

## BOOK REVIEW

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### Russia-EU Relations and the Common Neighborhood: Coercion vs. Authority

By Irina Busygina

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Irina Busygina, who currently works in the Department of Applied Politics at National Research University Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg, studies comparative politics, regional politics, Russian foreign policy and EU-Russia relations. Her recent book is an exceptional one in terms of both her analysis of forms of power and power relations in global politics. Also, the application of this theoretical analysis to Russia-EU relations in the context of a common neighborhood makes it a novel one. The structure of the book provides an easy-reading framework as the first chapter gives the necessary theoretical background to the readers. Thus, it facilitates an understanding of the next four chapters on the formation and main practices of the EU and Russian foreign policy. The last four chapters distinguish four cases by focusing on the common neighborhood countries as an area of competition between Russia and the EU.

As major powers of international relations, the EU and Russia adopt different modes of behavior in their foreign policies. According to Busygina, both actors are not status quo powers, which means that the ultimate borders of these entities are not clear. However, they differ in the application of their foreign policies. The EU employs the *power of authority* while Russia employs the *power of coercion*. In David Lake's formulation, countries using relational authority construct their relations over three pillars: legitimacy, voluntariness and commitments. On this basis, the subordinate surrenders its freedom to a certain amount in exchange for a political order that is created and maintained by the superordinate. However, countries using coercive authority prefer either to use force or the threat of force, which also includes the use of economic sanctions.

Busygina, unfolding her theoretical framework, proves that using coercion in Russia's foreign policy is quite optimal since state-building and nation-building followed the market reforms of the Yeltsin era. Russia, differing itself as a *sovereign democracy* from other democracies, determined an oppositional stand against the West (the U.S. and the EU). Thus, Russia became the only global defender of conservative values, which embraces service (*sluzhenie*) to higher goals as its main purpose rather than consumption. Although these assumptions of the Russian ruling elite do not correspond to Russian reality, the author states that they were enough to obtain necessary public support for Russia's coercive foreign policy maneuvers in Georgia (2008), Crimea (2014), Eastern Ukraine (since 2014) and recently in Syria since September 2015.

The EU, as an unconventional power, has a multilateral authority system which necessitates sharing authority across an institutionalized, hierarchically-structured set of actors. Decision-making by consensus gives each member veto power and places constraints on foreign policy. Busygina, in this respect, refers to the EU's structural limitations in taking tangible external action against Russian ambitions in Caucasus, Ukraine and so on. However, the EU prefers relational power in its foreign relations, especially in the case of close neighborhood countries, through mechanisms such as the Black Sea Synergy, the Middle East Process, the Northern Dimension, the European Neighborhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership. The existence of Russia as the former leader of the socialist camp worried Eastern European countries and made it easier for the EU to launch authority-type Europeanization. Following the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, the conditionality principle acquired special importance as the Union got closer to Russian borders and target countries felt Russian coercive power within earshot. Moreover, new members joined the Union with the fifth enlargement, implementing intensive pressure within the Union to have special relations with the Eastern neighbors. Thus, the ENP (European Neighborhood Policy) was launched after the 2004 enlargement to export good governance, democratic governance and decentralization to countries in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus, Middle East and North Africa. However, targeting this large geographic area and its many countries made it clear that this move was not for enlargement but rather for a double-edge sword of a prize. Furthermore, Busygina states that the basic rationale behind the EU's concern here was to gain greater security without paying a heavy price after 2004's unprecedented enlargement.

Eventually from March 2014 onwards, EU-Russia relations were based on mutual coercion since Russia annexed Crimea, located in the area of the Common Neighborhood (CN) of both powers. CN, consisting of Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, emerged as an area of competition to which both powers needed access in terms of their economic relations and their value in forming a coalition to reach great power status. However, once more the 'desired future' presented by Russia and the EU are incompatible. The EU aims to attract these countries by offering them economic and political cooperation without the 'golden carrot' of membership. Thus, the EU expects instability during the first phase of Europeanization and stability in the aftermath.

On the contrary, Russia expects assurances of 'eternal love' from CN countries and follows a policy of 'managed instability' in case eternal love is not forthcoming. In order to bring a target country in line, Russia's ruling elite can apply many instruments, ranging from providing financial support or imposing trade embargos, to energy supply interruptions, manipulation using pricing policy, leveraging existing energy debts, creating new energy debts, and hostile takeovers of companies.

Busygina, making her work distinct from others, states that authority cannot be a response to coercion, while coercion can be a response to authority, at least in the short run. In fact, she believes that this is a competition between two rival narratives. For her, the EU's relational authority cannot be an answer to Russia's coercive power and this is proven by the annexation of Crimea, changing the rules of the competition radically.

After bringing forward the theoretical framework and the stance of the EU and Russia in their foreign policies, the author devotes the next four chapters to four country cases: Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, and Turkey.

Belarus seems an exceptional case among CN countries as a country free from major crisis with Russia. However, the author maintains that this is not something given, but only an imitation of relational authority. The country is bound by economic, military and energy relations with Russia and the EU has almost no *points of entry* due to Russian influence. Georgia and Ukraine, which are exposed to direct Russian military intervention in their territories and even lost South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Crimea respectively, experienced coercion as their main means of interaction with Russia. The possibility that color revolutions would create a domino effect in CN directed Russia to ap-

ply coercion against the EU's relational power initiatives such as signing the AAs. Especially in the case of Ukraine, for Russia there is no such strategically important country perhaps within the whole post-Soviet space due to energy transfer lines and the presence of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea.

Turkey differs from the other countries in the study. Thanks to its territorial size, key geographic location, and economic and military capabilities, both Russia and the EU are aware of their limits in attempting to establish authority type relations with Turkey. That is why Russia pursues a selective use of coercion, while Turkey defines EU membership as its final goal, although both the EU and Turkish leaders are very well aware of its impracticability. Nevertheless, the unique position of the country between the EU and Russia gives it the chance to play between them.

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