

**Buszynski, Leszek. Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War.  
Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.**

**Stuart J. Kaufman**

Volume 17, Number 1, Spring 1997

URI: [https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs17\\_01br06](https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs17_01br06)

[See table of contents](#)

---

**Publisher(s)**

The University of New Brunswick

**ISSN**

1198-8614 (print)

1715-5673 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

---

**Cite this review**

Kaufman, S. J. (1997). Review of [Buszynski, Leszek. Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 17(1), 169–170.

**Buszynski, Leszek.** *Russian Foreign Policy After the Cold War*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996.

In writing a book on Russian foreign policy during a period of such massive and rapid change, Leszek Buszynski takes on a challenging task. He makes it more manageable by focusing on two areas: the diplomatic history of the 1992-94 period, and Russia's political debates about foreign policy. Buszynski then divides those topics by region, offering chapters on Russia's relations with the West, with the "Near Abroad," and with the Asia-Pacific region.

Buszynski is meticulous in recording most of the numerous meetings, summits, and multilateral conclaves in which Russia's representatives engaged during the three years he covers. He is laudably frank in noting the limited value of most of the resulting agreements, especially the ones reached among members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). His treatment of the internal Russian debate about foreign policy is useful in categorizing the broad range of views expressed, and in noting the specific relevance of each school of thought to the different issues he discusses.

Along the way, Buszynski offers a number of shrewd insights into the workings and failings of Russian foreign policy. He points out that Russia's proclaimed status as an equal partner with the West is fictional, no more than a balm for the Russian psyche: aid recipients, he points out, are not the equals of the donors. Relatedly, Buszynski shows how the West repeatedly promised more economic aid than it delivered, then moved to expand NATO, leading to some Russian disappointment and resentment on both issues.

The drawback to the book's approach is that by focusing on the details of month-to-month events, it pays too little attention to putting those events in a broader analytical perspective. Given the ineffectiveness of many of the multilateral CIS agreements, for example, it would have been more useful to explain in detail why they were ineffective, rather than quoting the breathless and irrelevant official verbiage which surrounded each meeting. Buszynski does offer a plausible explanation for the weakness of multilateral CIS diplomacy: he suggests that the Russians wanted to re-establish a Soviet-style command system in the economic and security areas, which the other CIS member states refused to implement. (p. 120) But this view, like many of the other insights in the book, is merely asserted, not proven. Buszynski's methodology of quoting Russian officials and analysts could easily have been adapted to demonstrate such points, but disappointingly, he rarely deploys his quotes to do so.

Partly as a result, the book fails to note the coherence of the story it tells. The stories in the book do add up to a pattern: nationalists and other hard-liners have consistently disrupted Russia's attempts to cooperate with its neighbors. They block the implementation of border agreements with China and Japan, make excessive demands in negotiations with CIS states, and raise hackles in the West over exaggerated issues in Bosnia and the Baltic States. The book's focus, however, is more on the early "disorientation" of Russian policy than on its later increasing coherence.

This increasing coherence may have been more apparent had the book paid attention to the non-diplomatic aspects of Russian foreign policy, including the actions of Russian troops deployed abroad, arms sales, commercial deals, covert action and intelligence operations. Russia's relationship with Moldova and the Transcaucasian republics, in particular, would seem much less benign if more attention were paid to Russian support (military and otherwise) for secessionists groups in those areas, and to evidence of Russian involvement in the coup which overthrew Azerbaijan's President Elchibei. Part of the reason for these omissions may be attributable to the book's sources: most of the citations are to newspaper articles. A better job of searching the Russian- and English-language scholarly literatures on Russian foreign policy, from studies of public opinion to case studies of relations with CIS countries, might have provided the data needed to sketch out a broader picture.

Yet another omission, surprising in a book historical in style, is the minimal attention paid to historical background, even from the Gorbachev period. A paucity of trade statistics weakens the book's discussion of CIS trade issues. And there are numerous minor errors: Jeffrey Sachs' name is incorrectly reported as "Jerry," for example, and US Senator Mitch McConnell is mis-identified as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, rather than of one of its subcommittees.

Overall, the book is useful for compiling facts about Russian foreign policy in 1992-94 and for offering a number of scattered insights, but it fails disappointingly to cohere as a whole.

Stuart J. Kaufman

University of Kentucky