

A Review of Olga Barburska's book entitled *Polityka wschodnia Unii Europejskiej jako część składowa polityki zagranicznej UE* [The Eastern Policy of the European Union as a Component of Its Foreign Policy], The European Centre of the University of Warsaw/ Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, Warszawa 2018, 484 pages.

At the beginning of this review, I want to emphasise that the author of the monograph studied political science and has high professional qualifications. She has been working at the European Centre of the University of Warsaw for many years. Her research interests cover various fields of European studies, including primarily the political, historical and social aspects of European integration and the foreign policy of the European Union (EU), with particular emphasis on eastern policy. These interests have resulted in numerous valuable and compact publications. Thanks to this, Olga Barburska is known and appreciated in Poland and abroad in the environment of political scientists, particularly Europeanists and foreign policy experts, especially those specialising in the EU's eastern policy.

The reviewed monograph is the crowning achievement of Olga Barburska's research to date. It confirms her scientific maturity and vast knowledge of the EU. In this context, I positively assess the methodology and conceptual framework adopted by the author in the reviewed monograph on foreign policy, including the eastern policy of the EU. The foreign policy of the EU, with particular emphasis on its eastern vector, is in fact the principal subject of a thorough analysis of the monograph. In her work, the author has reviewed various approaches and definitions of "foreign policy" in general and the specific "eastern policy" of the EU which appear in domestic and foreign literature on the subject. As a result, she has developed and adopted her own definition of "eastern policy of the European Union," which has become a key reference point for further analysis and

answers to numerous questions, including what the eastern policy of the EU is, what its referents are and what distinguishes it from the foreign and eastern policies of nation-states, such as Poland. This is the added value of the reviewed work, which proves that the author has profound knowledge on this subject and a well-mastered political scientist's research workshop. This means that she is able to precisely define the subject, object and purpose of her scientific research, refer to appropriate theories and research methods, as well as pose adequate research questions and correctly formulate hypotheses and research theses, with which many researchers have serious problems.

Taking account of the subject and purpose of the research, which the author has defined in the reviewed monograph, I conclude that it is interdisciplinary as it combines political science and its sub-disciplines, such as international relations, European studies and legal science, particularly international law. Accordingly, in the process of analysis, Olga Barburska rightly refers to the methodology used in these disciplines, with particular emphasis on the integration, liberal and systems theories. She has used such research methods as document collection and analysis, systems analysis, decision-making method and the case study method, where the EU is treated as a "unique participant in international relations." At the same time, she admits that "none of them is treated as one, dominant approach; instead an attempt is made to use the achievements of various concepts and research schools" (p. 48).

The reviewed publication has a correct structure, adequate to its title. It consists of an introduction, eight extensive chapters, each divided into several subchapters and written in a problem-based order, summaries in English, as well as forty-six pages of an extensive bibliography and a name index. Regarding the bibliography of the reviewed monograph, I want to emphasise that the author has found over a thousand different sources, such as monographs, collective works, articles and scientific studies, reports, expertise, documents, as well as press and internet materials. Thus, she has done a tremendous job that confirms her research reliability and painstaking diligence, so needed in scientific research.

There is no traditional, separated ending in the work but this role is served by the eighth chapter, entitled *Perspectives for the future*, in which the author summarises her research and answers related specific questions regarding the future of the EU, the concept of EU management and its foreign policy, as well as European integration in

general. She states, inter alia, that: “The assessments of the eastern policy of the EU carried out in previous chapters as an important component of the entire foreign policy of the EU allow an attempt to outline the prospects for developments in this regard.” I entirely agree with this statement and also with the author’s accurate evaluation of the difficult situation in which the EU is today. Namely, she states the following:

Currently, the EU is facing a whole range of serious difficulties or even crises that show its structural and functional weaknesses. (...) The most important of them is a problem of basic axiological importance. Namely, the lack of a clearly outlined far-reaching vision of European integration processes, meaning the lack of well-defined *finalité politique*. The EU faces an extremely important need to clearly define its political system because, without resolving this key issue, it will not be able to act as an effective integration structure, including as an effective supranational organisation. In other words, adopting an appropriate integration model will allow the EU to develop further, play its role on the global stage and have an effective foreign policy (pp. 377–378).

All in all, I think that the structure of the reviewed work does not raise any doubts (reservations). It is subordinated to its research goals and empirical verification of theses and hypotheses posed by the author. In my opinion, from among the eight chapters of the reviewed monograph, the second, fifth and seventh chapters deserve special attention. The fourth chapter also deserves high evaluation. The second chapter, entitled *Foreign policy as an instrument of the European Union’s action in international relations*, like the first chapter, concerns the methodological and theoretical aspects of the reviewed monograph. The author tries to show the specifics (uniqueness) of the EU as a participant (entity) in international relations and the specifics of its foreign policy. She does so in a matter-of-fact and very apt way. She states as follows:

(...) the EU is the only example of such a highly integrated international grouping in human history. Its features, some of which are not unique or specific, create, in a simultaneous and combined manner and based on a kind of synergy, a new quality and make the EU a unique entity. (...) The uniqueness of the EU relates primarily to the depth of the solutions adopted (as demonstrated, among others, by the exclusive competence of EU bodies in certain areas), as well as the scale of integration activities undertaken within it. By gradually expanding, they covered virtually all – albeit with varying intensity – spheres of life: economy, politics, social and cultural issues, defence and so on. The same applies to the organisational shape and adopted institutional and legal solutions – none of the other global integration groups has achieved such a degree of coherence and efficiency of their institutions (pp. 74–75).

The fifth chapter, entitled *Eastern Partnership of the European Union*, shows what the Eastern Partnership of the EU was and is, what its geopolitical goals are and what place it occupies in its foreign and eastern policies. The author writes that the research goal of this chapter is to analyse the functioning of the Eastern Partnership, which she considers to be one of the two main components of the EU's eastern policy. She concludes her considerations with the apt statement:

Dangerous phenomena appear in relation to the functioning of the Eastern Partnership. One of the most dangerous ones seems to be that the Eastern Partnership addressees are more interested in maintaining a formal dialogue with the EU than in actually implementing sometimes costly and painful reforms in order to adapt to European standards. In short, there are many indications that the readiness of political elites and societies of the Eastern Partnership addressees to adopt European standards is relatively low (p. 269).

In turn, the seventh chapter, entitled *Eastern policy of the European Union: an attempt of assessment*, is actually an attempt to summarise and evaluate the current eastern policy of the EU. This is a critical and matter-of-fact reflection on this part of the EU's foreign policy, and the emerging picture of its eastern policy is not optimistic. There are many reasons for this. Most of them have been accurately identified by the author.

Returning to the fourth chapter, entitled *The subjective scope and research approach to the eastern policy of the European Union*, I want to note that not only does the author make an accurate description of the EU's eastern policy in the light of various research paradigms, but she also tries to show its implementation instruments, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Europeanisation of post-communist Eastern European countries.

As I have already mentioned, the main goal of the reviewed monograph is to analyse the EU's foreign policy, with particular emphasis on its eastern direction and to show its successes, failures and perspectives. The author also writes the following:

The research subject discussed in this work is a comprehensively developed system created by the EU regulating the broad and comprehensive sphere of its functioning in international relations. In the normative and functional dimensions, this system is very close to the important category, which is the foreign policies pursued by the basic participants of these relations, i.e. sovereign states. Therefore, the basic goal and research problem of this work is to try to examine the main assumptions and ways of pursuing the EU's

foreign policy, and then to check how this policy is implemented by analysing the EU's eastern policy (pp. 20–21).

In the reviewed dissertation, the author has made – in my opinion – a successful attempt to define both the foreign policy and eastern policy of the EU, emphasising that these are actions on the international arena, aimed at stabilising it and solving current problems within the EU and its external environment.

In the reviewed work, Olga Barburska has formulated many interesting, original and also controversial research theses and hypotheses, and posed several questions to which she tries to provide comprehensive answers. As a result of the extensive research, thoroughly described in the reviewed monograph, the author has managed to come to interesting conclusions about the EU and its foreign policy, particularly in the east. Namely, she claims that the EU's foreign policy is complex and has a mobilising effect on EU member states and potential members applying for accession. There is a kind of feedback here between the EU and its members. In her opinion, the EU's foreign policy is determined by many internal and international factors; it is complicated, but it allows a better understanding of the functioning of the EU on the international stage. It also has its shortcomings, which are affected by disproportions in its financing and the professionalism of its participants. The author writes that the research conclusions are not very optimistic, also because the potential of the EU is not fully used in practice. In my opinion, EU officials such as Commissioners and MEPs, are too passive and should also take on some of the responsibilities related to the EU's eastern policy, which has and can have a significant impact on its image in the world. Moreover, I think that there is no correlation between high or low level of links between citizens of a given country and the EU, and that their national strategies in foreign policy do not always include European issues. I have the impression that, as the idea of a nation-state is revived today in international relations, the member states and the candidates for the EU need its funds more than the EU as such. It is a peculiar novelty of this dissertation, the added value that determines its original character, both in theoretical and utilitarian aspects.

Olga Barburska's book and her objective analysis of the EU's eastern policy treated as a component of its foreign policy – as I have already mentioned – is set on a broad theoretical basis and has been

carefully prepared based on extensive Polish-, Russian- and English-language sources. It has been written in a problem-based arrangement, which I consider to be the right solution, both in terms of content and methodology. All in all, this is an original, well-developed work, which in fact pioneers in Polish literature and thus deserves to be very highly evaluated. It makes a significant contribution to the development of social sciences, in particular political and administrative sciences and its sub-disciplines, such as European studies.

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