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Александров О. Б. **Северный вектор внешней политики России: внешняя политика России на Балтике, в регионе Северной Европы и в Арктике. М.: Спутник+, 2012. 205 с. [The northern vector of Russian foreign policy: Russian foreign policy in the Baltic, Northern Europe and the Arctic], Moscow, «Sputnik +», 205 pp.]**

The monograph of the famous Russian political scientist and specialist in international relations O. B. Aleksandrov (an associate professor of the Department of International Relations and Foreign Policy of Russia at Moscow State Institute of International Relations) is a result of his study of many years into the "northern vector" of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet period.

The author is considering the features of Russian policy towards the Baltic region, the Nordic countries, and the Arctic, combining these areas in the framework of a single "northern vector" of Moscow's foreign policy. This "integrative approach" is not typical of modern Russian political science and international relations studies, since Russian scholars traditionally examine these regions individually. In this respect, O. B. Aleksandrov's research approach is close to the New North concept, which has been promoted by the President of Iceland Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson since the early 2000s [2] and developed by the Russian scholar N. Yu. Markushina (Saint Petersburg State University), whose works were left beyond the attention span of the author [4; 5]. Although the "New North" concepts (as well as that of the "northern vector" of Russian foreign policy) has neither an established geographical nor general definition (its adherents keep on putting forward different versions of this concept), it is evident that the emergence of these "integrative" notions reflects current trends in the development of the Baltic, Nordic, and the Arctic regions and is indicative of the formation of a new macroregion.

Structurally, the book consists of an introduction, four chapters, conclusion, and bibliography.

The first chapter is dedicated to geopolitical transformations in the Baltic and North European regions after the "Cold War". It also analyses the bilateral relations between Russia and several countries of the region.

The author emphasises that the military and strategic situation was the first to have changed in these regions of the world. Russian military presence in the Baltic drastically decreased; Moscow's attention shifted from the need to oppose NATO to the issues of trade and economic cooperation with the "old" and "new" (former Soviet republics of the Baltic) states of the region. At the same time, after Sweden and Finland entered the EU in 1995, these countries lost their neutrality, which they had preserved over many years and acquired the status of "non-aligned" states (however, both countries took an active part in the formation of the EU military structures). Despite the disbandment of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, the bloc policy continued in the region, since NATO — instead of following the example of the WTO —

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did not only not disestablish itself, but, on the contrary, started the active enlargement (also in the Baltic region).

The monograph under review stresses that alongside the activation of NATO in the Big North (another name of the macroregion forming in the Baltic, Northern Europe, and the Arctic), the process of military and political integration also intensified at a sub-regional level. Thus, in the beginning of 2009, the so called report by T. Stoltenberg (a famous Norwegian State Figure, who has occupied top military and diplomatic positions throughout his career) with contributions from experts from all five North European countries was published. It sproposed a number of measures towards military and political integration of the "Nordic five" (the development of a system of monitoring the air and marine situation in the Arctic and North Atlantic, including the establishment of a satellite fleet; the creation of joint military and rescue units for conducting corresponding operations in the region; the development of joint infrastructure; military and technological cooperation, etc.).

The ideas presented in Stoltenberg's report underlay the agreement on the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) concluded by the five states in November 2009. At the same time, O. B. Aleksandrov stresses that another group striving to coordinate its military and political strategy in the region was set up in January 2010. This time, it was a "nine", rather than a "five": the five Nordic countries were joined by the three Baltic republics; Great Britain acted as an initiator and leader of the group.

Thus, there is an evident discrepancy between Russian aspiration to demilitarise the Big North and the development of different military and political coalition with an apparent anti-Russian subtext in the region. Moscow has to take these "hard" circumstances into account when formulating the "northern vector" of its policy.

At the same time, the author's general evaluation of the geopolitical situation in the "Big North" calls for a discussion. The book creates an impression that negative trends (remilitarisation of the macroregion) prevail over the positive processes. In effect, it is not the case and the interest of different countries of the regions in trade and economic and humanitarian cooperation to override the remnants of the "Cold War mentality". This interest is especially evident within cooperation in the field of energy (it is shown both by Russia counting on western investment and technologies for exploring Arctic gas and oil deposits and by European countries facing a pressing need for energy carriers).

At the same time, the current military preparations of western countries are of a completely different nature than those during the global confrontation between capitalism and socialism. Except for the "third world" countries, military force is usually used by the West not to achieve strategic advantage over the "potential adversary", but to protect their economic interests (in this case, in the Arctic).

At the same time, in our opinion, the author of the book under review slightly exaggerates the potential influence of the new military and political coalitions in the Big North (the "five" and the "nine") on the Russian policy in the macroregion. So, he believes that one of the reasons behind Moscow's concessions to Oslo in the issues of marine area delimitation in the Barents

Sea (the agreement of 2010) is the concern for isolation in the face of the consolidated NORDEFCO coalition and the "nine" (c. 42—43, 165—166). Apparently, it is an exaggeration, since neither the military potential of the mentioned coalitions (it is incomparable to that of Russia), nor the degree of their unanimity (the interests of the members of those rather amorphous associations differ significantly, for instance, in the Arctic and sometimes are simply opposite) give grounds to speak of the development of an anti-Russian "front" in the Big North. Russia enjoys a wide spectrum of diplomatic, economic, military, propaganda, and other tools to prevent both the formation of such "front" and facing isolation in the macroregion.

The author's opinions on particular issues are also not immune to criticism: on the one hand, he believes that Iceland is still an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" of the USA (c. 34), on the other hand, he mentions that Washington closed its military base in Keflavík in 2006 (c. 21, 35). Moreover, when Moscow offered Iceland facing the crisis its financial help in 2008, the country's president (the above mentioned Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson) came up with an initiative to lease the military base to Moscow for it to be used by Russian strategic aviation operating flights over the North Atlantic. This initiative did not only shock western countries, but also encouraged NORDEFCO to urgently take the airspace of Iceland under its wing.

This section pays close attention to the issues of Russian-Norwegian relations, but hardly mentions the positive experience of cooperation between the two countries — the development of cross-border connections, joint projects in the field of energy, culture, education, sport, tourism, etc. In certain aspects, this experience is unique. So, in November 2010, Norway was the first Schengen state to introduce the visa-free regime within the 50-km border zone. A year later, this experience was used in concluding a similar agreement with Poland for Kaliningrad and two Polish border voivodeships. The Norwegian town of Kirkenes and the Russian town of Nikel develop cross-border cooperation in the framework of a unique twin town model [1; 6]. A project of establishing a joint coastal industrial and innovation zone, which could operate the transhipment and processing of energy carriers from the Arctic shelf is being discussed at the moment.

As opposed to Russian-Norwegian relations, the author characterises Russian-Danish interaction as less problematic and more positive (c. 44). Despite the generally positive dynamics in the relations between Moscow and Copenhagen over the last 20 years, one should not overlook serious problems. So, Denmark consistently supports Chechen "freedom fighters", having granted the latter an opportunity to establish a centre in Copenhagen, which covers all Europe, and even that to hold a Chechen congress in October 2002. The latter resulted in the disruption of the Russia-EU summit in Copenhagen (it had to be moved to Brussels) and a virtual (unofficial) boycott of Danish goods by the Russian party. Denmark also pursues a strictly pro-American policy, which cannot but result in Moscow's discontent. Copenhagen did not express very strong condemnation of the Russian actions during the Five-Day War with Georgia in August 2008. Finally, O. B. Aleksandrov mentions serious Russian-Danish contradictions relating to the Arctic shelf dispute (in particular, the underwater Lomonosov ridge). By the

way, unlike Norway, Denmark does not show flexibility when it comes to the shelf division and delimitation of marine areas claiming exclusive rights to the North Pole.

It is not clear why the author of the monograph, when analysing the multifaceted activities of the EU in the Baltic and North Europe never mentions the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region of 2009, which still serves as the basic conceptual framework for Brussels's politics in the region.

The second chapter examines Russian policy in the context of the EU Northern Dimension (ND), which was initiated as one of Brussels's regional policies and, in 2007, became a "joint venture" (a complex of "partnerships") bringing together the EU, Russia, Norway, and Iceland. The same chapter analyses the activity of such sub-regional organisations as the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC), and the Arctic Council.

O. B. Aleksandrov closely examines the evolution of both the ND and the three mentioned sub-regional organisations. So, he emphasises that the ND, which was conceived as a EU programme aimed at the integration of post-Soviet and post-socialistic states into the common European socioeconomic, legal, and humanitarian space, after the accession of most of them (except Russia) to the EU, lost its initial meaning and required a revision of its conceptual framework and a fundamental structural reorganisation. Russia has become a full participant of the project, which is now based on the principle of actual partnership. At the same time, the author believes, the ND has not yet taken on the "perfect form" (c. 86—88). So, the Russian party is poorly represented within cooperation in the fields of investment and high technologies. The ND still demonstrates numerous parallelisms and doubling in its performance. Sometimes, the activity of the EU within the ND is of virtual character, since the real work within partnerships with Russia is performed by the CBSS, the BEAC, Nordic organisations, and international financial institutions. The EU just takes credit through classing a certain projects as an ND achievement.

There are also enough problems with the performance of the CBSS. O. B. Aleksandrov stresses that after the accession of Poland and the three Baltic States the EU and the virtual transformation of the Baltic Sea into an "inland sea" of the EU, the mentioned countries and the administrative bodies of this supranational organisation lost most of their interest in the Council (c. 58). In the late 2000s, the CBSS focused on the implementation of mostly insignificant projects. Sharing the author's perspective on the performance of the CBSS in the post-enlargement period, I cannot but mention recent positive changes in the work of this organisation. Under the influence of Russia, which was not content with the "virtual" CBSS merely simulating activity and yielding no tacit results, the reform of the council started in 2008. The priorities of future CBSS activity were identified. In 2009, the authorities of the permanent secretariat were expanded. In 2010, the CBSS Vilnius declaration "A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2020", which outlined the mid-term priorities of the Council, was adopted. Finally, during the German CBSS presidency (2011—2012), the SEBA (South East Baltic Area) programme was launched; it is aimed at the modernisation of the Ka-

liningrad region and the bordering regions of the Baltic. The Russian presidency (2012—2013) is expected to give an additional boost to the CBSS activities.

O. B. Aleksandrov describes the complicated process of establishment of the Arctic Council, which, despite the resistance of certain members (first of all, the USA), gradually transforms from a mere forum for discussing the problems of the Arctic into an influential sub-regional organisation that makes decisions affecting the situation in the region. A good example is the Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) in the Arctic, which was adopted in May 2011. At the same time, the decision was reached to establish a permanent AC secretariat in Tromsø (Norway). Another agreement on oil spill response in the Arctic is to be approved. An indicator of the growing influence of the AC is the aspiration of a number of non-Arctic states (North Korea, Japan, South Korea, etc.) to become permanent observers in the organisation. Russia pursues a balanced policy in the framework of the Council, on the one hand, contributing to its increasing influence and, on the other hand, preventing its uncontrolled enlargement, which can undermine the standing of the "official" Arctic states (for instance, in case of the division of continental shelf rich in energy sources) [3].

The third chapter analyses the external ties of Russian North-West, the role of these regions in the formation of the "Northern vector" of Moscow's foreign policy, and the problems faced by the regions in the process of cross-border and transboundary cooperation. The chapter examines the formation of the legal framework of the foreign economic and international policy of the regions, the development of their relations with the federal centre in the field of foreign policy, and the forms and priorities of international activity of Russian North-West. In particular, it focuses on the trade and economic, ethnocultural, and humanitarian ties between the regions and neighbouring countries. However, some of the interesting forms of international cooperation between Russian regions and municipalities are merely outlined (for example, their participation in "Euroregions) or simply neglected (twin cities).

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the development of a new international region — the Arctic region — and analyses the strategies of key polar "players". Of special importance is the critical "review" of the Arctic policy of Russia in the post-Soviet period. The author stresses that, before the 2000s, Russian authorities had little interest in the Arctic and made a number of mistakes in developing their policy in the region. Just recently Moscow started a consistent formulation of its interests and goals in the Arctic region, organising research expeditions aimed at collecting evidence in support of that the Lomonosov ridge and the Mendeleev rise belong to the Russian continental shelf, and taking measures towards strengthening its military potential in the region and the reconstruction of the Northern Sea Route, etc. One can hardly object to the author's statement that Moscow still has to do a lot to bring its Arctic strategy in consistence with the national interests of the country and the current situation in the region.

Of practical significance are a number of recommendations relating to the improvement of Moscow's policy in the Arctic. The only exception, it seems, is the author's suggestion on concluding an international agreement of the demilitarisation of the Arctic, including a ban on military manoeuvres

in the region (c. 166). It is hardly in line with Russian national interests; 2/3 of its strategic submarines are moored in the Arctic, and military manoeuvres are necessary for sustaining the combat efficiency of the armed forces. It would be different, if it were possible to reach an agreement with the other polar powers on the non-deployment of missile defence systems in the region, the limitation of military marine and air operations certain areas of the Arctic, and the development of other measures of trust in the field of military security.

In general, despite certain controversial points, the book proves itself as an original and creative work. The author managed to handle the topic and solve the formulated research tasks. The publication of the monograph is timely and both contributes to the development of a research approach to studying Russian policy in the Big North and serves the educational purpose — an increase in the level of professional training of graduate and undergraduate student of international relations.

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