
BOOK REVIEW

Shokhin, S. O. & Kudryashova, E. V. (2022). *The Legal Framework for Strategic Planning in contemporary Russia*. MGIMO

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Comparative public governance is challenging researchers in a turbulent world. There is a whole variety of approaches, disagreements, and controversies in the views on political life and governance standards. Social sciences in the 21st century sought for a greater comparability of research findings, however, it remained unattainable, and more questions were provoked rather than common orientations for compatibilities were found. Still the dynamics of social processes encouraged studies which lead to better understanding of political institutions and public administration in different parts of the world (Joyce, 2022). The leading think tanks and academic institutions around the world are directing their attention to research in comparative politics, administration, and their legal aspects. This is also true of the leading Russian think tanks including the Moscow Institute of International Relations (MGIMO).

In 2022 the MGIMO Publishing house released valuable research on strategic governance in Russia – the monograph by S. O. Shokhin and E. V. Kudryashova, *The Legal Framework for strategic planning in contemporary Russia*. The book presents insights into the nature of strategic vision in the Russian Federation with a special focus on the legal aspects of strategic planning on the federal level.

The research is published in English and appeals to the international academic audience. A great deal of evidence and facts about the development of the strategic planning system in the Russian Federation during the past twenty years are outlined in the book. The facts and their analysis provide a solid basis for further discussion. However, this is not a mere accumulation of facts about strategic planning.

The analysis of the past two decades is underpinned by an investigation of the roots of the contemporary trends which go back to the soviet times. The authors demonstrate that the contemporary system of strategic planning has its roots in previous experience of Russia when it was a Russian Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR. Planning was mentioned in the soviet constitutions among the principles for the economy and later for all social life paradigms. The influence of the soviet concept keeps on manifesting itself in the current public governance concepts of the Russian Federation. For example, the Federal

law N 172-FZ of 28.06.2014 'On strategic planning in the Russian Federation' gives a definition of public governance. The law makes it clear that public governance is subservient to the top strategic planning goals. Giving priority to planning over other aspects of public governance is assumed by the authors to derive from the previous concept of planning as a constitutional principle.

As implied by its title, the book deals with the legal aspects of the strategies in Russia. The legal framework is mainly formed by the Federal law 'On strategic planning in the Russian Federation' and, therefore, it is the focus of the reviewed book. At the same time, it is not a pure commentary on the law. The speculations in the text cover the ongoing political processes that finally received legal status. The book highlights the social and political consensus on the configuration of the strategic vision formalised in the law. This consensus is clearly articulated in the main goals of the system of strategic planning in Russia. The sustainable social-economic development and ensuring national security are the core of the strategic planning system. This setting provoked some discussions as to whether there is a dualistic but unique goal or whether there are two autonomous goals. The outcome of this discussion affects the general understanding of strategic planning in Russia. Once these goals are merged into one then all the efforts in the security field can be attributed to the social-economic development. This is widely used for presenting the achievements in the economy currently. The social economic growth looks more impressive once the results of industry working only for national security are merged with other sectors of the economy. There are also studies rightly suggesting that the state policy of ensuring national security is crucial for maintaining the sustainable social-economic development of Russia and increasing its competitiveness (Nazarov & Afinogenov, 2022). This is not the only example of the important outcomes of the discussion on one dualistic or two separate strategic goals in Russia. This illustrates how the authors identified and revealed the most important and acute issues that go beyond just legal regulation and its interpretation. While the book deals with the law, it offers speculation on its context considering the law to be the art of possible.

Internal strategies influence international relations (Verlaine et al., 2020a; 2020b) and vice versa the external context influences domestic strategic planning. The authors look at the opportunities for strategic planning in current politics and international relations as well as at the historical experience. The first chapter reviews the experience of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (abbreviated as Comecon or CMEA). Shortly after the creation of CMEA in 1949 there was an attempt to create supranational bodies including an authority for central planning. This attempt failed, nevertheless, later a coordinating body – the CMEA: Committee on cooperation of planning activity – was founded and that succeeded. It is suggested in the book that the experience of the CMEA could be valuable for the current international integration processes. The Eurasian integration processes and the role of coordinating supranational strategies are discussed in the book. Several provisions in the Eurasian Economic Union documents on the coordination allow a development of strategies and their implementation. According to the book, the strategic documents of the Eurasian Economic Union have an impact on the process of strategic planning in Russia and in other member-states as an important contextual factor.

This book is a part of an extended discussion initiated by the authors in the academic journals (Kudryashova, 2019; Shokhin & Kudryashova, 2019; 2020). Perhaps this is the

reason that the book is not a thick folio. It seems that the authors have sought to expose the essence of their ideas and concepts in a concentrated manner for the international reader. Still, some of the findings could be further outlined and evaluated in more detail with more facts and evidence. Despite this comment the authors managed to present their vision in a systematic and coherent way.

The book under review facilitates the understanding of strategic governance and long-term vision in Russia displaying the issues that are worth attention and discourse. The book offers a thought-provoking exercise and undoubtedly situates itself as core research on strategic planning best practices. It is a great contribution to the comparability of research in public governance providing a basis for the exchange of ideas between academics from around the world and for the appreciation of the development of strategic planning in Russia internationally.

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