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## BOOK REVIEW: THE CRISIS WITH RUSSIA

Erik Görner\*

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BURNS, N. – PRICE, J. (eds.): *The crisis with Russia*. Washington: The Aspen Institute, 2015. 152 s. ISBN 978-08-98436-13-6.

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The European security environment has been changing rapidly in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and continues to change in the 21<sup>st</sup>. Since the end of Cold War, the main focus has been on the relations between “West” and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). After the dissolution of the USSR and creation of the Russian Federation there have been hopes that there would be a peaceful coexistence in Europe. The crisis in Ukraine in 2014 finally revealed that the security in Europe is very fragile and there is a need to develop a comprehensive and consistent foreign policy of the European Union and the United States towards the Russian Federation.

The reviewed volume *The Crisis with Russia* tries to provide readers and policy makers with some complex information on the topic. It was prepared and published thanks to the effort of the Aspen Strategy Group. The publication in which the central point is focuses on Russia-United States relations is quite symbolic for the group. The group was created to deal with issues of arms control in 1984 and the relations between Russia and the United States have been many times on the table throughout many years of group’s existence. The main aim of the Aspen Strategy Group is to provide a discussion in a group of experts of different political affiliations and come up with policy solutions. The publication is composed as a collective volume. Most of the articles were written by members of the group with the advice of experts on the topic, although some were written by experts out of the Aspen Strategy Group.

The volume consists of acknowledgements, a foreword, a preface and four parts. Each of the parts except the first one (part one consist of a single article

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\* Mgr. Erik Gorner is a PhD. Student at the Department of Security Studies, Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Kuzmányho 1, 974 01 Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic, e-mail: erik.gorner@umb.sk.

and thus there is no division into chapters) is divided into chapters, and each chapter in fact is one article. All articles were written by a different author.

The foreword is written by **Joseph S. Nye, Jr.** and **Brent Scowcroft**. It is very short and it deals mainly with the history of the Aspen Strategy Group. The authors inform readers that the articles in this volume represent core ideas of the Aspen Strategy Group 2014 Summer Workshop titled "Redux: Prescription for U.S.-Russia Policy." At the end of the foreword, some of the conclusions of the volume are presented.

In preface, written by **Nicholas Burns**, readers are provided with information about mutual relations between Russia and the United States. Author briefly introduces the content of this volume. It is stressed that relations between Russia and the West have not reached the level of a new Cold War, but they have, for sure, deteriorated.

Part one written by **Strobe Talbott** is devoted to the topic of Putinism. First of all, the author tries to explain what has led to the dissolution of the USSR and its consequences. The role of Gorbachev and Yeltsin is described in consideration of the rise of power of Putin. Putin has begun his career as proponent of cooperation with the West but has quickly modified his posture becoming a revisionist. In the words of Talbott: "Putinism is a conscious attempt at bringing back from the past a model for Russia's future." The author is of opinion that such a model must inevitably fail.

Part two of the volume consists of three chapters: The World According to Putin by **Lilia Shevtsova**; Putin's World by **Angela Stent** and The Ukraine Crisis and Beyond: A European Perspective by **Wolfgang Ischinger**. The first two chapters provide us with psychological and political profile of Vladimir Putin. Both of them speak about Russian policy towards the West that has mainly features of confrontation, even though there are also some areas where they cooperate. In terms of Putin's policy, Shevtsova writes that Putin has no comprehensive strategy in his policy. His policy is rather conducted on ad hoc bases. He tries to sustain his position. In the second chapter the author says that Russia should not concentrate on what it has been, it should rather try to modernise to keep the status of superpower in the future. In the third chapter, four main conclusions should be stressed. Economic sanctions themselves are not enough to resolve situation in Ukraine. Europe should develop its own common defence and bolster security in the continent. The United States' military presence in Europe is inevitable for Europe's stability.

Part 3 deals with relations of the Russian Federation towards the People's

Republic of China and Russian dependence on export of fossil fuels. The fourth chapter written by **Kevin Rudd** is entitled Sino-Russian Relations. China and Russia have not always had a good relationship. Today it is a strategic one based mainly on the trade with fossil fuels. China needs natural gas and oil for its industry and Russia has plenty of resources. The cooperation between these two countries is also based on the respect of borders so both countries can pay attention to other important areas of their interest. Joint navy military drills of these countries take place - the biggest one was Joint Sea 2013. Good relations of these countries are as well based on mutual respect of both leaders- Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. The next chapter written by **Meghan L. O'Sullivan** is called The Unconventional Energy Boom: Bad Timing for a Revanchist Russia. As a reader would expect from the title of this chapter it explains how new technologies of extraction of fossil fuels affect Russian economy. Extraction of fossil fuels from shale have expanded markets and lowered prizes. The author expresses his opinion and says that this means a huge problem for Russia and may even result in Putin's inability to satisfy needs of his citizens.

The last part of the volume is comprised of four chapters. Chapter 5, Advice for the Obama Administration on Putin, Russia, and Ukraine written by **John Beyrle** starts with an account of the history of the relations between the United States and the Russian Federation. There have always been ups and downs in the relation to oil prices, economic conditions and so on. Considering current developments, Putin can blame bad economic situation in the country on the sanctions imposed by the West. For the West it is important not just to impose sanctions but also to continue a diplomatic endeavour to resolve the situation. The author of the next chapter is **Stephen Biegun**. It is called Russia and the United States' National Interests (Or Reset Version 2.0). In the first few paragraphs, the author compares current behaviour of Russia with some historical episodes like Versailles system that caused the rise of Hitler, Anschluss of Austria and the policy of Appeasement after the Munich Agreement. He as well states that we should learn from the history and not to expect it to repeat in the same way. The author says that isolation and Cold War style realpolitik are not the right way to deal with Russia. On one hand, the United States should have a good relation with Russia but on the other it should also protect its allies and not fear to criticise worsening state of democracy and abuses of international law by Russia. Russia, the Ukraine Crisis and American National Interest by **Graham Allison** –it is the name of the eighth chapter. The author is of the opinion that keeping good relations with Russia is more

important for the interest of the United States than direct or indirect confrontation in respect to Ukraine. He names the areas in which Russia and the United States are partners: WMD non-proliferation, war on terrorism, gas trade, etc. In the end of the chapter, he assesses the response of Obama administration towards the Ukraine Crisis quite positively. It recognised that Russian actions in area are not vital threat for the United States, did not let Putin divide Europe and America, did not start a new cold war, and cooperated with Russia on other issues like Iran. The last chapter, Concluding Observations: What We Heard by **Stephen Hadley** concludes the whole volume. First, the author says Europe and the United States can have a huge impact on the development in Russia if they act together based on their shared values. Objective in Europe is to preserve it "whole, free, and at peace." Derived from that, another objective is a stable and a democratic Russia working at peace together with the West. To reach these objectives, the author presents comprehensive set of short and long-term goals. He also mentions policy prescriptions to deal with Ukrainian crisis to make Ukraine strong and independent once again.

To sum up my impressions of this volume, I would say that it is very interesting, comprehensive and also useful for those interested in the topic of U.S.-Russia relations, and those interested in major issues of international politics. Relations between Russia and U.S. are becoming more and more conflictual and it is important for major thinkers to cooperate and try to find solutions in order to advise politicians and other actors who can resolve the situation. Volume deals with the topic of U.S.-Russia relations from different angles and provides readers with information, explanations, but as well with solutions of conflictual interests. From my point of view, the whole volume's contribution to understanding of the crisis with Russia is of great importance, and should attract attention of everybody dealing with U.S.-Russia relations.