

and insight, but it is very much driven by the human aspect of the war. Schechter elegantly intertwines individual stories, context, and analysis taking the reader to the most intimate parts of soldiers' everyday lives. The interested audience of this work will be very large, spanning individuals interested in military history broadly defined, in the history of the Soviet Union, and in material culture.

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Andrew Monaghan, *Dealing with the Russians*. Polity, 2019.

Monaghan's book, *Dealing with the Russians*, joins the growing body of scholarship concerned with disentangling Russia's manifestations in the international space. After falling outside the purview of great power competition and viewed mostly as a "regional power" in the first decade of the 21st century, Russia surprised policy-makers and the academic community alike with the 2014 Crimean annexation. Tensions between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic community further escalated with the war in Eastern Ukraine, Syria, accusations of election interference in the Western democracies, disinformation campaigns, cybersecurity threats, sanctions, and countersanctions. Today, Russia's threat to the international liberal order is not open for debate. What is debatable is the Euro-Atlantic community's response to Russia's newly found assertiveness. *Dealing with the Russians* examines the reactions of the US, the UK, NATO, and the European Union (EU) to shine a light on the profound misunderstanding of Russia's acts in the Euro-Atlantic thinking. Essentially, Monaghan's key point is that the Euro-Atlantic community uses an old mentality and language when interacting with, responding to, and interpreting Russia, which is not useful in solving the "security challenge" the West and Russia face. It is time, argues Monaghan, to leave Cold War mental tools of containment and deterrence behind and engage in "fresh thinking" based on a fundamentally different international

context when evaluating the Russian threat (16). The way forward is not a “grand bargain” given the long-standing policy disagreements (59); rather, Monaghan is an advocate for a “grand strategy” centered around empathy, a dynamic dialog with Russia, and a sophisticated understanding of Russia’s warfare and military capabilities. In developing this argument, Monaghan complements his deep expertise of Russian history and politics with policy documents, a careful analysis of media narratives in the US and the UK, and numerous interviews with officials and military personnel in the US, UK, Russia, the EU, and NATO.

One of the book’s most potent arguments centers around the frequent misuse of history when assessing the Russian threat in political, military, and media circles. Using the Cold War analogy to understand the relations with Russia is not useful, argues Monaghan, because “history is not a cumulation of repetitive events” (31). Drawing on Marc Bloch’s insights that history entails both continuity and change, Monaghan warns against repeating the Cold War mistakes when assessing the Soviet threat. During the Cold War, the relationship was mostly adversarial, with a lack of empathy on both sides, misjudgment of strategic priorities, and difficulty assessing Soviet capabilities. Today, the Euro-Atlantic thinking on Russia’s aggressiveness repeats these mistakes, further explains Monaghan, given the gap between what the Euro-Atlantic community thinks of Russia and how Russia conceives its actions. Buzzwords like the “Gerasimov security Doctrine,” Russia’s “hybrid warfare,” or even the Anti-Access/Area Denial (A<sub>2</sub>/AD) exclusion zones along NATO’s frontier should be “retired from discussions about Russia” (37). These terms prevalent in the Euro-Atlantic discussions either do not exist in the Russian military and planning thinking (41) or are too ambiguous to interpret the Russian challenge (40). At the very least, the Euro-Atlantic community needs to properly contextualize these terms against the background of the West’s lack of concern with Russian activity for the past two decades. In other words, the surprise and confusion created by the swift Crimean annexation in 2014 pushed towards the use of terms that overestimate the Russian capabilities and overemphasize the technical capabilities while ignoring the Russian strategic thinking. The Western strategy is *reacting* to Russian events instead

of pro-actively shaping a grand strategy that considers the West and Russia's different interests.

The year 2014 proved to be a turning point in the West–Russia relationship, underscoring the different “time zones” (76) that Russia and the West inhabit. On the one hand, the Euro-Atlantic community only now realizes the depth of Russia's security ambitions. On the other, Russia already implements its deterrence since the Euro-Atlantic security structures represent an existential threat to Russia. The takeaway from these different versions of history on when and why the relationship took a turn for the worse highlights the need for clear messaging and, most notably, the need to think from the adversary's perspective. Monaghan's way forward, a strategy for the 21st century, is a long-term project focused on an ongoing dialog on common interest areas, like climate change, urbanization pressures, and demography challenges. The dialog process to reverse the continued deterioration should start, suggests Monaghan, with visit exchanges at a secondary level in parliamentary committees and by retired senior officials.

Written with a policy community in mind, and perhaps for a London audience, *Dealing with the Russians* would have benefitted from a closer analysis of the French and German initiatives, key players in generating policy solutions to the Russian–Ukrainian conflict. Unpacking the US dynamics, Donald Trump's distancing from the US intelligence services and the Western leaders would have also enriched the investigation because the US case underscores the importance of a critical player's regime type and democratic resilience when laying out a response to Russia. Finally, despite the deterrence policy preference emphasized in the Western circles, Russia's return to the Council of Europe in mid-2019 surprises the reader of *Dealing with the Russians*. One could even argue that from deterrence, we see a reverse again to dialog. Regardless of these suggestions, *Dealing with the Russians* is a captivating narration of critical events that have shaped the Russia-Western relationship in recent years.

MAGDA GIURCANU

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