

Book Reviews

Ann-Sofie Dahl, *US Policy in the Nordic-Baltic Region* (Stockholm: Santerus Academic Press, 2008)

*By Arunas Molis**

The United States is the hegemon of the international system: it dominates in the oceans, controls Eurasian coasts and has one of the most powerful economies in the world. In other words, the US controls all the major economic and political events in the twenty-first century. It took more than fifty years for America to create such dominance. It started with “having interest” in many parts of the world after the Second World War. Main aim of becoming “global” was to prevent any other state from dominating over the strategically important regions. However, the USSR established a zone of influence in Eastern Europe and thus became the biggest source of threat for the United States. The United States employed a system of military alliances in response. According to P.Taylor, “if the USSR is a fortress, then the best way to deal with it is to surround and seal it”. NATO in Europe, CENTO in West Asia, SEATO in East Asia – these are only few examples of Washington’s efforts to set the limits of Soviet global expansion. Such policy of “containment” succeeded: America became the only superpower after the Cold War. Countries of Central and Northern Europe played an important role in this regard.

After the Cold War, fundamental geopolitical interests of the United States remained the same: military hegemony, scientific-technological leadership and disunity of Eurasia. However, American scholars and politicians now argue that those interests may be implemented without necessarily conducting active global policy. In other words, Western and South-Eastern borders of Eurasia (not continental states) became crucial in the U.S. unipolar strategy. Therefore, the United States gradually reduced its participation in European affairs. Nevertheless, Central and Northern European countries remained focal points for the United States, which seek to prevent the emergence of any dominant power (be it “new” Russia, Germany, or France). States of these regions enjoy American security guarantees but must accept the asymmetry of power: the United States

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speak to all of them from the position of strength. On the other hand, after 9/11 attacks, Central and Northern European countries changed their status in the eyes of the United States again. Now they are promoters of American values and interests and therefore have some influence on the U.S. attitude toward certain political decisions (mainly of tactical or operational level).

In *US Policy in the Nordic-Baltic Region*, Ann-Sofie Dahl looks at the U.S. policy toward the regional actors in the Baltic Sea region from the end of the Second World War, throughout the Cold War and during the first fifteen years of the post-Cold War period. In other words, the author analyzes what role the Nordic-Baltic region played in the U.S. strategy in the last sixty years. According to Dahl, the role of this region was extremely important at the end of the 20th century as the design of the entire international system was determined in this northernmost corner of Europe. However, did the Baltic Sea region enjoy this importance through the entire post-Second World War period? What will be the role of the Nordic countries and the Baltic states in the U.S. policy in the future, as it becomes increasingly preoccupied with problems far from the shores of the Baltic Sea? These are probably the most important questions Ann-Sophie Dahl is trying to answer in her study.

Inspired by the dual perspective, which characterized the U.S. grand strategy of containment, the analysis is divided into two parts. Dahl starts with the U.S. strategy in the Nordic region during the Cold War. The author names military and ideological containment as the main features of this strategy. In order to explore the details of how the U.S. applied this strategy, Nordic countries are divided into four sub-regions, each of them having its role and significance in the U.S. strategy of containment. "High North", consisting of Northern Norway and northern parts of non-aligned Sweden and Finland, is entitled as a place where two superpowers found themselves in close physical contact. Therefore, this sub-region is sometimes seen as crucial for the United States. Not of lesser strategic importance is Southern sub-region, consisting of Denmark, Southern Norway, and Southern Sweden with the Baltic Straits. According to the author, those Baltic Exits allowed NATO to maintain military control in order to deny the Soviet Union and its allies exit from the Baltic Sea. Third sub-region (called Atlantic) includes Iceland, Greenland and the coastline of Norway. Its prime strategic value was in the protection of the Atlantic

Sea Lanes and providing territory for military bases as well as fuelling stops for the U.S. air force on eastbound missions. Last sub-region consisted of Northern Sweden and had only limited significance for U.S. planning. Its main objective was to maintain Finnish territorial sovereignty and its ability to resist Soviet advances westward. Part of the study on military containment is devoted to a detailed assessment of the role that each of those sub-regions played during the bipolar years. Original approach, based on the geopolitical premises and logical analysis, creates real added value in the context of other similar studies.

Chapter on the role of the Nordic region in ideological containment is structured around the policy of each Nordic nation-state (not a sub-region, as in the case of military containment). Though ideological strategy was parallel to military one, this choice is logical: from ideological perspective, the Nordic area constituted a single region. Analysis starts with the discussion on the main features of the Nordic such as belonging to Western camp, neutral stance and certain distancing from the United States. It continues with analyzing elements of the Nordic doctrine of “flexible response” (deterrence, *détente* and confidence-building measures as the main elements of it). Dahl argues that tactics of “footnotes” when dealing with NATO decisions did not prevent the United States from applying the Marshall Plan and “keep them friendly” strategy in relation to the Nordic countries. In other words, the Nordic countries managed to combine their neutralist stance with idealistic approach and to use moral values as a foreign policy tool. A tool, which was very often chosen to criticize the U.S. policy in Vietnam and other places. Nevertheless, according to the author, the United States did not have any other choice but to accept the neutrality of Nordic countries, to abide harsh rhetoric and to hope that these “evidences of Soviet manipulation” will not spread deeper in the continent.

Three chapters of the second part of the study deal with the U.S. unipolar strategy in the Baltic Sea region after the Cold War. This is where the Baltic states are brought to the stage. The presentation of three different U.S. approaches towards the Baltic states clearly show how the U.S. strategy developed during the last fifteen years. Author claims that “developments in the three newly liberated Baltic countries ... gave the region an additional sub-region”. Three other sub-regions experienced strategic downgrading because of the fall of “strategic enemy”. Therefore, in the

unipolar system, the author defines three important sub-regions of the region: 1) Northern Flank with the Barents in the middle; 2) Atlantic Islands, and 3) the Baltic Sea sub-region. The creation of the latter, according to Dahl, demonstrates the unipolar system's monopoly in creating and defining regions and sub-regions.

In the following chapters, the author analyzes the way how the unipolar strategy of the United States was implemented in the Baltic Sea sub-region and what was the role of the Nordic countries in this process. Two parts of this strategy are distinguished: until the 1997 and afterwards. Each part had several periods, the limits of each being closely associated with such focal events as Clinton Administration taking the office in 1993, NATO Madrid summit in 1997, Washington Summit in 1999, Prague summit in 2002 and, finally, formal admission of the Baltic states into NATO in 2004. Analyzing the strategic environment and policy developments that brought about the decisive events, Dahl uses many different sources (interviews with relevant officials, archive documents and even intelligence briefs) which make it easier to understand different aspects of complicated diplomacy of those days. The role of Nordic countries with regard to implementation (or sometimes even determination) of the U.S. strategy towards the Baltic states is presented in detail, both explaining the causes and evaluating the consequences. Although the reader may have a different point of view on how "altruistic" were the Nordic countries when they "decided" to "bring" the Baltic states to Euro-Atlantic structures, the text itself is dynamic and, therefore, easy and interesting to read.

Dahl's book refers to the insights, feelings and reports from Scandinavian and American scholars, state officials and other persons interested in the subject. This is a perfect choice if author has a goal to disclose the nature of Nordic policy, strategy, meaning of neutrality and relations with the United States. However, no Baltic politician (current or former) is quoted and none of many studies done by Baltic scholars have been mentioned as a source. This absence of "Baltic" sources forces the reader to have doubts about certain ideas presented in this book. First question is related to the definition of "Nordic-Baltic" region. Dahl does not expand on the explanations why Nordic and Baltic states are "united" into the one "Nordic and Baltic" region. Internal U.S. State Department's decisions (see p. 67) cannot serve as the argument here. Same State Department initiated many documents and strategic decisions which implied the association of

the Baltic states with Central and Eastern Europe (but not Nordic) states. If the author took a look at the studies of the Baltic scholars on geopolitics, she would recognize that they talk about Central Eurasia, Western Eurasia, CEE region, Baltic Sea region, East Baltics region, Baltic region, Nordic region, etc. However, none of them have put 5 Nordic and 3 Baltic states together in one region or sub-region without including other states by the Baltic Sea. Dahl mentions huge differences in historical development of Baltic and Nordic states, also different role they play or played for the United States. Therefore, talking about the Nordic-Baltic region (and dividing it into several sub-regions) without including for example Poland and Germany, seems somewhat artificial.

So, how can we describe the U.S. policy in relation to the Baltic states during and after the Cold War? Although the answer to this question is one of the main aims of the study, it deserved much less attention in comparison with the role of the Nordic countries. Exclusion of Baltic sources leads to the conclusion that the United States only provided the “umbrella” under which Nordics did what they found necessary. There is no doubt that Western Europe and Nordic countries in particular were of great importance for consolidation of democracy and start of Euro-Atlantic integration processes in the Baltic states. However, arguing that the progress of the Baltic states is mainly the achievement of their Nordic neighbors sounds somewhat subjective. In other words, more detailed analysis of the U.S. diplomacy and application of concrete instruments would bring more objectivity to this study. Meanwhile, after the focus was put on the Nordic “implementation” of the U.S. policy (instead of the U.S. strategy itself), it is difficult to understand the reasons of why the U.S. attitude was changing during the different periods of time. Dynamics of interests of the “external” players (such as Russia) and the influence they made on the activities of the United States and Nordic countries in the region could be better presented in this study as well.

Final remarks could be made regarding some “sensitivities” which are necessary to be followed when analyzing recent policy and history of the Baltic states. Such an expression as “three former Soviet republics” (p. 91, talking about the Baltic states) contradicts the historical fact that the Baltic states were occupied by the Soviet Union, not included into it on a voluntary basis. Many Western countries did not recognize this annexation, and this allowed the Baltic states to re-establish their statehood on

historical premises. Next, it is very much true that, up until mid-1990s, all the proposals how to provide the Baltic states with appropriate level of security were associated with the concerns of not provoking Russia (p.70). However, the Baltic states have demonstrated clear determination to escape the “gray zone” by starting to participate, from 1994, in NATO and UN operations. Therefore, telling that only official “NATO membership removed the “gray zone” dilemma for the Baltic states” means underestimation of the Euro-Atlantic integration as a process. Finally, the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from the post-soviet space started with leaving Lithuania in August 1993, not in 1994 (as it is stated on p. 66). Nevertheless, these minor inaccuracies do not diminish the value of the study. Book of Ann-Sofie Dahl is strongly recommended to read both for the students and for experts, interested in geopolitical developments and interactions of global and regional actors in the Baltic Sea region.

**Philip Bobbitt, *Terror and Consent:*
The Wars for the Twenty-First Century (Alfred A. Knopf, 2008)**

By *Robert M. Cassidy**

Terror and Consent provides an analysis of the protracted struggle against networked terrorists that is well grounded in history, strategy and law. Philip Bobbitt is eminently qualified to write such an exegesis of the war on terror as he is currently the Herbert Wechsler Professor of Federal Jurisprudence and the Director of the Centre for National Security at Columbia University. He also has a record of distinguished service in key posts of the U.S. Government, including service as Associate Counsel to the President, Legal Counsel to the Senate Select Committee on the Iran-Contra Affair, the Counsellor on International Law for the U.S. Department of State and Director for Intelligence Programmes, Senior Director for Critical Infrastructure, and Senior Director for Strategic Planning at the National Security Council. Moreover, his previous book, *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History*, was an excellent work that examined the nexus and interplay of strategy and law during history's epochal wars, beginning with the Thirty Years' War and ending with the Peace of Paris at the end of the Cold War. *Terror and Consent* is essentially a sequel to *The Shield of Achilles*, and I recommend both works to scholars and practitioners of war and strategy as they offer exceedingly germane and excellent perspectives on what this long irregular war of the twenty-first century is all about.

According to Bobbitt, "epochal wars produce fundamental challenges to the state" and "a single epochal war encompasses shorter wars, interposed with periods of little or no fighting, when a central issue links the constituent conflicts and remains unresolved until the ultimate settlement." Before an epochal war can really be concluded, "the dynamic interplay between strategy and the legitimating goals of the state" must be reconciled. *Terror and Consent* examines the interaction of the changing nature of terrorism, the expanding proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the increased vulnerability of the infrastructure of developed states. The author postulates that these three factors are the

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consequences of the interplay between the constitutional and international change that characterizes the twenty-first century. This book analyzes these topics in three principal parts. Part I examines the notion of a war against terror and it includes an analysis of the war our enemies wage against non-combatants. Part II addresses how strategy and law intersect within the internal domestic political arena. This part also includes a comprehensive analysis of the challenges for intelligence analysis that are engendered by bureaucracies and processes that for the most part remain wedded to the last century. Part III amplifies the nexus of legitimacy and strategy in the international area, including a chapter that illumines the imperative of legitimacy in the context of hegemony and the war on terror. This last part and the concluding chapter are particularly salient for what some perceive as a long war of ideas because they emphasize the centrality of moral and legal rectitude in a war between states of consent and non-states of non-consent that promote terror and theocracy in lieu of political sovereignty.

Examples of some of the percipient insights that Bobbitt provides in this work include the observations that “it is becoming increasingly apparent that al Qaeda is not only a reaction to globalization, but that it is a manifestation and exploitation of globalization;” and that “this looming intersection of an innovative organization and a novel means of terror will require a fundamental rethinking of conventional doctrines in international security and foreign policy.” Indeed, the same factors that are enabling the individual and catalyzing the evolution of states into polities devoted to maximizing the opportunity of individuals are also enabling the agents of terror, essentially increasing the vulnerabilities of democratic societies and ultimately menacing the notion of consent as the key source of state legitimacy. With the emergence of al Qaeda and the accelerated internationalization of terrorist networks, Bobbitt proffers that terrorism has “become the extension of diplomacy by other means.” What’s more, he acknowledges, as have many others, that counterinsurgency and counterterrorism are now conflated. In this sense, al Qaeda and its affiliated movements are affecting a revolution in revolution because they perpetrate acts of terror to foment insurrection and to overthrow the regimes of near enemies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia; and, to undermine the Westphalian system of states along with the United States’ hegemony of this system.

In the end, Bobbitt's prescription is a strategy of "preclusion" wherein the United States and its like-minded allies apply the full range of military and non-military instruments "to preclude hostile acts and the development of capabilities in hostile hands," that once acquired are unlikely to be voluntarily given up, and are more likely to be employed against the domestic populations of America and its partners. Thus, he proposes that the central doctrine for states of consent and legitimacy should be "preclusion," the aim of which is to protect civilians and their duly elected or appointed officials, so that under this protection, "the political development of governance based on consent can take place outside a climate of terror." Moral rectitude, credibility, and the protection of civilians are central tenets of his proposed doctrine of preclusion. Moreover, his notion of protecting civilians is a broad one that engenders protecting not only the civilian populations of the United States and its allies, but also the civilian populations across the globe who may be subject to threats by terrorists, WMD, natural catastrophes, and even actions by our own governments that may be inconsistent with our own constitutions or international laws and norms. In fact, one of the principal threats illuminated in this excellent book is the prospect that the democratic states of consent themselves metamorphose into states of terror by reacting to terrorist attacks in ways that violate their own constitutions and laws.