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Author(s) / Autor(i): Ľudmila Lipková
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BOOK REVIEW: POLITICAL MAP OF FRANCE AT THE TURN OF THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

L'udmila Lipková*

KUCHARČÍK, R. 2016. *Political map of France at the turn of the first decade of the 21st Century*. Kishinev: Centrul Editorial Poligrafic al USM (CEP USM),, 2016. 88p. ISBN 978-9975-71-862-2.

For centuries, France has been one of the world powers with decisive influence in various parts of the world. It is understandable that it is still object of interest of political scientists around the world.

France and its foreign policy priorities from the beginning of 21st Century are examined in the monograph of Rudolf Kucharčík *Political map of France at the turn of the first decade of the 21st Century* in comparative perspective.

The monograph is divided into four chapters: Fundamental principles of French foreign and security policy of Nicolas Sarkozy; French attitude towards selected questions of foreign/security policy during the presidential mandate of Nicolas Sarkozy and its evaluation; Different attitudes to foreign and security policy priorities, Change in French political map after election in 2012.

The first chapter deals with priorities of foreign policy of Nicolas Sarkozy. The starting points of his foreign and security policy attitudes were two White papers – White Paper on Defence and National Security and White Paper on the Foreign and European Policy. The author of the monograph pointed out that both these documents are ideologically quite close to the European security strategy from 2003 – the document based on the principles of multilateralism.

The chapter reminds that French characteristic of the international environment after Cold war was not very optimistic. The international order created after Cold war was according to them fragile. On the other hand, French

* Dr.h.c. prof. Ing. L'udmila Lipková, CSc. is Head of the Department of International Economic Relations and Economic Diplomacy, Faculty of International Relations at the University of Economics in Bratislava, Dolnozemska 1, 852 35 Bratislava 5, Slovakia, e-mail: ludmila.lipkova@euba.sk.

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were not prepared to marginalise the importance of multilateral institutions – most notably of United Nations.

The second chapter elaborates on selected issues of foreign and security policy during presidential mandate of Nicolas Sarkozy. It notices that France does not hide that its political priority is mainly a strong European Union. For France, Europe is a continent strongly linked together by common history and social values. EU is for France one of the key world security players “able to mobilize convenient economic, business, diplomatic and military tools necessary for the crisis solutions”. Regarding the EU enlargement, France tended to a limited enlargement – it means Western Balkans countries. French were usually sceptical regarding Ukraine and Turkey as the EU members. The monograph also points out that the future of the EU depends mainly on the relationship between France and Germany – although their geopolitical priorities are often somewhere else, (French focus on Mediterranean and German on East Europe including Russia). This chapter analyses also the complicated relationship between France and NATO, relations with Russia and pragmatic relations between France and the USA (including characteristic of partial escalation of relations after US intervention to Iraq).

The aim of the third chapter was to have “complex picture about logic of decision-making process in the field of foreign policy.” Therefore, it was necessary to analyse the steps and decisions of the most relevant players. The USA were the best example. The chapter tries to answer few questions – Were foreign policy steps of these two allies common? Were they coordinated or competitive? It shows that the administration of Republican president George W. Bush reacted on the security situation and threats in the world in its National Security Strategies from 2002 and 2006. Administration of Democratic president Barack Obama in National Security Strategy from 2010. While approach of George W. Bush was close to unilateralism, approach of Barack Obama was more cooperative and more close to multilateralism. However, neither Barack Obama gave up the possibility to act unilaterally.

The last chapter deals with the situation after the elections in 2012. In the second round of the presidential election, François Hollande became the president as he defeated Nicolas Sarkozy. The author also reminds that there were though tasks for him – to convince the French that he is the one who knows the solutions for economic and social crisis including the world problems – Eurozone crisis, Ukraine, Russia, Middle East, North Africa.

According to Rudolf Kucharčík we could not expect any significant changes of the French policy in the area of foreign policy. As the author points out – nothing indicates that French foreign policy led by its new president would principally reduce from its global trajectory started by President Sarkozy. Similarly to his predecessors, François Hollande was convinced about the French extraordinariness.

The monograph of Rudolf Kucharčík *Political map of France at the turn of the first decade of the 21st Century in comparative perspective* offers comprehensive approach to French policy at the beginning of the 21st Century and it offers different view on the decisive player of that period – the United States of America in comparative perspective. Analysis of both of these attitudes is necessary to understand foreign and security policy events of that time.