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MULTI-VECTORAL CHARACTER OF THE BELARUSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Introduction. The research analyses the main directions of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus in the context of the multi-vectoral diplomacy concept. It examines the unique case of the country whose experience is extremely valuable in the regional foreign policy context and Ukraine in particular. Transformation of the foreign policy aims and directions during 1991-2019 is demonstrated. Belarusian foreign policy doctrine changes during the recent Eastern European crisis and analysis of key geopolitical factors, that influence these changes after the Russian aggression in Ukraine, are shown. The strong and weak sides of the Belarusian foreign policy, crisis phenomena in the implementation of multi-vector foreign policy are identified with the help of comprehensive analysis of the Belarusian diplomacy multiply priorities.

Review of recent publications. Important contribution to the study of Belarusian foreign policy concept as well as the history of the Belarusian diplomacy in modern times was made by V. Snapkovsky, author of the monograph “Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus”, and hundreds other publications devoted to the Belarusian-Russian and Belarussian-Polish relations. The research of the Belarusian foreign policy experience is also subject of two monographs of A. Tikhomirov “Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus in 1991-2011” and “Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus (1991-2015)”. The author explores in detail the history of the

Belarusian diplomacy during early independence years and the formation and transformation of the foreign policy concepts. In terms of practical case studies, the publications of D. Melyantsov, the coordinator of the “Foreign Policy of Belarus” program of the Council for International Affairs “Minsk Dialogue” are also very interesting. The author of the dozens of publications devoted to top problems of the foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus, V. Shadursky also paid great attention to the analysis of the multi-vectorism idea in the Belarusian foreign policy.

Objectives of the paper. The main objective of this research is Belarus as an important modern foreign relationship actor in the region of Eastern Europe, as well as main directions and development of the Belarusian foreign politics in the context of the multi-vectoral diplomacy concept.

During the last years, Eastern European region became the playground of the various world powers interests – from European Union and the USA to Russia and China. First of all, this is related to aggressive Russian politics in Ukraine and the general rising of instability in the region. Foreign policy of the Republic of Belarus makes very interesting case in this situation. Despite extremely close economic links with Russia and long history of integration process that started from the mid-1990s, Belarus remains influential player in the regional politics.

Results of the research. Belarus relies on openness and flexibility in its foreign politics. The country has proven its ability to negotiate mutually beneficial dialogue and adequately respond to the modern challenges. During the last years, official Minsk has formulated the new foreign policy concept, which especially becomes clear after the normalization of relations with the European Union and partly with the USA, and Minsk negotiations on crisis in Ukraine [4: 64-69]. Belarus proclaims itself regional security donor, peacemaker, the Belarusian capital claims to be the most important negotiating platform in the region. As A. Lukashenko, President of Belarus stated in May 2018, “We are not with Russia against Europe and not with Europe against Russia. The question ‘with whom we are’ is fundamentally unacceptable for us” [2].

During the first two decades of independence, the common foreign policy concept was formed in Belarus, which was integrated into constitutional and legal framework of this country [12: 67-69]. The concept is formulated by the following legal acts: Constitution of the Republic of Belarus, Law “On Approving the Main Directions of Domestic and Foreign Policy” [7], “Military Doctrine” [5] and “National Security Conception” [6]. The formulation of these approaches happened under the direct influence of President A. Lukashenko, who concentrated authoritarian powers in his hands. The multi-vector foreign policy philosophy became the general basis for the country’s diplomatic activities.

Belarusian diplomacy has always been very active and extraordinary in establishing and developing foreign contacts, not only exclusively with the European countries but far beyond this region (Iran, Qatar, Venezuela, China, etc.) [9: 38-57]. In new Eastern European situation, these diplomatic efforts were primarily directed at maintaining peace and stability in the region, which are vital for Belarus, its independence and territorial integrity [10: 47-51].

In situation of mutual mistrust between Western countries and Russia, the Republic of Belarus, on the one hand, has saved its strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, a general focus on integration into the Eurasian Economic Union, and keeping traditionally good relations with the CIS countries [3: 28-36]. On the other hand, Belarus has managed to come out of long time established European diplomatic isolation and has continued to develop constructive dialogue with the EU and the USA. Relations with China have also come into a new stage: Belarus played active role in development of the Chinese “Silk Road Economic Belt” concept [13: 2-11].

The main destabilizing factor for the Belarusian foreign policy is the conflict in the east of Ukraine. If in the European context this gave Belarus opportunity to become a negotiations site between the conflict’s parties and led to positive changes for this country, in case of Russia this only made the relations with Belarus much more complicated and problematic. In its foreign policy Belarus is trying to provide multi-vectorism, balancing between the EU and Russia. Therefore, Russia creates certain risks that makes it impossible for Belarus to provide credible foreign policy [8: 59-67].

One of the important objects of the Belarusian foreign policy is the relatively new concept of “integration of integrations”, which Belarus views as a factor for strengthening international security and accelerating the economic development of both Europe and Eurasia in general [11: 76]. This means a combination of the main current continental global integration projects: the EU and NATO, on the one hand, the EAEU and the CSTO, on the other. A. Lukashenko voiced this idea in October, 2011, in his program article “On the fate of integration” published in the Russian newspaper Izvestiya [1].

By the late 2010s, the main objectives of the Belarusian foreign policy were the relations with Russia, the CIS countries, the EU, the USA, the so-called “Neighbourhood Belt” (Belarusian concept that includes Poland, the Baltic States, and Ukraine), China, and the Middle East countries. During recent years, as the result of war in Ukraine, Belarus has become increasingly inclined to balancing foreign policy between Russia and the EU, and to diminish the Russian influence through tactical alliances with Ukraine (within the neighbourhood policy) and with Kazakhstan (within the framework of the integration structures of the EAEU and the CSTO).

Conclusion. Belarus has implemented successful balancing foreign policy and learned to adapt to new challenges of the international relations. In addition, the Republic of Belarus used the opportunity to utilize the regional crisis to its own advantage.

The potential of multi-vector foreign policy is not always fully realized by Belarus, as its Russian vector still looks very unbalanced, limiting the freedom of diplomatic maneuver for the Belarusian state on the international arena, or establishing closer relations with other countries. It does not look that the nearest future would provide any proper solutions for these serious problems of the Belarusian foreign policy.

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ENERGY ASPECT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Introduction. Changes in the global energy market and even the possibility of an energy crisis are affecting the EU economy, which has the largest production capacity with the smallest local production of traditional energy carriers in the world. The evolution of European energy policy deserves careful analysis, both scientifically and in the world of Russia's and Ukrainian foreign economic interests.

Review of recent publications. Among the works of European authors who highlight this issue, it is advisable to mention the reports and developments of European think tanks and institutions such as the Chatham House (The EU's Tough Gas Game with Russia), the European Council on Foreign Relations (Europe's alternatives to Russian gas) and Committee of the House of Lords of the British Parliament (EU and Russia interdependencies). Different aspects of the EU's "Eastern" policy and relations between the EU and Russia have been considered in the works of Russian authors: T. Bordachev, A. Gromyko, A. Makarichov, D. Trenin and many others.

Objectives of the paper. The paper is aimed at evaluation of Russia – the EU relations in the energy field in particular, the provision of traditional energy sources and at outlining further prospects.

Results of the research. The problem of energy security is of the particular relevance as the most reliable and guaranteed energy supplies, produced in environmentally friendly ways, create the preconditions for the harmonious