

Eugene Fishel. *The Moscow Factor: U.S. Policy Toward Sovereign Ukraine and the Kremlin*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022. 221 pages. \$29.95.

The Moscow Factor: U.S. Policy Toward Sovereign Ukraine and the Kremlin was published at a very important time in international political history. In February 2022, Ukraine was invaded by Russia ushering in a new set of policy considerations for the United States and the international political arena. Fishel's book focuses on the relationships between the United States and Ukraine and Russia and given the current circumstances, this book provides a foundation where scholars, government officials and individuals interested in learning more about these political dynamics can read this book to better understand the political nature surrounding these world leaders. *The Moscow Factor* is not only interesting but is an important read during the international political turmoil surrounding the serious Russia and Ukraine war.

The Moscow Factor: U.S. Policy Toward Sovereign Ukraine and the Kremlin opens with the author telling a story within the Oval Office of the White House. Fishel cleverly outlines the discussion highlighting the state of the relationship between nations—but finally ends the discussion explaining that this was a conversation that took place about Poland, the USSR and President Franklin Roosevelt. The story, in essence, highlights the fact that the American international policy towards former Soviet countries remains similar as it did during the Roosevelt Administration. Fishel explains that the core concept at stake has been a careful balance between maintaining a tense relationship with Russia (as he explains a “geostrategic necessity” and supporting Ukraine as an independent European country (p. 2). Fishel also notes that the containment policies of the twentieth century were very much a part of the U.S. policies towards Russia (p. 6). Fishel uses these important policy considerations as the basis of his book to understand how the “Moscow Factor” (the American policy towards Russia), has “affected

both the formulation and implementation of U.S. policy towards Ukraine, questions that have not been studied in a systematic fashion,” (p. 9).

Fishel’s hypothesis focuses on “the dynamics associated with America’s recognition of Ukraine’s independence from the USSR, the pursuit of Ukraine’s denuclearization, support for the so-called Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the non-provision of lethal military assistance to Ukraine in the face of Russia’s occupation of the Crimean Peninsula and aggression in eastern Ukraine,” (p. 9). Fishel explains that he chose these policy challenges because “they have been rather foundational in the context of U.S.-Ukrainian relations and in part because they happened to have occurred across four successive US administrations, two Democratic and two Republican, (p. 9). Fishel’s framework to better understand this relationship through the “Moscow factor” illuminates a number of interesting dynamics between the countries.

The Moscow Factor is written in six chapters that highlight the history and political dynamics of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union and Ukraine. This historical analysis follows the various policy challenges that highlight important factors in the overall relationship between the nations. Fishel notes that there is an interchangeability between the American policies of the USSR to the American policies of the current Russia across multiple presidential administrations, (p. 221). He also carefully identifies numerous ways that the “Moscow Factor” is present in numerous interactions.

Many political scientists note that American policies follow similar patterns despite the fact that the various players change over the course of time. Fishel’s book includes important scholarly research that supports these notions. More importantly, Fishel’s book is timely and helps to explain the current agenda within the international political arena as the United States, the Ukraine, and Russia continue with this interplay in global politics. *The Moscow Factor: U.S.*

Policy Toward Sovereign Ukraine and the Kremlin is an important read for any international policy scholar or student of international relations. As it helps to explain the current issues taking place on the world stage, this book is an important read for undergraduate and graduate students alike, or anyone interested in learning more about the current international tensions. *The Moscow Factor* is well-written and the research is constructed well within myriad important scholarly constraints as Fishel takes the reader on a tour of international politics and twentieth century history of the Cold War.

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