

Marcin Wałdoch¹

(rec.): **Mary Elise Sarotte**
***Not One Inch. America, Russia, and
the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate***

Yale University Press, New Haven & London 2021, pp. 550

Mary Elise Sarotte is a historian working at Harvard University. Her academic work is focused on Cold War studies. She is an expert mainly in the history of international relations and an author of six books. Her books grab international attention. Her most readed and warmly welcomed books include: *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall and 1989* (2015) and *The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (2014). These books were selected as Financial Times Books of the Year. On her university's website we can read about the *Not One Inch. America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*, that this book is „[...] on what the fight over NATO expansion did to Western relations with Russia.” Thus this book should be thoroughly read by polish political elites. We must admit that Sarotte's works provide a nuanced and detailed look at the key players and decision-makers of the time of Cold War era.

The book, *Not One Inch. America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*, consist of introduction, three parts, conclusion, bibliography and index. The book contains 8 maps. All three parts cover different period from 1989 till 1999. The book bases is enormous, it bases on over a hundred interviews and on primary sources (records of White-House-Kremlin contacts). It means that the whole book is focused on this period, but the main Author's interes lay

¹ Dr Marcin Wałdoch, Wydział Nauk o Polityce i Administracji, Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego, e-mail: waldoch@ukw.edu.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-8778-1780.

on the period 1989–1991, when Soviet Union was collapsing. Sarotte's conclusion are that the events of this time period set the stage of the current state of US-Russia relationship. In the broad meaning these events from this period set the state for current geopolitical landscape in this part of the world.

In the first part of the book Author discuss events that take place in years 1989–1992. Sartore describes in this part of the book how Helmut Kohl – german chancellor at that time insisted on the West to „secure the gains of its Cold War success before hard-liners in Moscow mount a resistance to Gorbachev. Acting accordingly, Bush and Kohl pull off both unification and the enlargement of NATO beyond its Cold War border to eastern Germany in a mere 329 days” (p. 13). Then she writes in this chapter about the battle for power in Moscow and about the opportunities for Atlantic Alliance because of the fall of Soviet Union in 1991. In the second part of the book Sarotte focused on the period 1993–1994 in US-Russia relations. There is a lot about Boris Yeltsin and his relations with Bill Clinton at that time. Taking into account Clinton's change of stance on Russia. Third part of the book covers period of 1995–1999. Where Author shows how Western Europeans leaders decided that Russia will never join European Union. It shows the reasons for the lack of opportunity for long-term cooperation between the US and Russia at that time. It shows also how „the Russian forces of reaction that Kohl had feared back in 1990 win out after all” (p. 14).

The title of the book is attention grabbing and is at this same time one of the key themes of the book. The idea of „not one inch” is taken from Mikhail Gorbachev the last leader of Soviet Empire. Gorbachev intention was not to let the reunification of Germany. Sarrote argues that the term „not one inch” was a turning point in the post-Cold War landscape and a key factor in stalemate between the US and Russia.

Author deepens the conventional wisdom our understanding of political processes not only between US and Russia, but also in Eastern Europe. As she argues the collapse of democracy in Russia was partly an effect of betrayal of the West. When she looks back to the political processes during 1989–1999 Western leaders gave at that time an informal assurance to Russia that NATO would not expand across Central and Eastern Europe. There was no formal assurance as such, but Western leaders went ahead. Indeed there was a question which Secretary of State James Baker put to Mikhail Gorbachev: „What if you let your part of Germany go, and we agree that NATO will not shift one inch eastward from its present position.” Sarotte thinks and speculate that during the presidency

of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton both presidencies have done a lot to slow NATO expansion because of the need to stabilize Yeltsin government. Only because the democratization processes were stopped by Yeltsin weaknesses US decided to abruptly expand NATO to the east. It is obvious to reader that this book is a history of the geopolitical events that led to the current security environment in not only Eastern Europe, but in the world. This book presents Eastern European democracies that joined the NATO in late 90's as a consumers of security. Among the thoughts expressed by the author of the book, I was most disturbed by the poorly concealed view that NATO expansion is harmful to the world order. Such a conclusion may have particularly severe consequences for countries such as Poland. The second very important issue is the use of sources where a lot of information comes from the press, such as the New York Times or the Washington Post. The book also provides a fuller and deeper insight into the diverse positions of the American political elites on the presence and role of NATO in Central and Eastern Europe.

The whole book is a well written and very well-researched and documented political sciences book. It also provides valuable insights into the current state of US-Russia relations and what is even more important it „looks at the legacy of these events for today” with the conclusion that „leaders in Washington and Moscow snatch stalemate from the jaws of victory” (p. 15). This is a great analysis and synthesis which give a better understanding of West-Russia relations especially in the context of the war in Ukraine. In a broader sense, this book is a starting point for reflection on a security model for Europe.

References

- Mary Sarotte. Retrieved from: <https://sais.jhu.edu/users/msarott1> [accessed: 10.03.2023].
Mary Elise Sarotte. *Local Affiliate*. Retrieved from: <https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/people/002345-mary-elise-sarotte> [accessed: 10.03.2023].
Sarotte M.E. (2021). *Not One Inch. America, Russia, and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.