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**ŁUKASZ LEWKOWICZ, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN THE
INTERNAL AND FOREIGN POLICY OF THE SLOVAK
REPUBLIC (1993-2020), PUBLISHER OF THE MARIA CURIE-
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The region of Central and Eastern Europe is currently the object of interest of many politicians, research, and analysis centers. This is mainly due to the ambiguous role that countries such as Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary play today in the geostrategic plans of world powers. In American geopolitical thought, this region is perceived as a ‘buffer zone’ between American interests on the one hand and Russian interests, or more and more often Chinese interests, on the other. Nevertheless, today, due to the tightening of cooperation between individual countries, the importance of this region is changing, causing their strategic interests to also be taken into account in the international arena. It is worth emphasizing, however, that from the perspective of the Polish state, an extremely important strategic aspect is getting to know the interests of neighbouring states that shape their internal and external policies. In this context, an invaluable item that has recently appeared on the Polish market is the scientific monograph by Łukasz Lewkowicz “The Russian Federation in the internal and foreign policy of the Slovak Republic (1993-2020)”.

The author presents an in-depth analysis of the Slovak political scene, with particular emphasis on the country's relationship with the Russian Federation. The thematic scope of the monograph is extremely topical as it concerns the process of shaping the internal and external policy of the Slovak Republic in the conditions of the hidden information war that has been going on for several years, which the Russian Federation is waging against the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe region. In this context, it is also important that the author

thoroughly deals with these issues, presenting the various levels of Slovak politics from a historical perspective, which allows us to understand the overall picture of specific events. The chronological range included in the monograph concerns the years 1993-2020. The starting point is marked by the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic on January 1, 1993, and the final one - by the parliamentary elections in that country, which took place on February 29, 2020, ending the term of the coalition government of Peter Pellegrini.

The monograph has a solid theoretical basis, and a correctly conducted research analysis and precise presentation of the interdependencies of the studied phenomena and their context allowed the author to formulate specific conclusions and forecasts, giving the work an additional analytical value that can be used by various types of research centers and decision-makers in various countries. In this sense, the role of publications cannot be overestimated.

It is also noticeable that the author used a variety of research methods in an extremely skilful way during the preparation of this work. In this respect, it is important to emphasize the author's use of a decision analysis, which consisted in showing political phenomena from the point of view of the decision center, the decision-making process, political decision, as well as political implementation. The monograph shows the correct selection and selection of the right source materials, logical derivation of conclusions, and a combination of various aspects of a specific problem, which indicates the high level of the author's competence in this subject area. It should also be mentioned that there is a wide selection of literature in three languages – Polish, Slovak, and English – which indicates the author's objective approach to the research process. However, it is worth pointing to the fact that many Internet sources are used in the monograph, which could constitute an objection in the face of the disinformation struggle taking place online through competing sites – primarily Russian and Slovak. Nevertheless, it proves the topicality of the subject matter undertaken by the author, and also allows confronting the data contained in Internet sources with the actual state.

The language of the monograph is formal. The author skilfully uses vocabulary and words in the field of international relations, security, economics, political science, and the sciences of culture and religion. It is worth noting that in the introduction the author presents the semantic scope of the basic concepts used in the work, such as the foreign policy of the state, determinants of this policy, and soft power in international

relations. This activity allows maintaining a uniform and compatible narrative structure of the text, without escaping in terms of meaning in a direction other than that defined. The terms emphasized by the author also indicate the multifaceted nature of the monograph, as it covers three levels – political, economic, and cultural.

The main goal of Łukasz Lewkowicz's work is therefore to present the policy of the Slovak Republic towards the Russian Federation in a comprehensive manner. In this context, the author also took into account the issue of both internal and external factors influencing Slovak-Russian relations and analyzed their multidimensional and complex nature in an extremely skilful manner.

The author in his work verifies four basic hypotheses. The first one concerns the fact that internal determinants (especially the historical perspective, geographical environment, demographic and economic potential) influenced Slovakia's foreign policy towards the Russian state. The second, in turn, refers to the fact that the evolution of Slovakia's immediate international environment after 1989 had a strong influence on Slovak-Russian relations. The author interprets this process by referring to three important phenomena, which were the collapse of the Soviet Union, Euro-Atlantic and European integration. The third hypothesis put forward by the author indicates that Slovak-Russian relations after 1993 were dynamic and changeable, which was related to the policy implemented by successive Slovak governments and individual party leaders.

The fourth hypothesis refers to the multifaceted nature of the thematic scope and concerns the claim that economic cooperation developed the best, political cooperation was variable, while in recent years a strong Russian presence in the socio-cultural sphere has been visible in Slovakia. It is worth emphasizing that in the course of the work, these hypotheses are verified several times using separate research methods, which additionally gives credibility to the results of the presented analyses and conclusions.

The monograph consists of four chapters in which the author uses a problem-chronological structure to present the process of shaping the Slovak political scene, implementing the issue of Slovak-Russian relations in these considerations.

The first chapter contains an analysis of the factors influencing the shape of the internal and external policy implemented by Slovakia. It presents the historical perspective of the development of Slovak-Russian relations from the end of the 19th Century to the socio-political

transformations in 1989-1993. In the first chapter, the author also analyses the internal determinants that had a significant impact on the process of forming relations between Slovakia and Russia, taking into account in this context the geopolitical situation, socio-economic situation, political system, demographic factor, as well as the concept of foreign policy. This part also presents the issue of the impact of the changes in the international environment on the internal and external policy of Slovakia. The first chapter of the monograph is a solid theoretical basis for further deliberations by the author.

The second chapter is devoted to the general dynamics of Slovakia's policy towards Russia after 1993. This part of the monograph presents the policies implemented by individual governments, therefore the author divided the analyzed period into three stages: 1993-1998, 1998-2006 and 2006-2020. This activity made it possible to systematize the research process to comprehensively present Slovak-Russian relations after 1993. As a result, the author was able to highlight the key moments in which the Slovak authorities changed their approach to Russia in an excellent way, as well as to present the reasons leading to these changes.

In the third chapter, the author presents an analysis of the use of economic instruments in mutual interstate relations. He focuses, among other things, on the issue of Slovakia's dependence on supplies of Russian energy resources, as well as the case concerning Slovak nuclear energy, which is one of the significant determinants affecting Slovak-Russian relations. Moreover, the author discusses in this chapter broadly understood economic cooperation between the two countries.

In the last, fourth chapter, the author presents the results of research on how Russia uses a wide range of socio-cultural factors towards Slovakia. This part of the monograph must deal with the topic of ideological premises, such as Pan-Slavism, and common historical events, which Russia skilfully implements in a narrative directed at Slovak society, thus creating an effective tool of influence in this country. Besides, the author presents the issue of Slovak-Russian scientific and cultural cooperation, pointing to the extensive institutional structure that currently functions in Slovakia. In this context, it is also worth emphasizing the fact that this part of the monograph presents an extremely interesting phenomenon at present, namely the problem of pro-Russian right-wing extremism in Slovakia. The legitimacy of addressing this subject is the result of the fact that views of this type are becoming more and more popular among Slovak society, which may prove the effectiveness of Russian propaganda tools used in this area.

To sum up, the scientific monograph “The Russian Federation in the Internal and Foreign Policy of the Slovak Republic (1993-2020)” by Łukasz Lewkowicz is an excellent work that fills the gap in Polish and Slovak literature on the subject, presenting a comprehensive political science approach to Slovak-Russian relations after 1993. This work, through its analytical and research potential, constitutes the basis and contribution to further research on the Slovak foreign policy, which is still a dynamic process, especially taking into account relations with a country such as the Russian Federation. All this constitutes a high content-related assessment and scientific value of this publication.