautiful bluish, reddish and greenish missile tails drawing picturesque lines in the dark skies, was immediately retranslated over the world media. Since no person beyond the militaries, was notified of the event in question, we are to assume that Russian and American Defence Ministries are in charge of making such photos and movies. And Trump is obviously secondary here after Putin.

¹ This terrorist organisation is legally prohibited in Russia (a commentary of the Editor). The lack of a commentary like this may entail a charge to the journal in complicity of terrorism, according to the Russian laws.



Fig. 1. The night launch of Russian 'Calibre' missiles from Caspian sea-based military vessels in October 2015 headed at IS positions in Syria (left), and the night launch of American 'Tomahawk' missiles from Mediterranean sea-based ships in 2017 aimed at Shayrat airbase of Syrian governmental forces (right).

The photos above were taken by military representatives. We witness the involvement of the military in the media scope.

© Defense Ministry of Russian Federation; US Department of Defense; BBC



Fig. 2. The morning launch of Russian 'Calibre' missiles from Caspian sea-based military vessels in November 2015 headed at IS positions in Syria.

The next portion of media images came of the other time of day not to fatigue the TV and Internet viewers of the show.

© Defense Ministry of Russian Federation

The same innovative approach based on the politics of visibilities is observed everywhere throughout the modern Europe. Merkel, May, Macron and Hollande just before him, are all trying their best to create images of business politicians who understand the problems and

needs of their countries, while the crisis of European integration, despite their media attempts, is constantly growing (Galpin 2015, 26, 30; Neklessa 2018, 82; Rozenblatt 2017, 244, 247; Sakwa 2017b, 16). Mrs May for two years has been designing and posting beautiful photos and videos of her greatest activity on Brexit in the British press, and as a result, it turned out that for two years since the Referendum on the UK's leave/remain in Europe, not a single real step was made, but we witnessed more than twenty theatrical performances of herself in front of TV cameras, half-joking pathetic speeches of Attorney General Jeremy Wright in the High Court, and ever-undiplomatic but well-acted colloquies of Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond.



Fig. 3. The politics of visibilities in the Brexit deal.

It seems that the three persons mentioned above, make everything not to allow the Brexit done, and say all for everybody to believe them that they are trying their best.

© Stratford-upon-Avon Herald; POLITICO Europe
Theresa May (with Juncker): "We are likely to have the shared determination to make the Brexit done" (above).



Jeremy Wright: "It is better not to pass the Brexit deal on to MPs" (middle).



Philip Hammond: "You'd better prepare for a bad-tempered Brexit" (below).

It seems that currently European politicians are actually coming to a conclusion, that

merely a beautiful and bright picture on TV screens or in the Internet without any real political content behind it, is quite enough now for the people residing in Europe, as well as for the Americans.

EVOLUTIONARY ENVIRONMENTS: THE STAGES OF THEIR OWN EVOLUTION

I WILL NOT HESITATE TO NAME THE BOOK *Evolutionary Environments. Homo Sapiens - an Endangered Species?* one of the best recent monographs on the contemporary history of Europe in the modern globalised world, and on the analysis of modern instruments of the European politics of visibilities. The group of the authors involves scholars from Europe, Russia and China with different political attitudes, cultural and religious values as well as education backgrounds. That difference did not prevent the authors heterogeneous in their backgrounds from melting their valuable theoretical and practical expertise together in one profound academic research. They are Dr-Ing Wolfgang Sassin (Germany), Dr habil Oleg Donskikh (Russia, Australia), Dr Sergey Komissarov (Russia), Dr Alexandre Gnes (Russia, Hungary) and Dr Liu Depei (China). Their collective monograph “Evolutionary Environments” is a scientific result of the international project *WE: The Dark Side of Evolution* initiated in 2012.

It will hardly be superfluous to make their brief introduction. Dr-Ing Wolfgang Sassin has a wide scientific and humanitarian background. Having commenced his career as an alumnus of Technical University Munich and nuclear physicist and a specialist of International Institute for Applied System Analysis in Laxenburg, he would eventually acquire the second specialisation as a historian with a focus on European Roman antiquity and Chinese history. Later he switched to the academic research of the modern political EU history. Besides, he is a professional consultant in automobile industry on man-machine interfaces, a member of advisory boards of Technical University of Vienna, Research Centre Jülich, the International panel on Climate Change, UN Programme Habitat, the Directorate General on Research and Innovation of the European Commission. Now he is engaged primarily in modern political history studies.

Dr habil Oleg Donskikh is unlikely a scholar of narrower interests. Having started his academic career as a philologist and received his PhD and higher doctorate degrees in the scope of philosophic analysis of language origin, he would defend his PhD dissertation “Russian Philosophy as an Expression of Russian National Consciousness” in Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. He was the Director of Russian Ethnic Mission of Victoria State (Australia), and Professor of University of Melbourne, while now he is Professor of Novosibirsk State University. He is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Ideas and Ideals* (*Idei i Idealy* in Russian) being published in Novosibirsk, the author of nine books and more than 250 research papers in periodicals. Besides, he is a Member of the Russian Union of Journalists. Currently he investigates predominantly history of education, history of ideas

and the newest Soviet and post-Soviet political history of Russia.¹

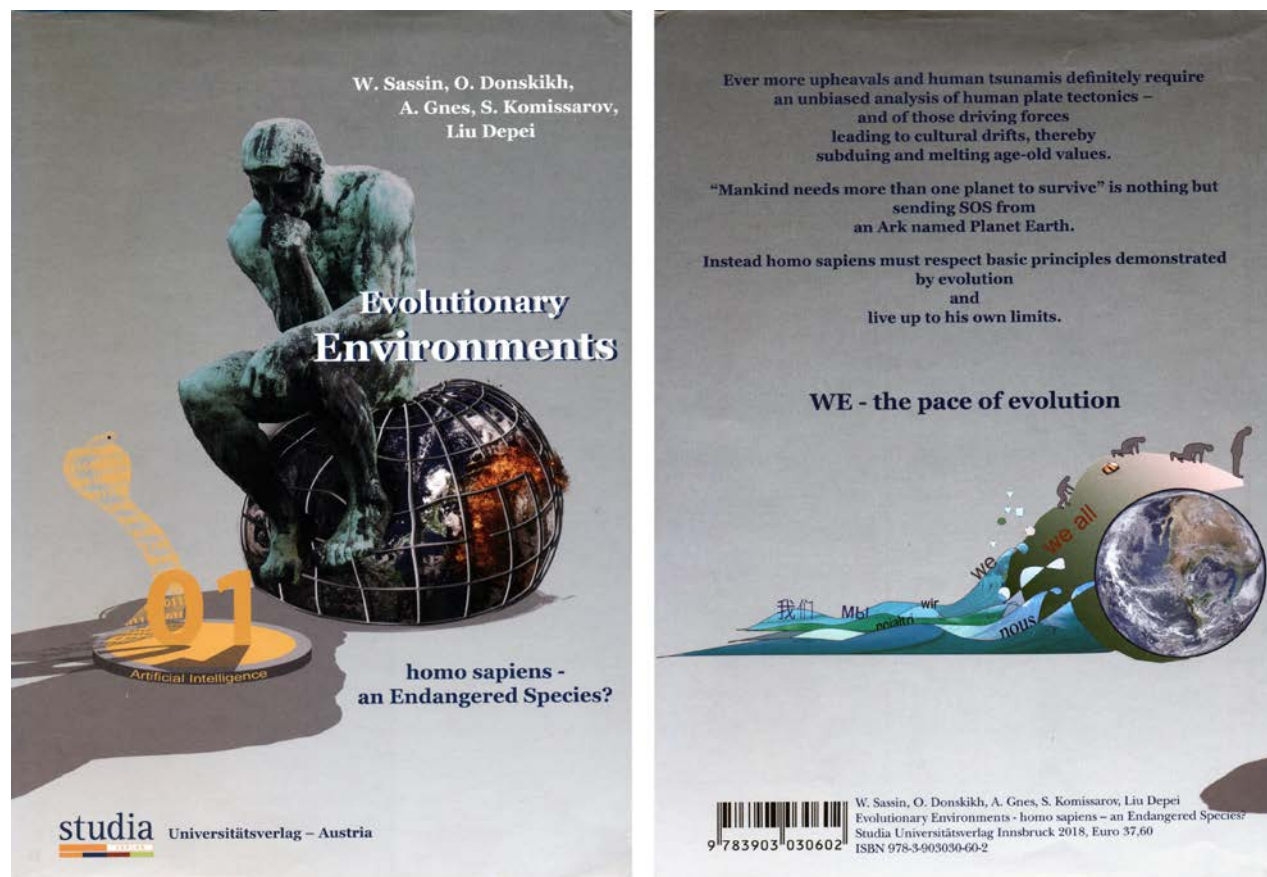


Fig. 4. *Evolutionary Environments: homo sapiens - an Endangered Species?* The book's cover. The book is available for the retail customers at the British, German and American branches of Amazon, as well as in a number of European book stores.

Sergey Komissarov is an Orientalist historian, a specialist in Eastern, mainly Chinese history. Now he occupies the positions of Professor of the Chair of Oriental Studies in Novosibirsk State University, and the Director of Confucius Class of Novosibirsk State University.

Alexandre Gnes is a historian specialising in the newest European history, and translator at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In his book *Before and after Sarajevo: The Right to Subjunctive* (2011) he considers WWI as a major bifurcation, a no-return point of the European course of civilisation development.

Liu Depei is a Professor and Supervisor of Doctorate in the Chinese People's Liberation Army, Major General at the Institute of Physical Education (China) and an expert sociologist

¹ In my view, one of the most interesting contributions of Oleg Donskikh is his work on the mythology of the post-Soviet space (Donskikh 2012).

for the Chinese Olympic Committee. He is engaged in studying the contemporary history of China.

Having united their different backgrounds and expertise in one book *Evolutionary Environments*, the authors seem to achieve their major target of accomplishing their mutual investigation. A considerable part of the book is devoted to studying history of human society, including that of the European Union. This investigation was performed during the last seven years. The team of these scholars not only contributed to different chapters of the book separately, but also chose to unite their expertise in several parts of the book written together. This had somewhat equivocal effect on the process of reading the book. On the one hand, the book profited from it in its content and wideness of topics. On the other hand, all the authors have quite different literary styles, and combining these styles together probably was not always a best idea for the smoothness and simplicity of a reader's perception.

PATHS AND ROUTES OF POLITICS OF VISIBILITIES

THE AUTHORS IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER resonate with the views of Oswald Spengler (2007), Michel Foucault (1993), Samuel Huntington (1996), Sergey Kurginyan (2011) and postmodernist classics Jean Baudrillard and Jacques Derrida (2015). The authors of the book emphasise that a desire to construct political illusions gradually replaces a wish to find acceptable political solutions to the most pressing issues and problems of global humanity. Indeed, now-a-days visual images often associated with political intimidation, creating a potential enemy's sense of permanent fear, bringing the situation to a critical, almost to the nuclear war, become convenient political technologies (Arbatov 2018; Dutkiewicz and Kazarinova 2017; Hänsel and Ott 2015; Morris 2014, chap. 2–3).

A lion's share of the book is occupied by analysing the history of political paths and routes Europe trod since WWII, and European Union is currently treading. The contemporary reality awkward for the EU, is comprehensively contemplated on in the book. The authors tend to view a source of the current EU political and legal stumbling not only in discrepancies of metaphorical and geographic *West* and *East*, *North* and *South* (Sassin 2013; Sassin et al. 2018, 15–16) of Europe. The other and more important reason, in the authors' opinion, is an attempt of the EU political elites to create a new morality, an innovative artificial set of ethic, moral, ideological and axiological guidelines that overthrow the thousand-year European cultural legacy. Just a few of the urgent questions of EU politics Dr Sassin with his co-authors is pondering on, are the following:

- 1) why should we deny our European cultural past in favour of new values of globalised world?;
- 2) to which extent should we linger round the idea of the unified EU and which turmoil and disorder are we going to withstand to protect the idea of our political union?;

- 3) which political initiatives should be put forward in the EU religious scope, i.e. how will the majority of secularised European citizens deal with highly religious migrants?;
- 4) how should the EU policy makers deal with the migration itself and “its unavoidable complement, the cultural transformation”?;
- 5) how to achieve the balance between US military presence raising in Europe since the beginning of the Cold War, and dealing with Russia and China completely independent in their politics and “unpredictable” for the EU political elites?;
- 6) how to make legal remedies on the continent for centrifugal tendencies such as Brexit?;
- 7) has the EU governance a right to authorise some territories and political groups to secede from a country expressing its desire to quit the EU, e.g. should the EU political bureaucrats now politically support Scottish and Irish voting results in the UK Brexit referendum? And how to deal with Catalan and North Italian centrifugal forces *etc.*

The authors divided their treatise into three parts farther subdivided into fourteen chapters (with subchapters). The parts are not equal in size and differ considerably. The monograph is written in English (primarily) and German (several chapters), with the chapters in German helping to better grasp the linguistic part of German Civil Code and German culture a reader need understand in the course of building the whole picture of the authors' logic.

The first part of the monograph deals with describing and analysing the social, political and legal problems of EU and EU members since 1969 (the date of human reaching the Moon), and the history of international relations between European states themselves and between Europe and outer political forces. The second one (written in German) discusses the concept of re-organising the world by the contemporary political and economic elites, the new world order, as well as the place of European civilisation and Germany in it. The third one that includes additional commentaries is devoted to the analysis of cultural, religious, social sources of shaping the modern EU, China and Russia. In the end, the team of the scholars makes the conclusions, proposes the predictions and advances the recommendations for administrative, political and legislative initiatives. The author group does not provide the finalised answers – that would be an unreal undertaking, indeed – but rather formulates the proper and urgent queries, urgent for the survival of *homo sapiens* itself.

The authors demonstrate in detail in which way several decades ago a number of European countries with different legal systems came to the pivotal agreement in the history of Europe, and the EU emerged. The persevering logic of the author team is a negative outlook for the EU for the nearest and more distant future. To what extent Dr Sassin and his colleagues may be correct in their pessimist views as for the future development of the European Union? They are arguing that the Doomsday of EU will come when the last parts of cultural independence of the nations are buried in the attempt to make the unified

Europe.

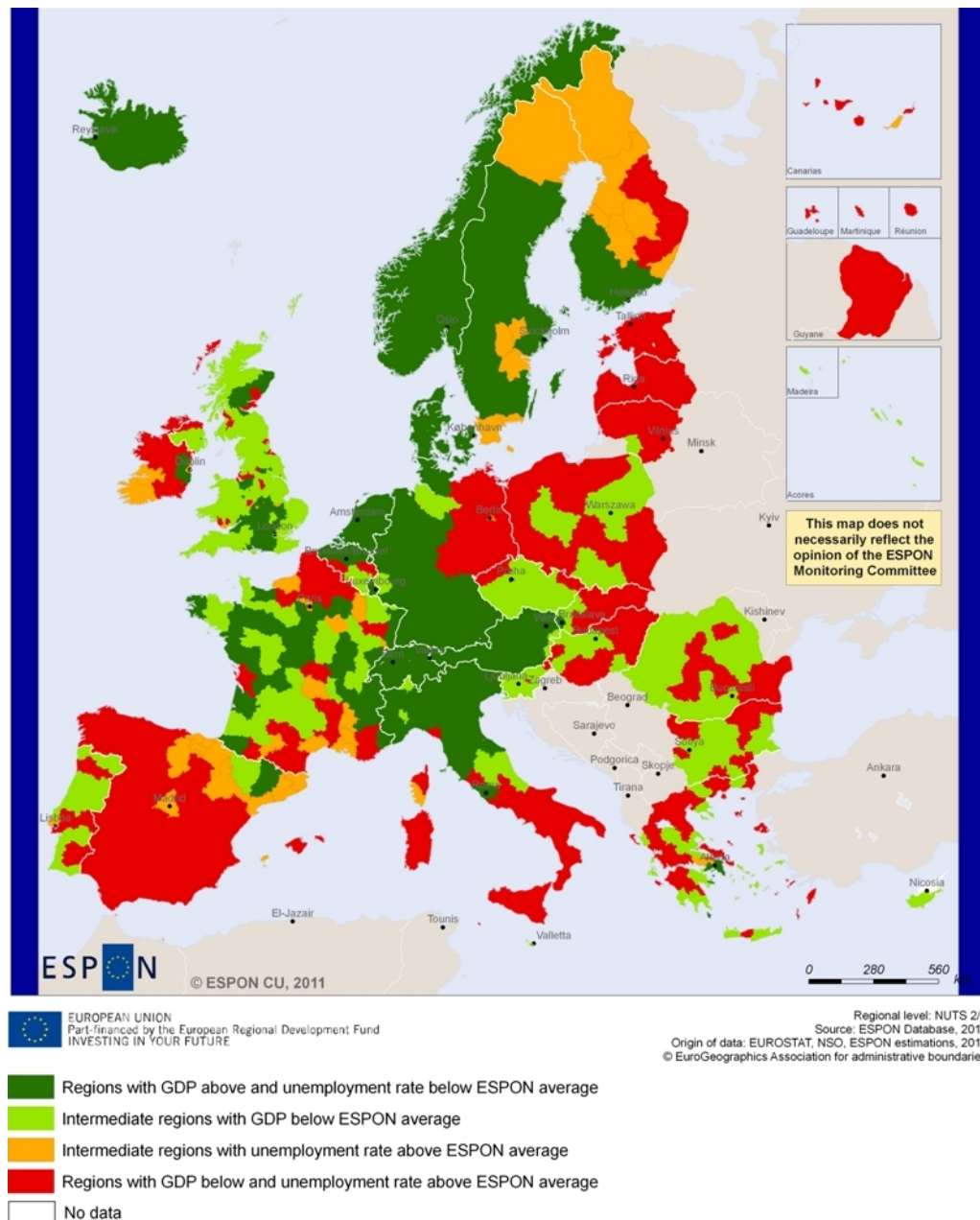


Fig. 5. The difference in the level of life across EU created by ESPON.

The green regions may be regarded as ‘more wealthy’ while red ones indicate regions with more economic problems. This map demonstrates that there is no economic unity not only at the scale of EU, but also at the scale of different countries, the EU members.

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During several decades since 1969, scarcely anybody but futurist-like most pessimistic visionaries professed doubts as to the bright and unclouded fate European Union shall face in the 21st century and beyond. The European economic prosperity of the 1990s and early 2000s was leading to a Faust-scale dream to rally different EU members round one morality, unite them round one set of ethical principles and values, and equalise their legal systems accordingly. Time passed, and now, in the midst of the stormy turmoil of the 2010s, hardly anyone but futurist-like fiction-writers especially and personally blessed by Clio, can preserve their cold-bloodedness and strong belief in the effulgent to-be of EU itself.

There is a never-ending feeling that almost all possible economic, political and legal perils and woes are now befalling EU simultaneously. Let us count but some of them: migrant troubles, economic slowdown, NATO issues, rising concerns of energy safety, centrifugal political tendencies (Brexit as the most powerful and instructive example), and finally, enormous and flagrant disparities in the members' GDPs, mentalities and – last but not least – legislation, law codes and law enforcement systems the EU members, obstinately do not wish to equalise. In addition to the internal unrest of the unified Europe, there is a constantly growing external pressure on it. The leaders of EU continental countries Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron and Giuseppe Conte now have to manoeuvre between

- a) US growing political and military influence on Europe;
- b) fearing the Russian “cyber threat” (how European mass media usually call it) with simultaneous constructing the partnership with Russia in Nord Stream 2 project; and
- c) accepting Chinese overflow of cheap technology that has already conquered the EU market as a side effect of the Chinese trade war with USA.

It seems high time the European civilisation did a survey if it is going to withstand all its troubles, and adhere to the common European dream of its unified future having emerged in the late 1950s, or retreat from the battlefield, and accept the unavailing policy of failing and failed states. In these uneasy times of EU development bifurcation, the books like *Evolutionary Environments. Homo Sapiens - an Endangered Species?* are of the utmost importance for the thoughtful historical contemplation. We may completely accept the right of the authors to regard the EU future in a negative way based on their analysis of EU history, and it is not difficult to prognosticate the EU to-be for twenty-thirty years ahead.

A thorough and in-depth historical research of political development and movements of Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic and European Union as a whole is amply replete in the book with the innovative political measures and legislative initiatives carefully proposed by the author team. Finally, their research is supplemented with the comparative historical study of European countries international relations with the Soviet Union, China and USA in the years after WWII and especially starting with the late 1950s, when an abstract overall idea of the future unified Europe has started to materialise in the form of European Economic Community (EEC).

The book has its undoubted strong part in thorough and detailed studying cultural, social, philosophic, axiological and religious traditions as sources of politics in European countries

(since WWII) and the Union itself (since 1973). The piece concerning the Hungarians and written by Alexandre Gnes, is a real gem for those who are engaged in the history of culture. *Horror Zivilisationis* written by Oleg Donskikh, is one of the most crucial chapters necessary for the understanding the ways in which European civilisation destroys the common European culture.¹ A tour to the Confucian Chinese culture organised by Sergey Komissarov, permits one to comprehend the ways of ethnical culture formation. Liu Depei in the chapter “Man needs a new type of intelligence,” by means of example of the modern China, emphasises what challenges the humanity will face in the nearest future, in the condition of overpopulation. Wolfgang Sassin focusses on elaborating the *WE* and *WEstern* world concepts. The researchers try to understand in which way the shift in the cultural development of European countries within globalising world will influence European policies and legislation. In addition, there are convincing excerpts linking the ancient history of European civilisation (Graeco-Roman world) with the modern EU *status quo*.

W. Sassin and his colleagues conclude that the adherence of Western-type communities to the political course once proposed by Eleanor Roosevelt, Stéfan Hessel and Albert Schweitzer, has led to the fact that West European and American super-civilisation is now becoming a kind of ideological, economic and political prison with a purpose of bringing the whole world to an order similar to that required to maintain the stability of a jailhouse (Sassin et al. 2018, chap. 8-10). Michel Foucault in his book *To Supervise and Punish: The Birth of Prison* (1975), expressed a similar idea that the transforming apparatuses of the state in France and the United States, are beginning to resemble tools for maintaining order in prisons (Foucault 1993, chap. 1). The authors of the monograph under review, taking the Foucault’s model as a basis, significantly expand it and justify the validity of its use for all European-type communities, including the European Union itself (Sassin et al. 2018, chap. 5, 12). The authors prove the close connection between the Foucault’s term *world order of prison* and the concept of *homo billionis* advanced by them.

HOMO BILLIONIS AND EVERYDAY CITIZENS: THE EVOLUTION IN PROGRESS

IN SEVERAL SPEECHES OF HER RUN-FOR-PRESIDENCY CAMPAIGN, Hillary Clinton repeated that she wants to be the President of “everyday citizens.” In fact, she became the first politician in American history to deliberately reject the idea of an “ordinary American.” What are these everyday citizens to whom Clinton addressed herself? In addition to the disparaging connotations in this expression, it refers to the people without identification, everyday citizens are not middle-class Americans who have always been the backbone of the Democratic party’s voters. The expression “everyday citizen,” from my point of view, has

¹ I appreciate Dr Konstantin Sharov who drew my attention to the original version of Prof Donskikh’s article (Donskikh 2015).

a number of meanings:

- 1) a person of simulated identity, i.e. without national, cultural, religious or other significant identification;
- 2) a person who does not seek to stand out from the crowd, and contented with his (her) life;
- 3) a cosmopolitan loyal to the imaginary concept of “world democracy,” having no ideals of organisation of his (her) own country, besides the ideals that are imposed on to him (her), from the elites and authorities;
- 4) a person politically amorphous, i.e. completely entrusting his (her) political rights to the state and government.

The term “everyday citizen” is somewhat close to the concept of *homo billionis*, a “billionaire human,” introduced by Wolfgang Sassin and his co-authors. Any *homo billionis* is a puppet, a human entity of zero value, for whom the political system decides everything. However, a *homo billionis* sincerely believes that he (she) is involved in the construction of a “democratic” system, but in fact, pseudo-democracy imposed by the US and the EU to all countries of the world. He (she) believes that sharing the “democratic” values that he (she) was instructed, the main and only thing that makes him (her) a real Person. He (she) is also convinced that the whole world is divided into the “democracy” and “absolute evil.” He (she) believes that much depends on him (her) in political life, that all political transformations and reforms are initiated from below, sometimes he (she) even thinks of himself or herself as a master of destinies, because the media discourse of the politics of visibilities carefully infuses this idea into his (her) mind. According to W. Sassin and colleagues, social media plays an important role in the transformation of man into *homo billionis*: “mental exposure to unknown billions is gradually experienced and interpreted by billions as the new reality” (Sassin et al 2018, 38).

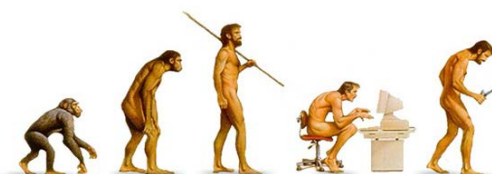
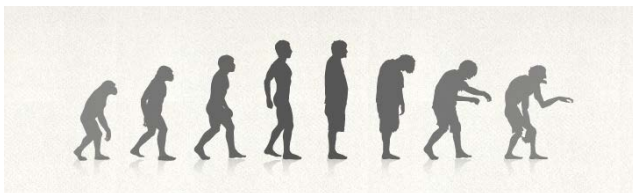
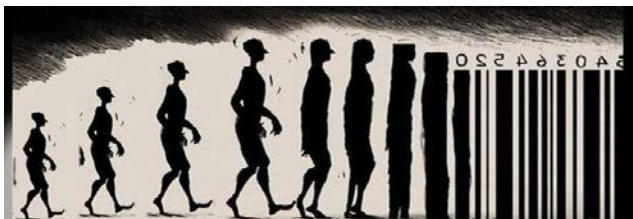


Fig. 6. These three dimensions of the further evolution of *homo sapiens*, in my opinion, persuasively show the direction to *homo billionis*: functional (above), psychological (middle), and technological (below).

The pictures are not mine; I acknowledge the right to use them in my paper.

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The authors are trying to predict what the politics of an independent state may be like in the world of *homo billionis*, and what place the EU and European civilisation shall and may occupy in this world. The concept of *homo billionis* is put forward as a next stage of humanity social evolution, a post-human step of *homo sapiens*. Each step of the world globalisation, as the authors demonstrate, requires innovative techniques and procedures of ideological control: individuals → families → clans → tribes → kingdoms → nations → states → empires → one globalised world.

The authors argue that one of the EU political problems consists in constructing the legal base for the European new mega-narrative of tolerance and neo-liberalism (including its gender, national, racial *etc.* parts). The EU political system starts to treat the title nationalities of EU members as *homo billionis*, parts of human faceless mass without prominent leaders and true ipseity, while the humanity in its wholeness as an uttermost value. The politics of visibilities has no need in supporting such inconsistencies.

On the whole, according to the authors, ideological mechanisms of using *homo billionis* are necessary for political and economic elites as important components of functioning the policy of appearances, turning the concept of democracy into a burlesque. To such burlesques more and more forms of government and political systems of the Western world come, and these political systems start to remind of the classic dystopias of the twentieth century.

Thus, Dr Sassin with his co-authors insists that in the EU politics and law there is a striking disparity between proclaiming the human nature as the final goal of any legal or political reform and initiative, and the post-human (anti-human) real treating the title European nationalities. Dr Sassin with his team argues that what should have been a legal protection of the Europeans, became a set of legal instruments of abusing their rights. The authors develop the idea here that the European civilisation seems to forswear its ancient cultural, legal and religious traditions. This idea is in no way new and is already reflected in a number of publications (see, e.g.: Begg and Schütte 2016; Calhoun 2017; Gills 2010; Koselleck and Richter 2006) but it receives novel valuable refractions in the historical analysis of *Evolutionary Environments*.

IS EVERYTHING SO VIVACIOUS WITH THE BOOK?

OF COURSE, A BOOK OFFERING NEW AUDACIOUS POLITICAL CONCEPTS and re-thinking the existing ones, cannot but face a strong academic critique in some areas. To name but a few:

- 1) Underestimating the transformation of common Christian heritage that could have been a basis for making a concept of a European citizen, i.e. a future citizen of the politically unified EU without national boundaries.
- 2) Therefore, not analysing the corruption of this religious legacy.

3) overlooking the specific of the United Kingdom with its common law system as a possible reason of Brexit and initial destabilising the EU; the authors carefully examine the crisis of European integration as primarily a value crisis of European civilisation, without taking into account the specifics of the British situation. Brexit is just mentioned in a few sections of the book and is not sufficiently discussed, in contrast, for example, with the approach proposed by Thomas Philippon (2016) or Christopher Bickerton in his book *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the Futures of Europe* (2018).

4) Criticising the legal EU identity uniting methods without taking into account that exactly the same principles are laid in the foundation of US internal politics and have been successfully applied for more than two centuries of the America politics. “God has a contract with Us, his beloved people! Together WE are stronger!” - the authors problematise this statement for the EU (Sassin et al. 2018, 9) but the United States Declaration of Independence of 1776 is based precisely upon that principle and it continues to be workable even today, when the American national idea begin to be stumbling.

5) The authors draw an obvious parallel between monotheism and modern EU centripetal forces (Ibid, 226–228). They expound the basics of Abrahamic religion and unites Judaism, Christianity and Islam all in one without making any difference between them, in their political and legal ways of application in the modern EU. As well, the authors do not distinguish between their political potential of rallying people in the modern Europe. But the authors seem to forget that the experience of Muslim migrants integration into European society may often prove the opposite.

6) Why are Islam and Christianity used quite in different ways in the modern European Union? Why do the readers not receive even a slightest idea from the authors?

7) The authors take for granted the equality (and even identity?) **mono-theism = mono-humanism** and outline their desire to use this maxim as a basis for a lot of their deductions (Ibid, 9). But in reality this axiom remains an axiom throughout the whole monograph, without any considerable explanation, foundation or elaboration. Was it made deliberately or is it a neglect of the authors?

8) There are several dystopian tales with which the book is supplemented (Psycho 3, chap. 14). Their role in the fabric of the book is unclear, although they are beautiful masterpieces of their own and composed in strict accordance with the rules of the dystopian genre. Perhaps, they will illustrate some theoretical provisions of the book, but personally for me, they seemed somewhat excess parts that stand out against the background of the book reflections.

9) The process of globalisation is supposed on the pages of the book, but different degrees of different countries and communities involvement in the globalisation, is not discussed. It remains obscure and recondite if we may consider, for example, the situation of Hungary located in the heart of Europe but nevertheless retained its cultural specificity (Ibid, chap. 13.4, 13.6), as a recipe for other countries and nationalities, or not. The possibilities and potential for transmitting cultural and political experience between countries with very different histories and cultural backgrounds, also remain only briefly outlined.

Then, the authors bravely attempt to delineate the world division into but the two types of societies: a) post-human (“*WEstern*”, as he calls them) and b) traditionalist (“*THEM*”) ones. The situation is scarcely so simple here. On the one hand, many societies are at the verge of the imagined borderline between “US” and “THEM”. On the other, globalisation gradually involves the whole world in its course; and all the societies shall become parts of the globalised politics sooner or later. In such a situation, it is difficult even to make an obvious distinction between “US” and “THEM”.

The next point of major concern, where the book is open to severe criticising, is the authors’ purely instrumental approach to religion as a world outlook and understanding distinct specific religions as instrumental phenomena, nothing more (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, pagan beliefs). Attaining the considerations of religion, the logic of the book, in other places unexceptionable, begins to stammer. And, since such cases of addressing the matter of religion can be met in the monograph rather often, the narration sometimes transforms to a roller coaster – breathtaking, however. Certainly, the loose points of the authors are related to their constant and unchangeable comprehending the religion as a mere artificial technique of rallying masses round a political force (see, e.g. Ibid, 9, 106–107, 226–236 &c). This oversimplifying the religious scope of human existence leads the authors of *Evolutionary Environments* to overlook some interesting ideas, which otherwise they undoubtedly would not have disregarded.

CONCLUSION

NOTWITHSTANDING SOME MINOR POINTS OF CONCERN, the book *Evolutionary Environments. Homo Sapiens - an Endangered Species?* of the exceptional and highly talented international team of scholars, is definitely a milestone in literature on the newest history of Europe. It is completely free from any ideological blinkers and this circumstance definitely adds to the merit of the book.

As a logical and cognitive conclusion of their profound monograph, the authors make an attempt to elaborate possible European Union legal, political and administrative initiatives that could place a stop to the pernicious *status quo* where “democracy is no longer committed to its voters, but to ideologies which can transgress boundaries without diffi-

culties” (Ibid, 31). I believe they achieved their goals for the main part. The scholars are more or less successful in their bold undertaking in different parts of their historical analysis. Their book will definitely have an undisputable merit for academic historians both in the United Kingdom, Europe and abroad, as it already had for the author of this review.

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

GREY, CECILY, LADY. POLITICS OF VISIBILITIES IN THE MODERN EUROPEAN WORLD.

THE PAPER REPRESENTS A REVIEW OF THE BOOK: Wolfgang Sassin, Oleg Donskikh, Alexandre Gnes, Sergey Komissarov, Liu Depei. *Evolutionary Environments. Homo Sapiens - an Endangered Species?* The book is an unusual attempt of a team of scholars from various parts of the world (Europe, Russia, China) with various backgrounds to analyse the political history of European Union using an interdisciplinary methodology that includes historical analysis, sociological surveys, political research, legal study and even natural scientific approach (in investigating the European demographic trends). To accomplish their goal, the authors of the monograph under review, not only contributed to different chapters of the book separately, but also chose to unite their expertise in several mutual parts written together. The major achievement of the author group is their fresh look at the EU development, which they advance with the aid of *homo billionis* and *WEstern* civilisation concepts. The authors are analysing different trends in the modern EU history and describe political, administrative and legislative initiatives that could stabilise or destabilise the EU. A special attention is paid in the book to the history of EU international relations with Russia and China, and contemporary attempts of European political elites to find the EU place in the globalised world. The authors insist that the European Union experiences the turbulence period of its history, not in the last turn because of the per-

sistent idea of EU bureaucrats, political and economic elites to create a new post-human morality and system of values that include the utter tolerance and neo-liberal ideology.

The mechanisms of the modern transformation of international politics in the policy of appearances (images) are analysed. The authors of the book attempt to perceive not only the principles and techniques used by politicians to create the desired political images in our time, but also the effects that the new type of politics has on the involvement of citizens in the political life.

The authors introduce the concept of *homo billionis* ("billion people"). From the authors' view, it is a new stage of socio-political evolution of *homo sapiens*, which changes the whole life of a person and the set of social connections in which he or she participates. In this case, an ordinary person is imposed on an idea that he or she is a central figure in the formation of democracy in his (her) own country, whereas he (she) is a controlled and fully dependent object.

A central place in the book is devoted to the study of the political course of the current European Union and the transformation of European democratic systems in the globalised world, both in domestic European affairs and in international relations with Russia, China and the USA. A comparative analysis of the involvement of different communities in the globalised world, is carried out. It is concluded that the adoption of the ideology of neoliberalism by the society of a given country occurs in a close connection with the loss of this society's cultural identity, and the transformation of the citizens of this country into "everyday citizens," in fact *homo billionis*. According to the author of the review, the book is a successful attempt to analyse political technologies, ideologies and social programmes of modern political and economic elites of the societies of European type, especially in the EU itself.

The article also provides criticism of a number of provisions of the book, which, from the point of view of the author of the review, may be rash or not completely grounded. However, they do not diminish the value of the book. It can serve an excellent academic source on EU political ideologies and international ideological use, as well as a guide for legislative and administrative initiatives to curb the proliferation of ideological influence.

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Lady Grey's main scope of research includes the following topics: UK in the globalising world; transformational processes of social institutes, organisations and relations; national and international culture shifts; UK and EU relations; history of the UK countries from Roman Empire thus far; history of British science and philosophy.

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