

Review

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Zdzislaw Sliwa*

EU-Russia Relations: is the return to “business as usual” possible?**Review of Kristi Raik and András Rácz (eds.).
(2019) Post-Crimea Shift in EU-Russia Relations:
From Fostering Interdependence to Managing
Vulnerabilities. Tallinn: International Centre for
Defence and Security (ICDS).****ISBN 978-9949-7331-5-6 (PRINT)****ISBN 978-9949-7331-6-3 (PDF)**

<https://doi.org/10.2478/jobs-2019-0005>

received April 23, 2019; accepted April 27, 2019.

The Russian behaviours within international policy has been an interesting topic for last decades. The war in Georgia and annexation of Crimea has proved to be very important factors influencing perception of Russian Federation and it has caused many debates within international relations community to recognize origins and to discuss the future developments. It has been very important as the security of Europe proved to be not granted and guaranteed; it has been especially important for the nations bordering Russian Federation including Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The relation between European Union (EU) and Russian Federation has been very multidimensional and important for both sides. Therefore, the future of their interdependence is of great importance within all domains of security. The book is an interesting collection of articles provided by recognized experts dealing with variety of the dimensions of those bilateral relations allowing a reader to gather ideas, information and data permitting drawing personal conclusions and to conduct own research within respective fields. The book is the tangible consequence of a research project founded by the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute (EFPI)¹ in 2018 with support of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The value of the findings has benefitted from discussions of contributing authors with other experts during a seminar and a workshop organised by EFPI/ICDS in Tallinn in November 2018. Therefore, the ideas presented are not only personal views of authors as those include outcome of contributing authors' meetings with researchers and practitioners from various EU member states, organizations and Russia. Although security is considered in many domains as energy, trade, financial sector, defence industry, police and cross-border cooperation it is not discussing military aspects of relations.

The book is composed of three major parts related to: the EU's and Russia's approaches to interdependence; EU-Russia interdependence in different sectors and is completed by conclusions and way ahead based on conducted

¹ Estonian Foreign Policy Institute (EFPI) is an autonomous unit under the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS) in Tallinn.

*Corresponding author: COL (ret.) Dr Hab. Zdzislaw Sliwa, Baltic Defence College E-mail: zdzislaw.sliwa@baltdefcol.org. The views expressed in this book review are those of the author's alone and do not represent the position of the Baltic Defence College or any other government, institution or organization.

research. It includes total 15 chapters (articles) supported by purposely-selected tables, maps and figures to underpin presented data and to visualise the content. The introductory chapter is creating theoretical framework for the book and it includes brief overview of the relations between EU and Russia showing their dynamics during different stages of cooperation including Cold War, post-Cold War and post-Crimea periods. It was highlighted that “*Russia has demonstrated on various occasions that it is indeed ready to weaponise the dependences of its partners and neighbours, for instance by using their dependence on Russian energy as a tool of (geo)political influence*” and implementing range of hybrid methods. The introduction is covering brief overview of all the chapters allowing seeing their focus.

Part I is focused on perception of interdependence by both actors: European Union and Russia. The chapters are prepared by experts from think tanks, academic and European Union institutions. Within the Part I, the Russian perspective is presented by professors of Sankt Petersburg State University enabling to see clearly national perspective of the topics. Very interesting is Stefan Meister’s German perspective of Russia and Berlin’s Ostpolitik coming from initial “*thinking in terms of positive interdependence, win-win situations*” to recognition later that interdependence marks also vulnerability. Another noteworthy aspect is provision of broader overview of the energy security (‘Nord Stream 2’) and economy as constituents of German – Russian relations. The analysis by Katrin Böttger about the shift from positive EU - Russia interdependence and cooperation through deteriorations of bilateral links toward after-Crimea crisis is allowing understanding the reasons and outcomes for both entities. The Igor Gretskey views on impact of Gorbachev’s ‘New Thinking’ programme and Yeltsin shift “*to incorporate popular nationalist ideas and slogans into his agenda*” are creating background to understand the Putin’s initial pragmatism to bring Russia and the EU closer. He is presenting the reasons of move out of interdependence vocabulary to the annexation of Crimea and explaining the background of that turning point and impact on long-term bilateral relations and EU and Russia societies. The perception of Russian comprehension of ‘interdependence’ is further researched by James Sherr in historical and leadership change contexts covering also impact of NATO and EU enlargement on threat perception in Moscow. Part I is concluded by Rein Tammsaar who recognized the post-2014 EU Global Strategy as a tool supporting reduction of the organizational internal vulnerabilities and external dependencies. According to the author it is enhancing readiness to face hybrid threats, cyber confrontations, strategic communication narratives leading to growing resilience by creating tools to counter them. Part I is providing an important framework leading to sectoral aspects of interdependences between EU and Russia.

Part II is initiated by Heli Simola’s perception of EU and Russia as noticeable trading partners with constantly increasing trade volume during last decades with decreasing tendency after 2014. The author is recognizing the asymmetry in trade relations as “*for the EU generally and for most sectors, Russia is a far less significant trading partner than the EU is for Russia*”. The statement is supported by analysing reliable data linked with natural resources and non-energy trade and the impact of sanctions and oil prices on Russian economy. The energy sector is further analysed by Anke Schmidt-Felzmann in the context of EU and respective member states energy supply choices and options connected with role and regulations related to energy companies. The closer research is connected with the case of the ‘Nord Stream 2’ including recognition of differing interests of EU members. The impact of EU and US sanctions on Russian financial system are elaborated by András Deák, who is not only discussing impact on elites, foreign direct investment, exchange rate, GDP as he is also debating the Russian strategies to face the Western sanctions. The economic and financial sanctions and their impact on defence industry sector proved to be important in the context of modernization of Russian armed forces. András Rác has approached that part of economy presenting in comprehensive way the cooperation of European defence industry with Russian partners ahead of 2014, crisis during prosperous minister Serdyukov period and appointment of minister Shoigu in 2012 as turning-point for defence sector. He is discussing in more details the impact of post-2014 sanctions and challenges faced by military industry affecting limitations of ambitious modernization program. Part II is followed by other aspects of relations between EU and Russia. Ludo Block is examining cooperation of Russian and EU members’ police, the nature of different types of crime requiring for cross-border cooperation to investigate them and prosecute criminals. Past and current practices are elaborated presenting some case studies e.g. Finland – Russian border. The cross-border aspects are further investigated by Boris Kuznetsov and Alexander Sergunin supported by analysing legal regulations showing some progress in that respect. Specific programs are presented explaining their functions but also pointing out the negative impact of political relations in some cases. The closing chapter by Anna Tiido is touching very fragile aspect, which are Russian-speaking communities in the EU countries. She is recognizing a potential to use them as an element of hybrid warfare toolbox within the Compatriot

Policy and the concept of the “Russian World” and is presenting legal and political aspects of that contest. Case studies from Estonia, Germany, Latvia are utilized to explain the complexity of that social aspect of EU – Russia relations.

Very important is Part III of the book focusing on conclusions coming from previous chapters and providing recommendations toward the future. The joint effort of editors Kristi Raik and András Rácz is offering the link between international relations theories and practices recognizing that “*the connection between security and interdependence in the EU-Russia relationship did not develop in accordance with the liberal interdependence theory*” but rather “*could be described more accurately by realist theories*”. This is also the brief overview of findings based on the previous chapters. The final chapter by Kristi Raik is future oriented presenting options for both EU and Russia asking some key questions and discussing possible ways to consider future relations between both sides.

The monograph is based on credible sources and it is a compressed compendium presenting important factors related to the EU – Russia relations and their influence on contemporary security in selected sectors of functioning of those two important European entities. The multidimensional outlook is allowing to comprehend interdependences among specific lines of cooperation, therefore it could be interesting reading for politicians, academicians and students to have better perception what the future could bring for the whole continent and beyond. The significance is that the book is an overview of current security analyses providing theoretical and historical contexts and variety of security-related challenges but also opportunities. It is supported by some case studies visualizing security implications for EU as the whole, its members and Russia. The book is primarily addressed to academics who are interested in security studies and international relations within EU relations with other countries. That combination of chapters is an interesting study material for both young researchers and professionals to broaden security related knowledge in respective domains. Moreover, it could be source of educational materials for various educational organizations dealing with social sciences, international relations as interesting study material for undergraduate and postgraduate students (for courses such as: Security studies; International relations; International security, Hybrid Warfare; Environmental courses; etc.). As it is including recommendations, the secondary group are the decision makers, persons in the field of international security and relations.