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Ambiguities of security, collaboration and policymaking in Central Europe

Anna Visvizi^{a,b}

^a Institute of East-Central Europe (IESW)

^b Deree – The American College of Greece

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Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe (Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej) is a quarterly, published in Polish and in English, listed in the European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS), Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEEOL), BazEkon and IC Journal Master List (Index Copernicus International). In the most recent Ministry of Science and Higher Education ranking of journals published on the Polish market the Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe received one of the highest scores, i.e. 14 points.

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Ambiguities of security, collaboration and policymaking in Central Europe

Also in the 21st century, Central Europe remains an area of overlapping identities, fragmented loyalties and divergent visions of the future. In 1989 when the communist system began to crumble, with the Warsaw Round Table Talks effectively defining the manner and the beat of that process across Eastern and Central Europe, no one could have foreseen how complex and complicated matters in this region will become today. Clearly, Central Europe is in spotlight and several ambiguities cast shadow on security, collaboration and, hence policymaking in the region. The matrix of variables that would have to be considered to understand these ambiguities is multidimensional and includes a variety of exogenous and endogenous factors. As a result, research on current developments is expected to be fragmentary, any diagnosis of the status quo is likely to be contentious, while attempts to devise prognoses (as students of politics are taught) are unrecommended. Indeed, uncertainty is the best descriptor of today's world. Set against this backdrop, the papers included in this volume

of the Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe (#YIESW) offer an insight into selected developments and issues that influence politics, policymaking and, overall, the international clout of Central Europe today.

Interestingly, in the discussion on contemporary affairs in the region, questions of security come to the fore, and the topic 'Russia' becomes dominant. In this way, the papers included in this volume and the topics they uphold serve as a litmus test demonstrating what the perceptions of risks and threats in the region are. As the Authors contributing to this Issue of #YIESW outline, the question of Russia's influence in the region is multifaceted and several factors weigh in the analysis of that impact, including questions of ideology, history, the military, and foreign-policy making. Equally important for understanding Russia's influence on the region of Central Europe, as the papers included in this volume highlight, is the ability to adopt a macro-perspective on Russia. The latter allows identifying not only the very challenges that Russia faces – an issue underdiscussed in the literature¹ – but also other actors that do not exhibit that kind of resilience to Russia's influence as the countries of Central Europe do.

The discussion in this volume opens with a paper by Olga Barburska, who explores the ideological and political dimension of Russia's stance toward the European Union (EU). The starting point of the analysis is the observation that Russian élites and society are convinced that their system of values and, so, their culture, are diametrically different, even opposed, to the system of values of the West, and especially of Europe. This results in a general hostility towards the EU. What follows is that the policy objective of maintaining 'normal' relations between Russia and the West/EU, i.e. stable relations between the two parties, becomes a gargantuan task.

1 Cf. A. Visvizi and T. Kapuśniak, 'Federacja Rosyjska i WNP w szerszym kontekście regionalnym Azji: polityka zagraniczna, bezpieczeństwo, współpraca gospodarcza' [Russia and the CIS in the broader regional context of Asia: foreign policy, security, economic cooperation], in: T. Kapuśniak (ed.), *Federacja Rosyjska wobec obszaru Wspólnoty Niepodległych Państw* [Russian Federation and the CIS], Lublin & Warsaw: IEŚW/Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2011, pp. 17-36; A. Visvizi, 'Pozycja Rosji w stosunkach międzynarodowych' [Russia's role in international relations], in: K. A. Kłosiński (ed.), *Rosja: ambicje i możliwości w XXI wieku* [Russia: ambitions and opportunities in the 21st century], Lublin: Catholic University of Lublin Press, 2010, pp. 287-307.

Following a similar path of argumentation, Ostap Kushnir, queries the mechanisms behind the imperialist touch in Kremlin's foreign policy. The Author outlines the geopolitical rationale behind contemporary Russian expansionism and, against this backdrop, discusses the mechanisms that Kremlin utilizes to solidify its authority in the post-Soviet space. The question of Russian political identity forms the thread of the analysis. Influenced by carefully selected insights from Russia's history, and hence emphasizing the Byzantium-type governing tradition, the paper makes a dire prognosis of the developments in Russia. As the Author argues, considering "Russian expansionism, alongside the Russian sentiment towards an imperialist worldview, [...] it is be futile to expect that Russia can fully democratize, build a Western type of a nation-state and start conducting open policies."

Zbigniew Ściborek and Marek Bodziany take the analysis a few steps further by examining Russia's combat potential and Russia's overall security strategy. As the Authors explain, Russian Federation (RF) cannot come to terms with the fact that following the dissolution of the USSR, it sustained substantial losses, especially with regards to its role globally. Hence, Putin and his team strive to rebuild the power of their country. In this context, the Russian society, used to sacrifices for their homeland, offers invaluable support. Along these lines, as the Authors outline, a lot of effort has been invested recently into developing the armaments sector. As a result, the structure, command and mobilization of the Russian Armed Forces have substantially improved. Various types of exercises are conducted. Frequently these manoeuvres take place in the vicinity of NATO's member-states, thus suggesting that the prospect of possible future armed conflict is firmly rooted in Russia's thinking of its security and policymaking.

Examining Russia and its foreign policy from a different angle, Katarzyna Pisarska dwells on RF relations with South and North Korea to query the prospect of the reunification of the peninsula. To this end, three scenarios are examined, incl. a peaceful reunification, a reunification that would result from North Korean regime's collapse or from an all-out war on the peninsula. It is argued that although RF might prefer to see the continuation of the current status quo, in case of any potential security environment shift, the peaceful reunification scenario would best assure Russia's interest in the region.

In the same vein, i.e. focusing on foreign policy issues, Adrian Chojan examines Poland's eastern policy as it had unfolded over the period 2016-2018. By so doing the Author adds empirical evidence to the classical debate on domestic sources of foreign policy.² Set against this backdrop, it is argued that the lingering of Poland's engagement in its eastern neighbourhood is conditioned by developments on the Polish political scene.

Addressing the question of Russia's role in the post-Soviet space and its complex implications for domestic policymaking of selected countries, Mateusz Kubiak offers a unique insight into current developments in Armenia, a nation of wonderful people and very painful history, caught in geopolitical space with little room for manoeuvre. The paper, Armenia's *creeping revolution: between the #RejectSerzh* movement and previous civic initiatives, is a nearly hands-on account of the mass protests that erupted in Armenia in April 2018 and that – surprisingly – captured very little media attention. As the Author explains these were the biggest demonstrations in this country since the 90s. Arguably, the #RejectSerzh movement would not achieve success of this scale without the “legacy” of the civic, grassroots initiatives taking place in Armenia since 2008 and especially since 2013. These movements and initiatives were highly interlinked and constituted continuous (however still incomplete) creeping revolution. Possibly, it will lead to a change in the oligarchic political system in Armenia.

By focusing on Turkey, in the following paper Artur Adamczyk suggests that in the discussion on security in Central Europe, attention should be paid also to actors other than Russia. In this view, security in Central Europe ought to be seen as a function of security and absence of threat across the EU. Accordingly, the Author argues that Turkey's foreign policy narrative is highly revisionist targeting especially the Lausanne Treaty of 1923; the provisions of which established the external borders of today's Turkey. The Author makes a case that these claims pose a threat to security and territorial integrity of Greece.

2 J. N. Rosenau, *Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy*, New York: Free Press Publishing, 1967; P.-H. Bischoff, 'External and domestic sources of foreign policy ambiguity: South African foreign policy and the projection of pluralist middle power', *Politikon*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2003, pp. 183-201; K. A. Hill, 'The Domestic Sources of Foreign Policymaking: Congressional Voting and American Mass Attitudes toward South Africa', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1993, pp. 195-214.

Provided that since the mid-1990s, having refused to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the High Seas (UNCLOS), Turkey questions the Greekness of several islands in the Aegean, whereby observers are well-aware of Turkish fighters trespassing the Greek airspace on a regular basis³, the narrative of Turkey's foreign policy today awakens long-standing fears of destabilization of the region.

To add to the debate and, hence, highlight that the status quo in Turkey is fragile, Elżbieta Szyszlak examines the case of Turkish minority in contemporary Bulgaria. The Turks are the largest national minority in that country, with their minority status dating back to 19th century and the establishment of the Bulgarian state. The point is that the Turk have neither identified with their new homeland nor integrated with other ethnic groups. The discussion in this paper examines it.

By means of returning to issues pertinent to Russia, the challenges it faces and their bearing on Central Europe, Golovataia and Dinner focus on refugees and internally displaced persons in RF. The Authors seek to understand the legal, political and social aspects of the matter.

The discussion in this issue of #YIESW ends with a review of a book published in 2017, titled 'European Security and Stability in a Complex Global Order – The Case of the Neighborhood Policy'.⁴ Written by Ioan Horga, the review showcases the specificity of the EU Neighborhood Policy. By elaborating on the content of the book in question, Ioan Horga not only gives a glimpse of issues and challenges to safety and security in the EU's neighborhood, but also offers an insight into the process of establishing and developing a research hub, the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, at the Warsaw School of Economics.

The objective of research and concept-driven discussion on matters pertinent to politics and international relations is to spot how apparently random events form a pattern, and thus, draw a bigger picture of the external and domestic contexts in which politics and international relations unfold. Over decades, the art of – what effectively is – political analysis has been influenced by several perspectives, analytical choices and trade-offs that individuals contributing to the

3 Editor.

4 E. Latoszek and M. Proczek, M. Dziembała, A. Masłon-Oracz, A. Kłos (eds), *European Security and Stability in a Complex Global Order – The Case of Neighbourhood Policy*, Warsaw: Elipsa, 2017, ISBN 978-83-8017-184-8 (pb).

making of the (meta)-narrative had embraced.⁵ What follows is that concept-driven and empirically-founded research must be devoid of ideology. Importantly, though, research cannot refuse ethical responsibility for those excluded, marginalized, treated unfairly; that would indicate lacking relevance of research and academic debate, and create a cul-de-sac. In times of confusion, best defined by notions such as self-assuring oblivion, muted alertness, and painful awareness of trends and patterns unfolding in Central Europe, it is imperative that the broadly defined academia keeps the proverbial compass, just in case the winds change, and Odysseus can return home.

That being said, it is necessary to say ‘thank you’ to all reviewers for their hard and speedy work, and to authors who followed the reviewers’ suggestions and recommendations. #YIESW follows very strict editing and publishing standards consistent with double-blind review and – the resulting – several rounds of the revision process. As of this year, #YIESW started issuing certificates for reviewers, thus further adding to transparency and accountability of the review process. The Editors of #YIESW are grateful for the financial assistance provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland that made the publication of the journal possible. As a result, the papers included in this volume are available both in print and online (open access). Overall, the papers included in this volume, the quality of the argument they entail, and accessibility serve the purpose of nurturing discussion on Central Europe and Poland’s role in it.

Anna Visvizi, Ph.D.
#YIESW Commissioning Editor

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