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POLSKA – UKRAINA – BIAŁORUŚ – ROSJA.
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There have been a lot of changes in the states of Central and Eastern Europe over more than the last 30 years. Some of them managed to leave the sphere of Russian influence and join the Euro-Atlantic integration structures, and some of them not only remained in it but also ‚strengthened’ the link. In an attempt to analyse the geopolitical and geo-economic situation of the states of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, we can draw absolutely diverse conclusions. Thus, there are states such as Poland, which in spite of some problems in the period of transformation managed to climb the heights of their political and economic possibilities and join the biggest and the most influential international organisations. There are also states that have been drifting between the eastern and western models of politics for nearly 30 years now: these include Ukraine. Belarus and Russia constitute another category of states. The former cannot and the latter does not want to integrate with Western Europe or into the Euro-Atlantic area. However, the fact that the Central and Eastern European region has undergone massive changes over the last tree decades cannot be hidden.

That is why the book by Professor Józef M. Fiszer of the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Tomasz Stępniewski, PhD, of John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, and Konrad Świder,

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PhD, of the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences is undoubtedly interesting and significant. The monograph that is subject of this review is titled *Polska – Ukraina – Białoruś – Rosja. Obraz politycznej dynamiki regionu* [Poland – Ukraine – Belarus – Russia: Picture of the region's political dynamics] and was published by Wydawnictwo Instytutu Studiów Politycznych PAN in 2019. The publisher's reviewers of the book are Krzysztof Fedorowicz, PhD, and Yuri Shapoval, PhD. As the authors write in the preface, the monograph is aimed at

'familiarising readers with the complex issues of the region where the influence of the West and the East compete' (p. 12).

Indeed, it is not possible to conceal that analysing the region is as difficult as interesting, in particular due to the changes occurring there and the entities that function in it.

The work is properly structured, adequately to its title and the research objective. The monograph is designed clearly following a problem-based pattern. It is composed of a synthetic introduction, six chapters, final conclusions, an abundant bibliography and an index of people.

The first chapter is devoted to Poland's experience in the process of accession to the European Union as a model proposal of solutions for Ukraine. It presents internal and international conditions for Poland's route to the EU, as well as opportunities, threats and prospects for Ukraine. Referring to Poland as an example, the authors make an accurate diagnosis and state that

'Poland's accession to the EU has become a real breakthrough in the post-war history of Poland, in particular as far as its domestic and foreign policy is concerned' (p. 15).

It is an obvious fact that thanks to the accession to the European Union Poland has experienced enormous civilizational development. However, unlike Ukraine, Poland was in very friendly international surroundings in the process of its accession to the EU, including support of the biggest and the most important Member State of the EU, i.e. the Federal Republic of Germany. It cannot be said about Ukraine and its external surroundings. In the second part of the first chapter, the authors draw attention to a very important issue of losing sovereignty (p. 25) and introduce a thesis that part of Poland's sovereignty has been moved to a supranational level. Engaging in a discourse with the authors, it is necessary to ask a question whether the independent decision to join the EU has also resulted in the loss of part of sovereignty.

But coming back to the issue of Ukraine, it is important to indicate possible solutions and consequences of this country's potential membership of the European Union. However, Ukrainian society's hopes should not be raised too much as it happened during the famous Euromaidan. In my opinion, it is necessary to treat Ukrainians fairly and show them realistic prospects for their accession to the EU, which is also presented in the first chapter.

The second part of the monograph analyses the political relations between Poland and Russia in the period 2000–2014. The authors conclude in this chapter that in the period discussed

'Russia quite skilfully applied the strategy of developing a negative image of the Polish state on the international arena (...). On the other hand, the Polish party was not able to resist this practice and its policy towards Russia was limited to current responses to Russia's accusations and activities' (p. 81).

This assessment is, in my opinion, properly made. It is so because it should be noticed that from the point of view of Polish foreign policy, this period was usually very reactive towards Russia. The only exception was the period of the first government formed by Law and Justice in 2005–2007. However, it did not result only from the willingness to change the policy towards Russia but in general from the change in the approach to Poland's eastern policy in that period¹.

The next, i.e. third chapter of the monograph focuses on an important issue, i.e. Poland's policy towards Ukraine. There are numerous publications on this topic²; however, the content of the monograph constitutes a very good and clear unscrambling of Polish-Ukrainian relations. The authors analyse particular stages of those relations, emphasising 2004 and calling that year a breakthrough (p. 96). It is due to the fact that it was the year when two important events took place: for Poland because of its accession to the European Union, and for Ukraine as it was the time of the so-called Orange Revolution. The authors state that Poland should support Ukraine *in the implementation of the Euro-Atlantic direction* (p. 113). The opinion seems

¹ For more see: Chojan, A. (2016) 'Polityka wschodnia Polski w myśli politycznej partii Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (lata 2005–2007)' ['Eastern policy of Poland in the political thought of the Law and Justice party (2005–2007)'], *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* vol. 5, no. 14, 301–314. See also: Chojan, A. (2018) 'From strategy to improvisation – Poland's Eastern Policy in 2016–2018'. *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* vol. 16, no. 4, 107–123.

² See: Dahl, M., Chojan, A. (2019) *Poland and Ukraine: Common Neighborhood and Relations*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uczelni Łazarskiego.

to be right, however, first of all it is the Ukrainian nation and its political class that should decide which direction they want to go to develop their country. I get a deep impression supported by many examples that Poland cared about Ukraine's accession to the EU and NATO more than Ukraine and the Ukrainians themselves.

The fourth part of the monograph is titled *Ukrainian policy in the environment of (in)security*. The authors rightly analyse the influence of the remains of the Soviet Union on the political situation in Ukraine. Nevertheless, in this chapter's conclusions, the authors make a key and very accurate diagnosis when writing about the European dreams and Euro-Atlantic realities in Ukraine's policy, which in any case the history of this country after the collapse of the Soviet Union demonstrates.

The fifth chapter presents an analysis of the relations between Russia and Ukraine. The authors draw attention to a series of important issues such as the problem of denuclearisation of Ukraine, the status of Crimea or eventually the issue of Russian minority in Ukraine. The presentation of the so-called period of Euro-revolution in Ukraine is also an extremely important topic. According to the authors of the monograph,

'integration of the post-soviet space in the form of strengthening multilateral regional cooperation has become Russia's ambition' (p. 186).

From the perspective of 2020 it seems that Ukraine 'unsubscribed' from this regional cooperation in which the Russian Federation plays the main role. However, there is a question that remains unanswered: Is it a temporary state in the Ukrainian policy (as it often used to happen) or the beginning of Kyiv's general turn towards the Euro-Atlantic alternative?

The final, sixth chapter covers the issues concerning Belarus in the context of its place and role in the policy of the Russian Federation. Presenting the conditions of Belarusian policy, the authors propose an interesting thesis that

'Belarusian society is a 'hostage' of geopolitical relations between the West and Russia because their nature determines the stability of president Alexander Lukashenka's government' (p. 207).

On the one hand, Belarusian society, especially the younger one, is clearly for integration with Western European structures, and as one Belarusian student told me, *only the West can give us a chance of normal and secure life*; and on the other hand, for the government and president Lukashenka's

regime, attempts to integrate with the West and, thus, the break of the links with Russia would result in the loss of power.

From the methodological point of view the work has been properly developed and does not raise objections. However, it seems that the authors could have tried to devote much more space to the policy of Belarus. I have no doubts that the authors should continue their research and deepen it in a publication broader than the one that is subject to this review. The issues concerning the four states are so complex and so extensive that, in my opinion, there are reasonable grounds for developing a second volume of the publication, of course covering other issues that have not been discussed in this first and single monograph so far.

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