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Mirosław Banasik, *Rywalizacja, presja i agresja Federacji Rosyjskiej. Konsekwencje dla bezpieczeństwa międzynarodowego*

[Rivalry, Pressure and Aggression of the Russian Federation. The Consequences for International Security] (in Polish)
[Wydawnictwo Difin, Warszawa 2021, ss. 348]

In today's world, the rivalry among the great powers is increasingly being conducted just below the threshold of an all-out war, as demonstrated by the activities of the Russian Federation in the international security environment. The publication *Rywalizacja, presja i agresja Federacji Rosyjskiej (Rivalry, Pressure and Aggression of the Russian Federation)* brings up an interesting though difficult issue of the Russian Federation's rivalry in the international arena, in both theoretical and practical terms.

The monograph was written by Professor Mirosław Banasik, Safety Sciences Ph.D., Colonel of the Polish Army, whose scientific career focuses on activities of the Russian Federation and potential threats to global security.

The publication in question deserves attention for several reasons. Firstly, the name of the Author is a guarantee of the book's excellence, and its subject matter is still relevant. The content of the work reflects the Author's extensive military

experience (service at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and at the Polish Ministry of National Defence Operational Centre), as evidenced by the complexity and scope of the analysis regarding the military craft. Secondly, the Author discusses a wide range of instruments used by Russia to achieve its strategic objectives, including building new governance and exercising influence on society, as well as explains the mechanisms behind them, and attempts to assess their relevance for international security. Thirdly, the book points out that the Russian Federation's rivalry in the international arena does not need to be based on direct involvement of the armed forces but can rely on conducting next-generation wars. In this context, the Author draws his own conclusions regarding the rivalry of the great powers in the future.

As mentioned in the introduction, the monograph is intended for those interested in the subject of the Russian Federation's international rivalry and the subsequent threats to international security, including potential use of nuclear weapons. It should be highlighted that the multifaceted nature of the deliberations and the rich bibliography make for a remarkable reading experience for the scientific community.

Since it is an outcome of a research project, the publication has a clear and logical structure and constitutes a significant contribution to the development of scientific reflection on the issues listed in its title.

In the introduction, the Author guides the reader step by step through a broad spectrum of strategic actions taken by the Russian Federation. He draws attention to the fact that information operations, cyberspace, and outer space activities are as important as kinetic military operations and can be carried out from any region of the world. The introduction refers to hypotheses about the activities undertaken by the Russian Federation to achieve its international rivalry goals. The Author's research tool kit deserves to be commended: the presented material is based on theoretical and empirical methods, and the limitations of studies conducted in this field are pointed out.

The first chapter, *Preparation of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for International Rivalry Challenges in the Third Decade of the 21st Century*, offers a holistic description of the Russian Armed Forces' transformation and discusses the milestones on the way for a new strategy aimed at achieving military and political objectives, e.g., separating from the legacy of the USSR and focusing on the concept of next-generation wars. The material presented in this chapter enables the reader to understand the Russian Federation of today and its imperialist aspirations by discussing, among others, the increasing influence of the Russian Federation in the Arctic. These deliberations are supported with examples of armed conflicts, e.g., in Syria and Ukraine, demonstrating their impact on the effectiveness of the Russian Armed Forces' activities and gaining an advantage in the 21st century.

The second chapter, *The Rivalry of the Russian Federation in the International Arena Conducted Below the Threshold of an All-Out Armed Conflict*, shows the mechanisms of changing strategic thinking and tendencies to blur the lines between war and peace. While discussing examples of achieving long-term strategic goals, the Author presents the undoubtedly hostile activities of the Russian Federation against Central and Eastern Europe in a vivid and accessible manner.

The subsequent chapters describe the tools employed by the Russian Federation to compete in the international arena. The third chapter, *Information War in the International Rivalry of the Russian Federation*, presents the issue of information as a weapon as dangerous as kinetic military actions and often decisive for the result of battlefield operations. Understanding the difference in perception of information war between the Russian Federation and the West enables the readers to avoid any misconceptions about the large-scale use of information by Russia. The fourth chapter, *Strategic Deterrence as Employed by the Russian Federation in International Rivalry*, identifies the origin and types of strategic deterrence employed by Russia. In order to strengthen the message, the Author draws some original conclusions, stating e.g., that in the future conventional weapons of precise destruction will be regarded equal to nuclear weapons (p. 184).

The next part of the book aims at describing nuclear weapons, non-strategic nuclear weapons, and weapons of precise destruction (Chapter 5: *Nuclear Weapons as Employed by the Russian Federation in International Rivalry*, Chapter 6: *Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons as Employed by the Russian Federation in International Rivalry*, and Chapter 7: *Weapons of Precise Destruction as Employed by the Russian Federation in International Rivalry*), their origin, evolution, and the current deployment strategy used by the Russian Federation. Political, military and economic threads woven on the pages of this book create a coherent picture of the Russian Federation's supremacy and associated threats. China is referenced as an example of a state becoming increasingly important and seeking to impose its own order in the international arena.

The conclusions at the end of each chapter are a particularly valuable part of this publication, as they provide yet another look at the research material and capture the Author's main thought. At the same time, they encourage reflection and can serve as a starting point for further exploration of the subject matter.

A rich bibliography with up-to-date source material including monographs, articles, and magazines in several languages completes the book. The Author carried out an extremely in-depth analysis of normative documents, articles, and publications of think tanks. He has managed to capture different perspectives of politicians, scientists, and military people in an enthralling manner.

The subject matter is ambitious, broad and complex, and even though the publication is written in an accessible way, the language could have been clearer at times, e.g., in the chapter on weapons of precise destruction, which is dominated by military jargon.

To sum up, the work *Rywalizacja, presja i agresja Federacji Rosyjskiej* (*Rivalry, Pressure and Aggression of the Russian Federation*) is impossible to ignore. It takes the reader out of the comfort zone and encourages a thorough analysis of the surrounding reality.

This book is worth reading as a tool for exploring Russia's geopolitical viewpoint and the evolution of the Russian strategic thinking. It brings us one step closer to understanding how the Russian Federation is striving to achieve its strategic goals and maintain its position as a great power in the 21st century.

