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BOOK REVIEW: FOREIGN POLICY RESOURCES OF RUSSIA AND THE EU WITHIN THE COMMON NEIGHBOURHOOD

Adrián Vaško*

SHISHKINA, O. V. (Шишкина, О.В.): *Foreign Policy Resources of Russia and the EU within the Common Neighbourhood (Внешнеполитические ресурсы Россия и ЕС на пространстве общего соседства)*. Moscow : ZAO Vydavatelstvo "Aspekt Press", 2014. 158 p. ISBN: 978-5-7567-0657-4.

Development of the events at the end of 2013 and at the beginning of 2014, especially on the territory of Ukraine, attracted the attention of general public as well as professionals to the countries located in the area between Russia and the European Union. At the beginning, it should be mentioned that from the perspective of the EU, the states in this area rarely get due attention. However, the area of "common neighbourhood", as defined in the publication reviewed, is understood more closely as "common neighbourhood" defined by the EU. This includes Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova only, as the author states. Even these countries have a common past within the former USSR, their development after obtaining their independence took different routes, demonstrating a good base when elaborating the relations of Russia and the EU toward these states. The edition of this publication is just a consequence of the need to analyse the changes after the collapse of the bipolar world of the late 20th Century. These changes resulted in the creation of so-called "new Eastern Europe". Also, Russia is a part of this group, in addition to its actual involvement in bigger and probably strategically more important systems. The position of Russia in other regional systems does not diminish the importance of the described area for Moscow; more or less to the opposite, it provides opportunities for an adequate operation on at least two levels – the pan-European and post-Soviet level. The new Eastern Europe reminds the

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Versailles-Riga order existing in this region from 1921 to around 1934. It would be interesting to see how this phenomenon is going to be retained in current circumstances since, again, it gets into the stage of its role, place and nature (pp. 6-7). As the author states in the introduction, there were only 3 countries left after the “eastern enlargement” of the European Union in 2004-2007, which retained their possibility of wide selection of institutional and political direction of development. Those are Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Russia and the EU are the most important players of the international relations in Europe; they declare their interests to participate in the stability and calm development of the states in their immediate vicinity. However, practical steps leading toward achieving their goals differ. The differences are the results of the diversity of foreign sources – the potential of Russia and the EU used in order to achieve their foreign policy objectives (p. 8).

As the author states in the introduction, it attempts of a kind of inventory of foreign funds necessary for comparing Russia and the EU in the area of the “common neighbourhood”. Deliberately, it compares the foreign policy possibilities of the participants of international relations which can be used even when looking for the grounds of these relations. According to the author, there is no sufficient amount of works in the Russian or foreign scientific literature which would compare the Russian and EU policy towards Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, thus toward to all Eastern Europe “common neighbours”. Virtually, there are no researches conducted on the level of creating the foreign policy objectives and utilisation of resources available. The purpose of this monograph is the attempt to fill this gap partially (p. 9).

The first chapter devotes its attention mainly to the explanation of the terms, such as foreign policy resources, “common neighbourhood”, as well as the foreign policy resource comparison algorithm. The author presents several understanding of foreign policy resources within the political theory. She mentions that there are differences in the evaluation of the approach to the foreign policy resources in the realist paradigm, liberal paradigm, in neo-Marxism, post-modernism, Russian classical political theory as well as contemporary Russian authors. When summarizing the approaches stated, there is a brief general definition of the consent of the term foreign policy resources, in this Chapter, meaning a certain material and ideological potential the state disposes of and serving as the base for forming the national interests and foreign policy. According to the author, it is necessary to focus on the

following common specifics:

1. The term “foreign policy resources” is linked inseparably with the formation of foreign policy orientation of the country.
2. The importance of the foreign policy resources is illustrated using terms, such as power, importance, potential, interests and goals.
3. The foreign policy resources can be classified in several groups but there is no united approach to this issue. Some researchers allocate material and non-material resources, other researches – resources of funds (material and information) and resources of conditions (space and time), and the third group puts the elements of state system and institutional resources among the foreign policy resources, in addition to material and non-material ones.
4. The understanding of foreign policy resources was formed as the metaphor for understanding the power. First, this included material elements, such as geological location, natural resources, production capacity and military power. Gradually, the non-material resources became more important than the information, institutional, ideological and scientific resources (p. 15).

At the end of the subchapter, the author defines the foreign policy resources as the potential of the foreign policy actor who can be used in order to achieve their foreign policy goals. The foreign policy actors participate in continuous movement in the geological area enabling to understand rationally their own foreign policy and to change them on the base of the knowledge of their own resources (p. 15). This part includes schematic illustration of the foreign policy resources enabling the understanding of their structure and fundamental division. The foreign policy resources of Russia and the EU are divided into political, economic and humanitarian.

The second subchapter of the Chapter 1 is devoted to the explanation of the term used the “common neighbourhood”. The author dates the formation of this term back to 2004-2007 after the mass enlargement of the European Union, most substantial in its history. During this period, the EU worked with the term “neighbourhood policy” and Russia with the term “near abroad”. In terms of modification of these terms, the term “common neighbourhood” is interesting, as it was stated, because Russia includes Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine only. The EU incorporates also Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia in the “common neighbours”. The “common neighbours”, i.e. Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, are

the countries of special importance for Russia as well as for the EU in geostrategic terms. Similarly, the fact that all three countries are the area of competition of the Russian and EU foreign policy interests is also important. Also, the common past of the countries of the “common neighbourhood” is also more or less important enabling Russia and the EU use the same methods of implementing their foreign policy. The author argues that the introduction of the term “common neighbourhood” has been recorded in expert and diplomatic circumstances since 2005. Recently, the “common neighbourhood” is under review and assessed in the Russian and foreign expert circles, it is mentioned in the official documents of the European Union, in the commentaries of Russian official representatives and maybe such name of the countries bordering Russia and the EU will get into bilateral treaties between Russia and the EU (p. 23).

The final section of the Chapter 1 is devoted to the foreign policy resource comparison algorithm. The author, in accordance with the theory of Arend Lijphart, allocates the basic sources - parameters necessary to conduct a comparative analysis. She divides them into three groups - political resources (general political resources, political and economic resources, military and political resources), economic resources (interdependence and political context, foreign-trade resources and trade structure, financial resources, labour resources), humanitarian resources (socio-psychological resources, information and propaganda resources, experience of mutual understanding, education and traditional interrelations) (p. 24).

The second chapter named Political Resources of Russia and the EU in the area of “common neighbourhood” is divided into three subchapters. In the first subchapter, the author incorporates all available mechanisms and formats of the cooperation between Russia and the EU with the countries of the “common neighbourhood” among the political Russian and EU resources. Just as an illustration, several projects are presented, either by Russia, respectively by the EU, requiring specific material resources – financial, administrative, and demographic, when implemented into life, along with non-material resources. The following are used: the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Black Sea Synergy, and the Eastern Partnership. Russia responded by intensifying the cooperation with the most advanced CIS member states, the Common Economic Area is an example. A better overview of the initiatives and projects is given in graphical form in this part of the publication.

The next part of the chapter is devoted to the formation of the ideas of Russia and the EU on their interests in the countries of the “common

neighbourhood". Russia paid its attention to its neighbours, later included in this geopolitical area immediately after the collapse of the USSR. However, the primary objective of these projects was to address the safety issues and to overcome the economic crisis. In 2005, a new phase of shaping the Russia's foreign policy doctrine started, where the interests in the development of relations with neighbouring countries take place. Just to compare, in the early 90s, the EU also focused mainly on its internal development. As the author states, in 2003 the EU understood the need to influence the policy of the future EU border states in order to protect its own security against the so-called soft threats (p. 31).

The main part of Chapter 2 is devoted to a comparative analysis of political resources. The author deals with a detailed description of the EU and Russia's general political resources, which she specifies and classifies chronologically, thus allowing the reader to get a sufficient overview of the development dynamics in this area. However, the Russian attention is mainly dedicated to the CIS project, which did not become a real instrument of real and beneficial cooperation on the territory of the former USSR, for various reasons. The initiatives by the EU are also analysed in terms of political and economic resources. The author deals with the genesis of the Eastern Partnership as a concrete initiative in time and space. This section, particularly the example of the relations with Ukraine, demonstrates the intertwining interests of Russia and the EU in the "common neighbourhood". Further attention is devoted to the description and characteristics of the use of political resources, namely toward Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Specifically, the military and political resources are also referred to, but here, the attention is paid mainly to the activities of Russia, since the majority of the EU countries addresses the security issues within the NATO structures.

The end of the Chapter deals in detail with mutual comparison of political resources of Russia and the EU in the area of the "common neighbourhood". This comparison is prepared at a high level and provides a very good basis for the understanding of this issue.

The Chapter 3 is devoted to economic resources. Again, it is divided into three subchapters. The first subchapter is devoted to the definition of the actual content of the economic resources concept. It belongs to one of the most important resources of foreign policy resources of the participants of international relations. As stated in the text: stable economy and flourishing state enable to implement independent foreign policy aimed at securing the

national interests. The most recent Russian history provides many examples of the use of economic resources to achieve foreign policy interests, while it is important to consider other issues in addition to successful business with energy resources and the possibilities of foreign policy pressure. Also, information about the high level of economic development of the international relation actor can be considered as economic resources, actively used by the EU (p. 64). Economic resources are made up of several elements. They include especially interdependence of economies and political context, foreign trade resources, financial resources and labour resources. Each element of these resources is analysed and compared with each other in detailed and critical manner. For Russia, the permanent main concern was to ensure its own security, promotion of foreign enabling the growth of the Russian power, the effort to preserve and develop the character of a large regional and global leadership (p. 69) were and still is the primary interest in the area of the "common neighbourhood". On the other hand, the EU has concentrated its attention on the development program of the European Neighbourhood Policy, representing a synthesis of traditional enlargement policy and effort to make protection policy against threats of the "soft security", in a certain manner: conflicts, statehood failure, inefficient state system, illegal migration, organised crime, etc. (p. 74). The end of the Chapter deals with a detailed comparative analysis of the attitudes and actions of Russia and the EU within economic resources.

The area of humanitarian resources is examined in Chapter 4, and its internal structure is similar to the previous sources. The text suggests that the very definition of the term humanitarian resources and their evaluation is the most difficult under foreign policy resources. There is no academic consensus on what actually falls under the concept of humanitarian resources of the international relation actors. As stated by the author, the theorists in Western Europe see this type of resources as "soft power", based on the operation of the culture, political ideals and pragmatic foreign policy. In the Russian foreign policy, the element of disseminating political ideals/values within this context is rarely perceivable. Humanitarian resources are seen as an opportunity to preserve and enlarge the common cultural civil heritage (p. 97).

The end of the chapter devoted to a comparative analysis of the Russian and EU humanitarian resources in the area of the "common neighbourhood" provides an opportunity to become familiar with different approaches of Russia and the EU relating to this issue. As mentioned, Russia

focuses more on the common values of the past and achieving short-term goals, while the EU pays its attention to the investment in the humanitarian resources development in the future, particularly through mutual understanding and providing educational opportunities to young generations, ultimately, this is the area where new political elite grows.

The end of this publication contains a summary of knowledge obtained in the areas of above foreign resources. The author concludes and also demonstrates with her arguments that Russia and the EU are the “foreign factor” of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus, influencing the formation of these three Eastern Europe states of the former USSR in the area of “common neighbourhood”. Already in 2005, the EU and Russia clearly understood the competitive nature of their relations in the area of the “common neighbourhood” (p. 129). The direction of the countries of the “common neighbourhood” is not the subject of the author’s attention of this reviewed book. The conclusion contains just the facts and empirical data, which does not mean that a perceptive reader may draw some trends and possible steps in the development of future relations with its neighbours.

The author of the reviewed publication by O V Shishikina is a university lecturer at the Department of International Relations and Foreign Policy of Russia at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MGIMO) in Moscow, she graduated from the undergraduate study at the MGIMO in major in “Regional Studies (of the European countries)”, she obtained her Master’s degree within the joint study program of the MGIMO and the universities in Berlin, Potsdam and Humboldt University. She completed an internship supported by Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institute für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit in Berlin and an internship at the Catholic University in Lieueven in Belgium.

The book provides a well-elaborated and detailed view of the relations of Russia and the European Union with the countries of the “common neighbourhood”. For non-Russian readers, particularly among the professional community, the benefit is clear since, in our country, we really rarely meet with the opinions of Russian experts on the issue of the EU foreign policy. Her comparative analysis is of high quality, sufficiently detailed and supported by argumentation. The effort to maintain an objective author's approach is obvious throughout the whole text, also evidenced by the critical evaluation of actions and attitudes of Russia in some of the areas reviewed. From the perspective of

a Slovak reader and reviewer, it should be noted that the author committed a small inaccuracy when she states some data on Slovakia at one point and then she relates the same facts to Slovenia at another place. However, this is understandable in terms of a human being and it does not diminish the contribution of the book in no way. Maybe, the Slovak publishing centres could be motivated more to monitor the Russian scientific literature, to communicate with Russian authors and thus to enrich not only our book market but also the international scientific collaboration.