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The US Foreign Policy towards Eastern Europe: State of the Field

The US foreign policy towards Eastern European countries, especially those that are members of the Eastern Partnership, is poorly understood. Therefore, the analysis of recent works (monographs and scientific articles published in peer-reviewed journals) is necessary to write further research and increase Washington's interest in the region.

This paper aims to familiarize scholars with recent researches and help them evaluate the existing scholarship in the field. A systematic approach was used to filter the publications in the field. After 2014, very few scientific publications focused on the role and place of the United States concerning Eastern Europe. The most significant publications are singled out, the conclusions and summary of researches are offered for acquaintance.

It is concluded that scholars do not widely cover the US policy towards Europe and individual states in Eastern Europe. We assume that more researches are being done in this area, but they are not published in peer-reviewed journals.

Keywords: state of the field, the United States, foreign policy, international relations, Eastern Europe, Eastern Partnership, Ukraine.

Зовнішня політика США щодо держав Східної Європи: стан наукової розробки проблеми

Зовнішня політика США здійснюється на певних принципах незалежно від партійної належності очільника Білого дому. Проте зовнішня політика США щодо східноєвропейських держав, а особливо тих з них, які є членами Східного партнерства, є малодослідженою. Актуальність аналізу стану наукової розробки проблеми зовнішньої політики США щодо держав Східної Європи обумовлено також безпосередньою зацікавленістю України в інтенсифікації та впливу Сполучених Штатів на країни регіону. Тому аналіз останніх робіт (монографій та фахових наукових статей, що опубліковані в рецензованих журналах) є необхідним з точки зору здійснення подальших досліджень з одного боку, та збільшення інтересу Вашингтону до регіону – з іншого.

Запропоновано огляд та аналіз останніх публікацій, які можуть претендувати на прискіпливу увагу дослідників. Після 2014 р. вкрай небагато наукових публікацій мали своїм предметом саме роль і місце США щодо держав-членів Східного партнерства. Виокремлено найважливіші публікації, запропоновано до ознайомлення висновки та короткий зміст із розглянутих досліджень. Короткий зміст публікацій представлено, в тому числі, методом прямого та непрямого цитування їх резюме та висновків.

Підсумовано, що тема політики США щодо Європи в цілому, так і окремих держав у Східній Європі не так широко висвітлюється науковцями. Ми припускаємо, що проводиться більше досліджень, але вони не публікуються в рецензованих журналах, тому приховані під час індексації у Web of Science або Scopus. Предметом досліджуваних статей та монографій є основному питання безпеки, проаналізовані публікації можуть бути використані як відправна точка у по-

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дальших дослідженнях політики США щодо східноєвропейських держав. Перспективним вбачається аналіз зовнішньої політики США після 2014 р. щодо держав, які є членами ЄС та є сусідами України.

Ключові слова: стан наукової розробки, Сполучені Штати, зовнішня політика, міжнародні відносини, Східна Європа, Східне партнерство, Україна.

Introduction. US foreign policy is widely researched in the world. It is sometimes hard to outline the critical tendencies in modern research focusing on the US foreign policy towards European partners, especially Eastern Partnership members. This paper aims to fulfil this gap and examine some recent academic publications on the American policy towards Eastern Europe as a whole and states like Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic states. That is why the following paper could be used as “state of the field” research in the US foreign policy in Eastern Europe.

Methodology. This paper uses the United Nations Statistics Division methodology, which names Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia and Ukraine as Eastern Europe. Few approaches exist to conceptualize ‘Central and Eastern Europe’ or ‘Eastern Europe’ in history, political science, geography, sociology. We examine some recent monographs and articles using direct quotes, paraphrases or abstracts from them. All the quotations are appropriately cited.

There are no specific qualitative and/or quantitative methods that prevail in this paper. Although a kind of systematic approach was used: the search of the articles has been undertaken at the libraries of Freie Universität (Berlin, Germany) and Columbia University (New York, USA), keywords “United States” and “Eastern Europe” should be met in the title of the paper. The set of filters were used to narrow the results: the year of the publication was 2016-2021, only peer-reviewed papers were selected, plus subject filters “International Relations”, “Political Science” were used.

This paper aims to familiarize scholars with recent researches and help them evaluate the existing scholarship in the field.

Research and Discussion. First of all, it is worth starting with a couple of recent monographs outlining the US. European foreign policy. Henriksen’s book hypothesizes that pendulum-like cycles took place in US foreign policy, alternating broadly from engagement to disengagement and back again in the four American presidencies since the Cold War. These cycles of international extroversion and introversion reflected the presidents’ political sentiments, significant parties, and the voters themselves. The researcher stipulates that worries about Moscow’s possible intervention into Poland and the Baltic States also brought together Americans and Europeans to address Russia’s aggressive intentions. Like its fellow NATO members, the United States stopped well short of granting Ukraine’s pleas for armaments, especially short-range missiles and anti-tank weapons. Once again, European nations pledged to up their defence spending at the summer 2016 NATO summit, while the United States pledged a battalion for defence³.

Bandeira’s book offers a historical analysis of the geopolitical and geoeconomic competition between the USA and Russia, which has recently heated up again due to NATO’s eastward expansion. The research explores the US foreign policy and geopolitical ambitions by illustrating Wall Street’s influence and the military-industrial complex on the United States’ policy. The historical part of the monograph covers a broad period, from World War II and the launch of NATO, to Iraq and Afghanistan wars, to the conflicts that erupted in Eurasia, Northern Africa and the Middle East in the 21st century, as well as the wars in Ukraine and Syria. Doing so reveals the influence of US neocons, the US intelligence and the Armed Forces on the Arab Spring, colour revolutions, and the war in Ukraine and Syria (though in Ukraine it is Russian aggression, in Syria, it is civil war). Bandeira’s book depicts a new era of worldwide instability and disorder, dominated by violence and arbitrariness⁴.

Birchfield and Young’s monograph examines the war in Ukraine with the “triangular diplomacy” approach, which is focused on the multiple interactions among the European Union, the United States and the Russian Federation. It is explicitly comparative, considering how the US and EU responded to

³ Henriksen, T. (2017), *Cycles in U.S. Foreign Policy since the Cold War*, Springer Berlin Heidelberg, New York, NY. P. 294.

⁴ Bandeira, L.A.M. (2019), *The World Disorder: U.S. Hegemony, Proxy Wars, Terrorism and Humanitarian Catastrophes*, Springer International Publishing, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03204-3>.

Russian aggression. It also adopts a “360-degree” method, focusing on how the US and EU interacted with Russia and how Russia and Ukraine responded. Some chapters focus on the EU, the US, Russia and Ukraine and sanctions, international law and energy issues. As a result, the book juxtaposes a traditional, extraordinary, and superior force (the United States) with a very non-traditional foreign policy player (the European Union). The monograph by Birchfield and Young will be appropriate for undergraduate and graduate courses on the European Union’s external policies and engagement in the world, EU-US ties, EU-Russia relationships, or regional security issues⁵.

Some articles published in peer-reviewed journals might be of great use and be a starting point for the research in the field. Hlaváček assumes that the foreign policy of the United States is undergoing a significant change. We are witnessing a paradigm shift from of generation, which experienced the victory of the United States in the Cold War and was assured it needed to maintain American hegemony in the world, to the generation which grew up during the unsuccessful War on Terror (in Afghanistan and particularly in Iraq)⁶. Available data about current American foreign policy suggests that the United States is undergoing a transformation from the extrovert (interventionist) mood and proceed to a period of introversion (non-intervention). It would not be the first time the 20th United States has undergone such transformation: it happened twice only in the century. This process is cyclical, self-generating and therefore, it is predictable to a large extent. Hlaváček believes that we may speak of a new paradigm because we can see a consensus on American foreign policy’s three critical issues. Firstly, the community of practitioners 21st generally agrees that the United States’ primary challenger in the following decades could be found in Asia. Secondly, the role of the United States will be less active. Support for the enlargement of democracy has already been significantly lower than in approximately 25 years after the Cold War. Finally, there is also a consensus that enemies can be negotiated and that diplomacy should prioritize armed forces’ deployment into conflicts overseas⁷.

Schultz believes the United States has enjoyed significant benefits from being at the centre of the international order it helped foster after World War II. The prospect of losing those benefits should spur political leaders to seek ways to moderate the effects of America’s growing divide. Otherwise, managing the international system while managing internal divisions is likely to prove a heavy burden. It is hard to see how a country so at odds with itself can lead a fractious world⁸.

Gravelle and colleagues examine survey items related to foreign policy in four countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) using exploratory structural equation modelling (ESEM). The equivalence of measurement is precisely checked, and a typical four-factor structure is discovered that matches the data in all four countries. As a result, accurate, direct comparisons of the four world powers’ foreign policy priorities are made. The four-factor model confirms and extends previous research on the structure of foreign policy perceptions in the process. The article also shows how ESEM can evaluate the dimensionality and cross-national equivalence of social science principles⁹.

Porter asks why the US grand strategy has persisted since the 1980s. After the economic and political events of the 2008 global financial crisis and the costs of the war in Iraq (circumstances that ought to have stimulated at least a revision), the United States remains committed to its grand strategy of “primacy.” It strives for military preponderance, dominance in critical regions, the support of allies, nuclear counterproliferation, and the economic open-door policy. The habitual ideas of the US foreign policy establishment, or the “Blob,” make the US grand strategy hard to change. The United States military and economic capabilities enable the US government to pursue primacy, but the Blob’s em-

⁵ Birchfield, V.L. and Young, A.R. (Eds.). (2018), *Triangular Diplomacy Among the United States, the European Union, and the Russian Federation: Responses to the Crisis in Ukraine*, available at: <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1595521> (accessed 10 April 2021).

⁶ Hlaváček, P. (2018), “New Security Strategy and Contemporary Paradigm of U.S. Foreign Policy”, *Obrana a Strategie (Defence and Strategy)*, Vol. 2018 No. 2, pp. 57.

⁷ Ibid, P. 69.

⁸ Schultz, K.A. (2017), “Perils of Polarization for U.S. Foreign Policy”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 40 No. 4, P. 25.

⁹ Gravelle, T.B., Reifler, J. and Scotto, T.J. (2017), “The structure of foreign policy attitudes in transatlantic perspective: Comparing the United States, United Kingdom, France and Germany”, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 56 No. 4, pp. 757.

bedded assumptions make primacy the seemingly natural choice. Thanks to Blob's constraining power, alternative grand strategies based on restraint and retrenchment are hardly entertained, and debate is narrowed mostly into execution and implementation questions. The presidency of Bill Clinton and the first year of Donald Trump's presidency – support such point of view. Candidates promising reform were elected in each case in tumultuous circumstances that we expect to prompt a reevaluation of the US commitments. In each case, the Blob was successful in establishing itself, at least in terms of grand strategic fundamentals. A shift in grand strategy is conceivable, but it would take significant disruptions to shake the status quo's expectations, as well as a Head of State willing to accept the changes and bear the political costs of overhauling the United States' conventional design¹⁰.

Rehman believes that the election of Donald J. Trump is a turning point in modern American history. On the domestic front, the US president's unconventional governing style and social media use has triggered controversy, as has his professed antipathy toward vital democratic institutions such as a free press and an independent judiciary. Donald Trump's presidency has also coincided with the rise of the so-called "alt-right"—a movement that may be analyzed as an effort to unify and disparate mainstream elements of the American far-right. American foreign policy has been revolutionized in almost equal measure. Although US statecraft has never been entirely insulated from domestic disputes, it has nevertheless been undergirded since the end of World War II by an overarching, bipartisan system of belief. This shared credo has centred on liberal internationalism, American moral leadership and the promotion of free trade. The current president has repudiated these core principles, articulating an alternative "America First" vision for managing global affairs¹¹.

Iłowski continues to research populism in international relations, and this phenomenon has been often treated as a problem of inclusively internal policy, often in isolation from international relations. The problem of populism in international relations and its influence on state policy and foreign policy has not been studied extensively, according to Iłowski. This is perplexing because globalization, immigration, and trade ties all have a transnational component. Trumps' victory in 2016 demonstrated that traditional paradigms could be challenged, and laws can shift as a result of new factors with a character that is distinct from that of the nation. That is why it is worth considering: is it possible to talk about populism in international politics? What influence do international affairs have on the domestic politics of countries where populists rule? What impact does the populist policy of a given country have on its neighbours or, in the case of the US, on international principles and security?¹²

Wæver focuses his discussions on "growing powers" and the potential end of the liberal international order on two types of actors: the hegemon (the United States), which is favoured by the power distribution of the past, and rising powers (notably China). Europe's perplexing status reveals some exciting complexities of the new world order, nuances that will be crucial in capturing a more differentiated future. Wæver's essay traces the threats and opportunities to Europe presented by the existing order in four realms. Far-reaching shift registers in terms of total power (polarity) and economics but is rarely labelled as dangerous. In contrast, a change regarding values (human rights and democracy especially) triggers more alarm. Finally, change elicited a relative lack of concern in the institutions' domain before 2016, but anxiety has grown since then. Peaceful transition in Europe necessitates emerging powers rearticulating rather than confronting classical Western ideals because, unlike the United States, there is little sense of loss in Europe over global power and economic structures¹³.

Charokopos' article draws on the contribution of the cognitive approach to the analysis of foreign policy-making. It investigates the energy-foreign policy nexus in the EU and the US through the lens of actors' different cognitive structures to understand the world energy scenery. This conceptual framework examines how the energy-foreign policy linkage has evolved in the EU and the US, to

¹⁰ Porter, P. (2018), "Why America's Grand Strategy Has Not Changed: Power, Habit, and the U.S. Foreign Policy Establishment", *International Security*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 9–46.

¹¹ Rehman, I. (2017), "Rise of the Reactionaries: The American Far Right and U.S. Foreign Policy", *The Washington Quarterly*, Routledge, Vol. 40 No. 4, P. 30.

¹² Iłowski, P. (2019), "Populism and International Relations. Comparison of the United States and Central and Eastern Europe", *Studia Europejskie - Studies in European Affairs*, Vol. 23 No. 3, P. 49.

¹³ Wæver, O. (2018), "A Post-Western Europe: Strange Identities in a Less Liberal World Order", *Ethics & International Affairs*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 75–88.

what extent energy is still perceived as a helpful instrument serving foreign policy objectives. In reverse, how far energy policy objectives are integrated with foreign policy-making¹⁴.

Zachara's article focuses on the account technology as a factor in the twentieth-century relations of the United States and Europe and a view of transatlantic history through the lens of technology. It describes the trajectory of modernization through technology in specific characteristically transatlantic contexts - including the Cold War role, advancements in military technologies and the international political competition. It demonstrates that technology development, in many ways, provides a structure for transatlantic cooperation and acting as a force reshaping political relations¹⁵.

Hadj Abdou assumes migration has become a highly divisive, polarizing issue. By examining migration perspectives at crucial junctures, his article leads to a better understanding of this polarization. It addresses discursive framings in the European Union and the United States during recent migration crises. Immigration is among the most salient and divisive issues in Western democracies, and scholars are increasingly striving to understand this politicization. The politicization of immigration did not develop in a void. In the case of the EU, immigration has been increasingly dealt with as a European Union concern, while at the same time, Euroscepticism has been rising¹⁶.

Though great powers' attempts to export their regimes to small states have been well studied in the literature, the importance of mass opinion in small states where great powers compete for control as a factor that can form small state preferences for foreign alliances and policies has been under-theorized. Siroky's paper investigates the causes of individual-level variation in foreign policy preferences toward major powers in small states with big neighbours. Using recent public opinion data from Georgia to understand why some people in small states favour stronger relations with various significant forces, the researcher suggests a conceptual structure focused on three factors: political paternalism, economic status, and religiosity. All three factors shaping foreign policy attitudes toward Russia, but not toward America, are supported by the author. The study of foreign policy interests in small states will become increasingly crucial to our understanding of world politics as great powers continue to follow policies that promote their desired political orders in small states¹⁷.

Jakstaite's paper aims to discuss Ukraine's implications to the US foreign policy towards the Baltic States. This paper consists of several parts. To begin with, the political discourse of Obama's and Trump's administrations' is analyzed. The second part presents an analysis of the practical level of US relations with the Baltic States during and after the Russian-Ukrainian war, focusing on the set of three issues: political/diplomatic, military and economic. In the last part of this publication, implications of the Russian-Ukrainian war on US relations with the Baltic States are assessed, comparing trends in official political discourse and practical foreign policy of Baltic States before and after the Ukrainian crisis¹⁸.

Kupiecki states that regardless of interdependence and intense interaction, so characteristic of the Poland-U.S. security and defence relations, there remains no doubt that they hold much higher value for Warsaw than for Washington, and it is America that keeps a more robust position here. That forces Warsaw to have a more detailed insight into Washington's actions, accompanied by an effort to accommodate its position, with no guarantee whatsoever that there would be a similar response to Poland's expectations. Based on complex data, one could still venture a statement that Poland has obtained over the post-Cold War quarter of a century more attention from the US than any other nation in the region. In recent years, in terms of defence (except in a NATO context and the reaction to the Russia-Ukraine conflict), the balance of US attention has also improved due to Poland's defence capabilities and ambitious modernization program of the Polish Armed Forces. Then, suppose the underlying

¹⁴ Charokopos, M. (2020), "Energy as an issue area in the European Union and the United States foreign policy-making: oscillating between independence and interdependence", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol. 23 No. 1, P. 24.

¹⁵ Zachara, M. (2018), "Techno-Transatlantic Science and Technology in Relations Between the United States and Europe", *Ad Americam*, Vol. 18, P. 89.

¹⁶ Hadj Abdou, L. (2020), "'Push or pull'? Framing immigration in times of crisis in the European Union and the United States", *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 42 No. 5, P. 644.

¹⁷ Siroky, D.S., Simmons, A.J. and Gvalia, G. (2017), "Vodka or Bourbon? Foreign Policy Preferences Toward Russia and the United States in Georgia", *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 500–518.

¹⁸ Jakstaite, G. (2019), "The U.S. Foreign Policy Towards The Baltic States: The Implications Of Ukraine Crisis", *Journal on Baltic Security*, Vol. 5 No. 1, P. 27.

point of the “asymmetry theory” assumes that the relationship between countries with a considerable difference in their potential can still develop normally. In that case, the Polish-American relations provided fascinating research material¹⁹.

Changes in Hungary’s foreign policy over the last decade, including its relations with the great powers, have become the subject of increased interest for researchers in the field of international relations. These changes have been examined mainly in constitutional and institutional measures undermining liberal democracy taken in Hungary after 2010 and its efforts to diversify external economic and political relations. Hungary - United States relations have been marked by different approaches of the administration of Barack Obama and Donald Trump to the Hungarian government’s policy. Differences between these two periods of Hungarian-American relations were examined in the article by Kurcz²⁰.

Vereshchuk and Umland assume that “in spite of caveats like these, a US-GUAM Charter, following the examples of the Baltic and Adriatic Charters, would be a small, but symbolically significant step forward in making Eastern Europe more secure. It would usefully parallel and demonstratively support Brussels’s European Neighborhood Policy in general, and the Eastern Partnership initiative, in particular. While not providing yet a comprehensive solution to the fragile security situation in East-Central Europe and the Southern Caucasus, it would help in making gradually Europe’s post-Soviet gray zone less gray”²¹.

Conclusions. The US policy towards Europe as a whole or separate states in Eastern Europe is not so widely covered by academics. The set of filters were used to show the gap in the scholarship in the field. We assume there is more research in the field, but they are not published in peer-reviewed journals, so they are hidden from the search via engines like Web of Science or Scopus collections, digital libraries. We suggest some research and policy papers were published by think tanks and considered valuable sources of information. Most security issues are covered in the examined papers and monographs, and they could be used as a starting point in further research on the US policy towards Eastern European states. Even though the topic is not widely covered in peer-reviewed journals, it is of extreme importance and should stipulate scholars to intensify the research in the field.

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¹⁹ Kupiecki, R. (2016), “The Poland-United States Security Relations in the light of Asymmetry Theory”, *Przełąd Strategiczny*, No. 9, pp. 44-46.

²⁰ Kurcz, M. (2020), “Hungary-United States Relations under Obama and Trump Administration”, *Politické Vedy*, Vol. 23 No. 2, P. 99.

²¹ Vereshchuk, I. and Umland, A. (2019), “How to Make Eastern Europe’s Gray Zone Less Gray: The United States’ Baltic and Adriatic Charters Could Become Templates for Embedding Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan in a Provisional Multilateral Security Structure”, *Harvard International Review*, Harvard International Relations Council, Inc, Vol. 40 No. 1, P. 41.

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