

Book Reviews

Book review “Prospects of Development in EU and Regional measurements “Olga Brusylovska and Igor Koval (eds.)”

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Understanding events in the current global political system is becoming a hard and challenging task, for academics and policy analysts. The recognized theoretical lenses, which have been used to read relations among powers and understand the causes of war, balance of power and cooperation, are no more providing adequate results. In particular, large portions of reality slip from the deep-rooted notions of hegemony and hegemonic order.

Over the last decades, International Relations scholars have paid more attention to the use of prognosis for explaining international events. Foreign Policy Forecasting is used to complement such investigations, by making predictions on phenomena and processes, and on how they can perform in the international system. Rather than being a ‘futurolgist attitude’, such a scientific approach carefully analyses the overall global situation and puts trends and factors in connection, for promoting comprehensive perspectives and shaping policy prescriptions.

A group of representatives of the Department of International Relations of Odessa Mechnikov National University have spent years in researching EU’s policy perspectives, particularly in respect to their region, by using such an approach. In this collective monograph, edited by Olga Brusylovska and Igor Koval, senior and junior researchers present the most advanced results of their individual and communal work, by offering a sophisticated and insightful basis for reflection.

They identify the main trends in the development of EU’s policy, by exploring its regional and global proportions. The most innovative character (applied to a topic which has certainly been excessively investigated) is the use of scripting, as the most common predictive tool, aiming at predicting current and future political developments.

All chapters are based on the study of a logical sequence of events based on already existing or specified situation and offer scenarios to measures potential future impacts of the EU in respect to various policy fields and/or relevant political actors.

Therefore, already massively explored issues, such as the impact of European regionalization on EU integration policy; the influence of nationalism on EU geopolitical models; the EU's effect on the transformation of Eastern European countries; the roles of the EU as a peace mediator and peacekeeper appear in a new light and are scrutinised in their aspects, in order to fit into a set of more of less accurate scenarios.

The book is divided into three parts, focused on different dimensions of the EU international role and foreign policy within three macro-areas, theoretical, regional, and global.

In the first one, major International Relations theories are used to provide the necessary background within which the development of the EU as an international actor should be read and understood. This is the main aim of Olga Brusylowska's chapter. She identifies four main vectors – power, strategy, partnership, and external governance – to describe how an 'unusual' actor like the EU has been produced in the global system. On the one hand, it is the result (and the victim) of its member states and necessarily reflects power relations. On the other, the EU has created a model, based on authority, and potential partnerships which attract more admirers than it may be expected.

Such perspective is complemented by Sergii Glebov, who deepens the notion of integration in an internal perspective (particularly stressing the Brexit effects) and in an external one. In respect to other partners, regionalism is described as a powerful tool for building various levels of partnership and cooperation, under the European values (which are perceived as universal ones).

Finally, Yana Volkova offers an insightful analysis of nationalism which, despite its historical meaning, is now perceived as a dangerous ideology. The risk deals with the ideas of the EU as a fortress, as based on a specific perception of nation which has prevented many countries (like Ukraine) to be truly considered as potential new members, and barred to migrants and refugees, even to those escaping from war and deprivation. Considering this, only a post-nation approach and the abandonment of social boundaries can save from the spread of such hazardous ideas.

This multilayered and theoretical framework introduces the second part of the book, focused on the regional impact of the EU.

Alina Zadorozhnia investigates the influence on the Eastern European coun-

tries and demonstrates, through empirical data, that the EU conditionality has significantly influenced internal transformation of several countries, surely those which have joined full memberships, while the Balkans have always requested a specific set of programs and interventions. Although sentiments of Euroscepticism have nurtured many populist parties in the region and have determined recent elections in the Visegrad countries, according to the scenarios' analysis, there is no other partners and no alternative to the EU values, if this big and populous region wants to survive.

The 'ghost' which lingers here is nevertheless Russia. In her chapter, Olga Brusylovska sustains that the EU has never put Russian influence on its neighbours under question, although it has always tried to build some partnerships. This has driven the relation between the two actors, along a long and complicated process she simplifies in four steps. The most important is undoubtedly the last one, affected by the Euromaidan and the Donbass conflict and, consequently, by sanctions. Scenarios depict an overall situation in which energy issues and political instability in the post-Soviet space will probably determine relations.

The relation with the MERCOSUR region has rather been less strategic, but still very relevant. According to Kateryna Vakarchuk, since 1970s, the EU has invested several resources in this partnership. However, as it is described in the chapter, the strongly admired EU model has scarcely brought to a real integration, based on common institutions and supranational bodies. The future will depend on the implementation (or on the failure) of the EU-MERCOSUR FTA agreement which is expected to produce opportunities for the economic benefits of both actors.

Any investigation on the role played by the EU in the Syrian conflict is a hard task. As argued by Alla Zakharchenko, the Middle Eastern region has always been crucial and the EU has tried to build partnerships, by using several policies, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (1995), the European Neighbourhood Policy (2004), the Union for the Mediterranean (2008). It was never likely to play any conflict resolution role and the Syrian war, during which the EU acted in a very modest way, was a paradigmatic example. Despite the issue of several documents and the provision of funds to Syrian refugees, the EU abdicated any concrete role to other political actors and, partially, to some of its member states' bilateral initiatives. This attitude won't appear likely to change in the near future.

Relations with the US are rather marked by an abundant activism. In the chapter by Volodymyr Dubovyk, transatlantic relations are massively described since their early stages until the Trump era. The current US President never limited his anti-EU preference and his support to initiatives like Brexit. This is due

to several factors, like economic competitiveness and the values the EU represents. Scenarios are very pessimistic and it looks that relations are presently broken. What is interesting is to verify whether this is mainly caused by Trump himself (and is going to change after him) or, even worse, whether this is a sign of deeper deterioration which will produce more effects in the long term.

The last part of the book complements what previously sustained and announces the most difficult goals for the EU, that is to say, making its policies able to produce an impact on a global level.

A Common Security and Defence Policy has always been a dream. The ambitious goal to have a EU army and to be able to play a significant role of a peace and security provider had to fight against member states' preferences and interests and various political constraints. Olga Romanova describes this long and troubled development process, by enlightening some positive steps, like inter-organizational cooperation with the UN and NATO and the deployment of civilian missions in many parts of the world. By also considering the European security strategy (from Javier Solana to the EUGS), she concludes that the place of the CSDP, in the context of transatlantic relations, will always depend on member states (namely Western European ones).

When it comes to the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, any political discourse becomes strategically intricate. As Polina Sinovets argues, the main problem is that European countries are divided as to whether they need a more proactive view on strategic arms control. A closer alliance with the US or a more multilateral approach makes the difference. In this context, the most realistic scenario would be a combination of arms control and defence, as the only model able to combine so many diverging preferences.

Finally, Hanna Shelest discusses the role of the EU as a peace mediator and peacekeeper. According to some scholars, mediation has turned into a professional tool, more and more exerted by non-state actors, like NGOs and, consequently, has not yet entered the consciousness of the EU. At the same time, despite the problems which have been previously depicted, the EU has 'invented' a special typology of civilian missions and has positively shaped mediation outcomes and techniques. By using official documents and case studies, she argues that a more active role depends on external (rapid development of crises) and internal (member states' constraints) factors. She concludes that the accomplishment of internal issues will help to strengthen the external role and will restart deployment of missions.

At the end, the overall picture reveals a political actor which is constantly challenged by external crises and threats as well as internal tensions and divi-

sions. However, despite the clouds and the temptations to perform as if the EU does not exist, nobody is sure this is truly possible.

The volume significantly contributes to the ongoing debate on the future paths the EU can walk on and offers several interesting insights to those interested in foreign policy and international relations, both academics and practitioners.

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