

NADIA BOYADJIEVA
RUSSIA, NATO AND THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT
AFTER THE COLD WAR 1989–1999

DANIELA UBENOVA PUBLISHING HOUSE, SOFIA 2013, PP. 382

We are facing a clear redefinition of the international reality surrounding us. Through the prism of the Ukrainian tragedy, we see how the order carefully constructed after the Cold War turns into dust, and all components of the existing structures of international security require a redefinition. It is a time of triumph of realism, whose distanced approach to the principles and morals wins with idealists' illusory expectations that in international relations it is possible to introduce rules which everyone will interpret in the same way.

To date, the course of events in Ukraine does not provide arguments for the superiority of ideas over power. On the contrary, facts unequivocally perpetuate the belief that only a sober assessment of the situation based on an objective analysis of the potential and possibilities (one's own and of the opponents) allows us to properly interpret the reality. Therefore, it is true that superpowers have their spheres of influence and tendencies in these areas which are undesirable for them are sufficient for the use of force. It is also true that the European Union, irrespective of its technocrats' ideas, is not a power which is able to shape its surroundings. It is only the end product of the sum of the compromise of the will of national governments, which are also guided chiefly by their own national interests, for which of course they cannot be blamed. It is also true that weaker states are doomed to adapt to the conditions imposed by stronger ones. Moreover, their attempts to make changes in their geopolitical orientation are doomed to suffering. It is true that in Europe the most effective methods are still taken straight from the period before, not after World War II.

The Ukrainian crisis is the first such open confrontation between the main pillars of the European security system – the West (understood as NATO and

the EU) and Russia. The system, which very clearly outlined the framework of accepted activities of the state in the international arena by imposing a kind of international *savoir vivre*. All documents regulating security in the region duplicate the principle of territorial integrity, political independence, the prohibition of the use of force and the threat of using it, assume good-neighbourly relations and recognize the key role of organizations such as the OSCE, the UN, NATO or the EU as platforms for resolving international disputes.

Before the Ukrainian crisis other conflicts on the periphery of Europe were explained as cultural barbarism which will disappear in a natural way along with the spread of Western values; values which, by their nature, are attractive, conflict-free and spread naturally. Therefore, when today we are witnessing a travesty of all basic principles of international relations, it seems reasonable to ask what has gone wrong.

In Polish literature, there are numerous studies dealing with Russia's relations with the Western world, for instance by S. Bieleń, E. Stadtmüller and M. Raś¹. In a narrower, more analytical context, it is worth mentioning also the studies by M. Piwowar², M. Kaźmierski, a synthetic CES report by M. Menkiszak about relations between Russia and NATO before and after 11 September 2001. The publication discussed below seems to be a good supplement to this list. Most of the works were created before the half of the first decade of the 21st century. Next, with the developments

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- ¹ Stadtmüller, E. 2003. *Pożegnanie z nieufnością? Rozszerzenie NATO i UE a stosunki polsko-rosyjskie w kontekście bezpieczeństwa europejskiego*. [Farewell to mistrust? The enlargement of NATO and the EU and Polish-Russian relations in the context of European security.] Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego; Raś, M. 2005. *Ewolucja polityki zagranicznej Rosji wobec Stanów Zjednoczonych i Europy Zachodniej w latach 1991–2001*. [The evolution of Russian foreign policy towards the United States and Western Europe in 1991–2001.] Warszawa: WUW; Bieleń, S. 2006. *Tożsamość narodowa Federacji Rosyjskiej*. [The national identity of the Russian Federation.] Warszawa; Bieleń, S., Raś, M. eds. 2008. *Polityka zagraniczna Rosji*. [Russia's foreign policy.] Warszawa: Difin.
- ² Piwowar, M. *Ewolucja partnerstwa Sojuszu Północnoatlantyckiego z Federacją Rosyjską 1994–2006*. [The evolution of NATO partnership with the Russian Federation from 1994 to 2006.]; Kaźmierski, M. *Rada NATO-Rosja jako element adaptacji zewnętrznej Sojuszu*. [NATO-Russia Council as part of the external adaptation of the Alliance.], Department of Strategy and Policy Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 1999; Menkiszak, M. 2002. *Stosunki Rosja-NATO przed i po 11 września 2001*. [Relations between Russia and NATO before and after 11 September 2001.] CES Reports. May 2002.

in the international arena, the war in Georgia, then the attempt to implement Polish reset in relations with Russia, as well as the concentration of attention on the new identity of the Russian Federation, the issues of the 90s were pushed into the background. Today, however, when relations between Russia and the United States, the European Union and NATO are put to a serious test, there is a need to re-reflect on the course of events of the 90s to understand when Russia and the West leapt from cooperation to confrontation. The publication discussed below may be very helpful in this respect.

The monograph by Nadia Boydjieva, Bulgarian, belongs to those readings about which we can say that ‘perfectly coincide with the time’. Published in 2013, the work is devoted to relations between Russia, NATO and the security environment in the last decade of the 20th century. The release date is worth noting because it indicates that the author was not able to take into account the recent developments in Ukraine, and thus her scholarly observations are devoid of emotions and interpretations of the past, which today are abundant in comments on the hitherto prevailing order and Russia’s relations with the Western world. The monograph is an attempt to trace the difficult road which the system of international relations had to follow, passing from politics of power and rivalry to cooperation and respect for the rule of law and democracy in order to establish the desired and necessary security environment in Europe and in the world – the environment which today is facing the most difficult challenge of survival.

The aim of the author is to present the point of view of Russia and NATO in search of these driving forces which prevailed in the process of building the international order after the Cold War. Expanding the main topic chronologically, Boydjieva makes a synthetic introduction to the problem emphasizing the specificity of international relations during the Cold War. In the following chapters the author focuses on the process of the Soviet Union disintegration and the creation of the Russian Federation as a separate legal entity, stressing at the same time the essence of competition of Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin. Considering the impact of the coup of August 1991 the author poses the question about the reasons for its failure, taking the position that an extremely important role was played by the hierarchy of power. An interesting comparison showing a dynamic situation inside the USSR as a result of the coup is the fact that back in March 1991 three-quarters of people living in the Ukrainian SSR were in favour of maintaining the USSR as a renewed federation, but on 1 December of the same year 92% of the population of Ukraine, including Crimea and south eastern

regions, voted for independence. Boydjieva concludes her argument about the collapse of the USSR on the basis of the arguments of Russian lawyers S. M. Shakhray and S. N. Stanski, highlighting the impact of economic and political factors, as well as the provisions of the Constitution of the USSR which allowed individual federal republics to exit freely the Soviet Union as well as the so-called autonomy processes. Especially interesting seems to be the last argument justifying the collapse of the USSR by means of the 'information virus of envy' when in the Baltic republics the slogans to stop working for Russia were becoming louder, which in the opinion of the author showed the growing role of the selfish sense of nationalism in various republics and parts of the Soviet Union. Describing in Chapter III the new security environment in Central and Eastern Europe, Boydjieva notes that at the time the specifics of the international environment required cooperation between the Western security structures and Russia. It should be pointed out that although the Russian report for the Defence Policy and Security Council recognizes the loss of the states of Central and Eastern Europe as a priority for Russian foreign policy, at the same time the special importance of Poland, Bulgaria and Slovakia for the Russian Federation was stressed.

In Chapter IV the author focuses on the process of crystallization of the national security framework of the Russian Federation, stressing, at the same time, the importance of the Soviet nuclear heritage in the context of the START agreement. Alternative interpretations of the Commonwealth of Independent States among the former Soviet countries is noteworthy. For Moscow, the CIS should play a role of a permanent coordinating body in the processes of solving political, economic and military matters, where Russia should play a leading role. In turn, Kiev perceived the CIS as only a temporary organization whose main goal was the removal of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. Also, tensions on the line between Moscow and Kiev pertained to the creation of the Ukrainian army and control of the Black Sea Fleet which until 1995 was under common control of the presidents of Russia and Ukraine. It is worth noting that although the author devotes eight pages (103–110) to the issue of 'nuclear heritage', she failed to equally distribute the accents. Devoting a lot of attention to the issue the transfer of tactical weapons to the Russian Federation by Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, the problem of strategic weapons was compressed to a few paragraphs and the Budapest memorandum of 1994, essential in the context of the recent events in Ukraine, was completely omitted.

The dynamics of events in the international arena in the first half of the 90s is a reference point for the development of the Russian foreign

policy strategy. Special attention should be paid to the attempt to order alternative concepts of international orientation of Russia which competed for dominance. On the basis of the classification of alternative identities formulated by Ira Strauss, Russia could choose between Western and anti-Western identity, the former of which could take the form of Atlanticism and Europeanism, and the latter between Eurasian and Slavophile. In Polish literature S. Bieleń devotes particular attention to this issue³.

Then Boydjiewa distinguishes alternative trends which competed for dominance in the course of setting priorities of Russian foreign policy. Recognizing Atlantists, realists and conservatives, the author clearly marks the dividing lines between them. While for Atlantists the West appears to be a natural partner, for realists (also called pragmatic, moderate liberals, centrists, moderate nationalists, or Eurasianists) Russia should pursue policy of dialogue with all countries of the world and not limit it to the West. But for conservatives, known also as anti-Western, the priorities are still the CIS countries and Asia, and the prospect of Russia's membership in NATO is seen as a capitulation. The author concludes that in the first two years of the Russian Federation circles promoting unequivocal rapprochement with the West played the dominant role. However, attempts of a clear redefinition of Russian priorities encountered formidable opposition from military and special services circles. What is more, the culmination of the internal crisis at the turn of September and October 1993 revealed the level of determination of the internal opposition, which forced A. Kozyrev, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to abandon his vision and to redefine the priorities of Russian foreign policy once again.

In chapter VI N. Boydjiewa focuses on the perceptions of NATO enlargement to the East among Russian political and military elites, as well as various social circles. The author clearly agrees with the views of M. Kramer about the lack of promises made to Moscow in the context of NATO enlargement to the East as well as about the fact that in 1993 the issue of

³ Bieleń, S. 2006. *Tożsamość narodowa Federacji Rosyjskiej*. [The national identity of the Russian Federation.], Warszawa, and Postimperializm-neoimperializm-transimperializm: próba oceny rosyjskiej polityki zagranicznej. [Postimperializm – neo-imperializm – transimperializm: an attempt to assess Russia's foreign policy.] In: Bieleń S., Skrzypek, A. eds. 2010. *Rosja refleksje o transformacji*. [Russia reflection of the transformation.] Warszawa: Aspra JR, pp. 235–265; and Identyfikacja wizerunkowa Rosji w stosunkach międzynarodowych. [Russia's image identification in international relations.] In: Bieleń, S. ed. 2011. *Wizerunki międzynarodowe Rosji*. [International images of Russia.] Warszawa: Aspra-JR, pp. 13–35.

future enlargement of NATO to was of secondary importance for Russia. This position is justified in the context of the well-known insubordination between the statements of President Yeltsin and the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, for instance in the context of the prospects of Polish membership.

The mentioned secondary importance resulted not only from the tense internal situation, but was also based on expectations that the NATO will adapt to the new reality and change the nature of its *raison d'être*, becoming a kind of an equal partner in building a new security order and taking into account Russian interests. The Russian view of that order can be defined as complex because it assumed the active participation of all existing regional international organizations and the UN.

However, developments in the first half of the 90s, and in particular the prospect of NATO enlargement to the East, and developments during the war in Bosnia forced Moscow to revise its relations with the Alliance. Particularly painful were the experiences in the Balkans where Russia became a kind of a passive witness of the increasing involvement of NATO, which translated into the solution (even if not quite fortunate) of the greatest drama of war in Europe since the end of the Second World War, which was the war in Bosnia. Also in the dimension of bilateral relations with NATO, Russia was not treated as an extraordinary partner but as one of many countries that arose on the ruins of the Soviet empire, for which the Alliance's offer of cooperation was the same as, for example, for Bulgaria or the Czech Republic. It is in this aspect that the author sees the reason why Russia's decision-making circles departed from the idea of close relationships with NATO.

Although also in Polish literature the view of the periods of variable dynamics in NATO's relations with Russia is widespread⁴, Boydjieva emphasizes the role of disappointment in Russian circles. Namely, Russian benign and positive attitude towards NATO partners did not encounter reciprocation, but marginalization from the Western partners. Marginalization which Russia experienced in the course of solving the war in Bosnia, and which it began to resist during the conflict in Kosovo. This is where the

⁴ See, among others, Bryc, A. 2008. Stosunki Federacji Rosyjskiej z Sojuszem Północnoatlantyckim. [The relations of the Russian Federation with NATO.], pp. 68–89, and Kaczmarek M. 2006. Polityka Federacji Rosyjskiej wobec Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki. [Policy of the Russian Federation towards the United States of America.] In: Bieleń, S., Raś, M. eds. 2008. *Polityka Zagraniczna Rosji*. [Russia's Foreign Policy.] Warszawa: Difin, as well as Bieleń, S. 2006. *Tożsamość narodowa Federacji Rosyjskiej*. [The national identity of the Russian Federation.] Warszawa.

willingness to cooperate was replaced by a vision of the need to return to the harsh defence of its own interests. It was associated with rough cooperation, which since then became characteristic for the relations with the North Atlantic Alliance and lasted until the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

According to the author, the prospect of NATO enlargement to the East was most strongly opposed by Russian military circles, for which the driving force in this process was the lobby of the US defence industry. The realization of the plans of this lobby was supposed to upset the balance of power between Russia and the West, and to undermine the emerging system of arms control in Europe. In addition, the enlargement took place in a period which was exceptionally unfavourable for the Russian economy and army. Therefore, the voices of Russian nationalists saying that Russia risks losing the status of a great power and that the sensitivity to the threat to national interests increases became justifiable. Quoting D. Averre, the author notes that 'the simultaneous formation of the larger and more compact EC/EU and NATO, of which none is ready to accept Russia, the instability of the Russian south and the risk of confrontation with Turkey create the insecurity complex and limit its [Russia's – SD] vision of participation in the European security system'. What is unsatisfactory is the fact the author did not attempt to reflect briefly on the role of Russian military officers in shaping Russian foreign policy, especially in the absence of the actual civilian control over the army in Russia⁵.

In the context of the current deterioration of relations between Russia and NATO, S.M. Rogow's considerations seem to be relevant. He outlines three possible scenarios for the behaviour of Moscow – capitulation, confrontation or compromise. In the first case Russia can retreat and focus on its self-isolation; in the second it may respond according to 'a blade against a blade'; in the third, it can compromise aiming to ensure Russia's vital interests, although to a minimal extent. In the final analysis Russia chooses a middle path between confrontation and compromise demanding restrictions on the deployment of nuclear and conventional weapons; the prohibition of building military infrastructure on the territory of the new Member States; and renegotiation of the provisions of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

⁵ See more on the debate about NATO in the Russian Federation in Stadtmüller, E. 2003. *Pożegnanie z nieufnością? Rozszerzenie NATO i UE a stosunki polsko-rosyjskie w kontekście bezpieczeństwa europejskiego*. [Farewell to mistrust? The enlargement of NATO and the EU and Polish-Russian relations in the context of European security.] Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, pp. 39–46.

In chapter VII the author examines the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. The document in question is unique in that it establishes the foundation of relations between Russia and NATO by creating proper frameworks; highlighting the substratum on the basis of which the relationship will be built and proposes mechanisms for resolving disputes and forms of cooperation to be developed. The creation of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council provided Moscow with extraordinary institutionalized presence in relations with the Alliance enabling a flexible approach to finding common solutions. In Boydjjeva's opinion this act contributed to the increase of transparency in relations between Russia and NATO. At the same time the document was not able to solve the problem of the accumulating lack of trust between the parties. One of the main 'shortcomings' of the Act, according to the Russians, is the fact that the agreement does not establish legal guarantees that NATO will consult Russia on security issues which may be perceived as involving its interests. This means that Russia's opinion on security matters in Europe or in solving important political issues can be ignored. Russian concerns turned out to be justified, because already during the decision to launch a military operation against the Serbs in Kosovo, NATO first made a decision among its members, and only then communicated its position to Russia. In response, Russia comes to the conclusion that it is much more effective to focus on the cooperation with selected countries of the Alliance rather than within Russia – the NATO Council. The effects of this policy were visible very quickly. Today, from the perspective of sixteen elements of its implementation we can recognize them, for instance, in the failure of the efforts to invite Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 and in the context of decisions related to the position of NATO to the war in Ukraine.

The last chapter is devoted to the analysis of the relationship between the North Atlantic Alliance and Russia in the context of the challenges for regional security in the Balkans. Beginning with the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, the author focuses her attention on the process of internationalization of the Kosovo problem. She devotes particular attention to the evolutionary role of Russia and its growing assertiveness, which translated into reaching an agreement and ending the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. On the basis of a comparative study of the Dayton and Rambouillet peace agreements, Boydjjeva puts an interesting thesis about the existence of 'a Dayton model' of imposing peace. Its characteristic features are the mandate and competences of international structures which were created

on the basis of agreements. A direction of additional studies which the author could have taken is the analysis of the peace proposals of Rambouillet (February 1999) and Bonn (May 1999) and the assessment of the differences in the light of Russia's role and influence of public opinion in the West against the NATO air raids on Yugoslavia.

The author's study suggest that the crisis in Kosovo led to Russia's intensifying distrust, the strengthening of sceptical views of NATO in Russia and mobilization of Russian policy towards the need to protect national interests. The emanation of this concern was the re-evaluation of the Russian concept of national security and defence policy of the Russian Federation. Taking into account Vladimir Putin's rise to power and the continuation of NATO's policy of enlargement to the East, the author indicates the starting point for her further research on the subject which will be another part of her study of NATO and the Russian Federation relations at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

From the methodological perspective, the sources on which the author based her research deserve a brief comment. Basing it primarily on the existing documents, Boydjieva builds her argument without going into too far-fetched interpretations. Looking for understanding for the positions of Russia and the United States, the author mainly relies on the contents of documents, as well as on comments and positions of American and Russian politicians and researchers. In this way the author manages to present resistant points of the debate and the attitude of decision makers in both the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia. Noteworthy is special attention paid to the dominant attitudes among the Russian military, which rarely go hand in hand with pro-Western attitude of Yeltsin's team. On the other hand, there are subsections which the author based solely on a single item, which is not the best proof of the consequences while maintaining the quality of the workshop.

On the technical side, the lack of an index of names and places, and of a bibliography deserves strong criticism. The only source are footnotes below the line. In turn, the last part of the book is a reprint of a series of documents which provide a good complement and reference point for researchers. The author included, among others,; the Act on the safety of the Russian Federation of 1992; the concept of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation of 1992; the text of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, A. Kozyrev, to NATO Review of 1993; the basic assumptions of the military doctrine of the Russian Federation of 1993; the Report on the enlargement of NATO of September 1995, and the Concept of national security of the Russian Federation of 1997.

In summary, the monograph conducts comprehensive analysis of the evolution and subsequent regress of Russia – NATO relations on the basis of chronological exposition. Probably the most important contribution of the research is special attention devoted to and highlighting the impact of the conflicts in the Balkans on the development and subsequent regress in mutual relations. The issues, which due to the complexity and multi-threading of the Balkans problems, are often generalized and marginalized by the researchers both of Russia's foreign policy and of issues of international security and transatlantic relations of that period. That is why, we should look forward to both the English version of that position, as well as Boydjieva's continued research on Russia – NATO relations in the first decade of the 21st century.

Warszawa, July 2015

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