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The old system is withering away. But there is no need to reject all of its elements. It would be more reasonable to raise a new structure within it, including through accelerated creation of a Community of Greater Eurasia, and a broad dialogue on the future within the Eurasian Cooperation, Development and Security Forum.

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“May You Live in Interesting Times”

Fyodor Lukyanov

The recent G7 summit in Bavaria's Schloss Elmau was discussed mainly in terms of what Russia's absence from the gathering means and whether it could harm the forum, Moscow and the world in general. I will risk assuming that this is the last year when this topic is mulled over at all, as everyone is beginning to get used to the major change of scene in the global geopolitical play. The time when everyone viewed Russia, including itself, as a “candidate” for admission to the Western community is drawing to an end. Whether it is good or bad is a matter of taste and political preferences. More importantly, we can clearly see now that the present situation makes Russia's integration into the Western world impossible for two reasons.

First, Russia has chosen to follow a path that is very different from the one many expected (and some, on the contrary, feared) it to tread at the end of the 20th century. Second, the West itself has been changing profoundly both in terms of substance and place on the international stage. The situation requires that Russia combine the present opportunities and its capabilities to the fullest extent possible rather than make a choice.

Sergei Karaganov explores the broad context modern Russia exists in today and comes to the conclusion that the Eurasian track is becoming the main vector of its development. It does not

mean a rejection of the West and Europe, but a way to strengthen its own positions for an equal dialogue with them when the proper time comes. The geopolitical setting is changing and moving from Europe to Greater Eurasia, which used to be somewhat peripheral for Europe, but which is now pushing it to the back of the main stage. These changes are analyzed in detail in the **Valdai International Discussion Club** report, a shortened version of which we offer in this issue.

Anatoly Adamishin recalls Gorbachev's perestroika that ushered in a new era when the state made an attempt to renovate its ideology and reposition itself in the world. He believes President Gorbachev's greatest merit was his bold attempt to pull Russia out of the authoritarian matrix, to reform the country without oppressing the people and give them the rights and opportunities to build their own lives. This aspect of that policy still has a bearing on life in Russia today.

Mikhail Gorbachev's main dream that never came true was a common European home. More than a quarter of a century on, and we seem to be back to the pre-perestroika track of distrust and division in Europe. **Vladimir Tchernega** ponders over relations between Russia and Europe – the perennial issue of disputes among Russian intellectuals. These relations are an element of

mutual cultural and psychological self-identification, which makes them ever more complex but unavoidable.

Ukraine is the most painful issue at the moment. Relations between the two states will never be the same, and their divergence is clearer than ever. **Eduard Ponarin** and **Boris Sokolov** maintain that amid the socio-economic failure of the Western and nationalistic project in Ukraine, Russia has a chance to strengthen its positions in this neighboring country. **Vladimir Bruter** thinks that the changes in Ukraine are irreversible, but their perception in Russia will become less acute with time. **Alexei Slavich-Pristupa** offers a compromise view: Ukraine has already embarked on a path of chaotic decentralization, thus making it possible for different polities to exist on certain territories within a single country.

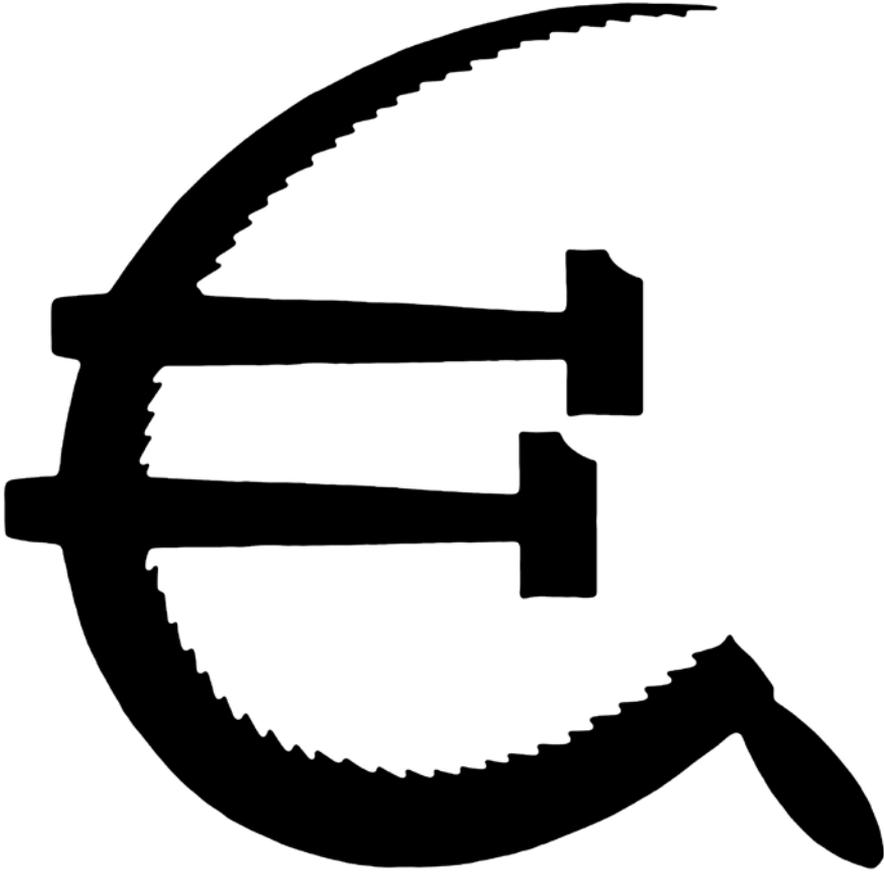
Sensitive as it is for Russia for historical, cultural and emotional reasons, the developments in Ukraine are rather local in global terms. In search of a more global alternative for Russia, our authors are taking a closer look at BRICS. **Mikhail Korostikov** believes that this grouping offers a way to preserve Russia's global prospects which are waning as Moscow is sinking deeper and deeper into post-Soviet problems. **Oliver Stuenkel** agrees that the association is important, but cautions against expecting it to assume a consolidated anti-Western position or offer too much support to Russia in this respect. **William C. Wohlforth** describes the erosion of U.S.-centric world, dwelling at length on the performance of international institutions.

Andrei Skriba continues the discussion of national interests started in the previous issue, specifically he

examines how the state formulates its national interests and the role of society in this process. **Mikhail Troitsky** speaks about the restricting function of the official declaration of national interests as a filter for politicians' ambitions, which is particularly important for today's Russia. **Alexander Filippov** analyzes the legal aspect, focusing on different perceptions of law by Russia's political and managerial elites. While acknowledging the crisis of international law, the author points out that only law can provide the language for stating a country's national interests. **Andrei Frolov** touches upon a very specific issue of how a country's military-technical capabilities help project its interests abroad. In his opinion, the expected cuts in Russia's defense budget will limit its ability to project power and defend its national interests to the post-Soviet region for many years to come.

There are two interesting outside views on national interests. **Samuel Charap** and **Cory Welt** urge their Western colleagues to avoid assuming that the way Russian leaders understand their country's national interests is likely to differ from that of outside observers. This idea may seem obvious, but after the Cold War the Western discourse has been absolutizing its own views. **Simon Saradzhyan** analyzes how Russia and the United States understand their national interests and comes to the conclusion that there are a large number of areas where they either converge or at least do not contradict each other. **Yaroslav Zaitsev** studies political cultures and the systems of determining national interests in Russia and China. In fact, many issues of the future world order will be addressed within the Russia-U.S.-China triangle, which is moving into the global limelight.

Change of Scene



Courtesy of Vadim Misyuk

“Europe is losing its magnetism because of a multi-level crisis and economic slowdown. Russia is now accelerating an economic turn towards the East. This turn is becoming not only economic, but political and possibly even civilizational. In fact, Asia is emerging in the minds of Russians as a symbol of success.”

Eurasian Way Out of the European Crisis

The European Continent on the Verge
of a Structural Degradation

Sergei Karaganov

I have already written previously that Europe, after emerging from the Cold War, lost the post-war peace. The European continent is on the verge of a strategic degradation that may either become a caricature of military-political division into opposing blocs or a time of disquieting uncertainty. The military-political conflict over Ukraine could escalate as well.

Europe is sinking into an internal crisis as its 500-year global dominance is ending. After a long period of two opposing blocs and a short “unipolar moment,” the world has entered an era of multipolarity. But this, too, is most likely an interim stage, since the role of nation-states is growing and old geopolitics is getting back on track in a new global environment. One can actually speak of the start of “deglobalization” or a completely different kind of globalization. The WTO is at an impasse. The world is dividing into separate political and economic blocs. Those blocs are competing with each other increasingly more fiercely not only by determining trade rules, but also by imposing non-tariff restrictions, and technical, legal, and other standards. Finally, “economic weapons

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of mass destruction” – sanctions – are being used more frequently. Remarkably, the West is heading the process of “deglobalization” as it realized that it is losing the game that is being played by its own rules established earlier.

The U.S. is retreating into semi-isolation, leaving behind, intentionally or otherwise, zones of instability and crises. A belt of tensions is emerging along the eastern perimeter of China. The Arab East has been shattered and will lie in ruins for decades. U.S. involvement can also be seen in precipitating the Ukraine crisis.

The main security challenges facing the European subcontinent, including Russia, are metastases of instability from the Middle East and the new military-political division of Europe. They add up to the systemic crisis in the European Union and economic slowdown in Russia. Both parts of Europe are searching for a new spiritual and geopolitical identity. This process has so far been going faster in Russia, which is drifting from a European cultural and foreign economic course towards a Eurasian one.

This period of turbulence will continue for some time and will likely acquire a new quality. New geopolitical macro-blocs are emerging in the 21st century: one is forming around the U.S. with its remaining global possibilities. This bloc plans to create the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

The second macro-bloc encompasses Greater Eurasia, united by cooperation between China, Russia, India, Kazakhstan, Iran, and some other countries, with China likely to act as a leader, but not as a hegemon. This process was spurred by the May 2015 agreement between Russia and China to integrate the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and China’s Silk Road Economic Belt project.

This will leave Europe partially torn apart, weakened economically and politically, and with declining security. No common economic and human space from Lisbon to Vladivostok has been created so far, but it is still on the agenda – at least for our country, which could benefit from acting as a mediator between the “major” Eurasian and “minor” European projects.

EUROPEAN SECURITY: SCENARIOS

As the issue of European security is fading from the global spotlight, Europe may revert to the time when it was a source of instability and even wars. There is no quick solution in sight, even though a number of good ideas were proposed before: turning the OSCE into a union of security; establishing a European Security Council; admitting Russia to NATO to automatically make the latter a pan-European alliance (Russia never received a positive reply); signing a new European security treaty (the project was emasculated by the so-called OSCE Corfu Process); and starting to form a Union of Europe – a common economic, human, and energy space (no reply again).

Why did all these plans fail? The West had decided (while always publicly denying it) to expand its zone of influence and control, while actually forcing Russia away, limiting its markets, seizing its “security buffer zones” acquired centuries ago, and often trying to impose post-European values. This second, lighter, edition of the Versailles Policy created a sense of vulnerability and rejection in Russia, whose main values, born in struggle, are sovereignty and security. When it came to Ukraine and the West began to draw it into its zone of influence and control, an armed conflict erupted, as many experts, including myself, had warned for two decades. It had internal Ukrainian roots, of course, but was essentially European in nature.

Russia also bears its share of responsibility for allowing the situation to develop this way by being weak and entertaining illusions about gradual integration with the West, while failing to understand where it should go. Another important question was how the country should develop, and Russia, of course, slid into economic recession in recent years. Apparently, it should not have consented twice to the North Atlantic Alliance’s enlargement in 1997, when the Russia-NATO Founding Act was signed, and in the early 2000s, when its objections were too weak. Finally, Russia should not have turned a blind eye to the horrible aggression against Yugoslavia in the hope that things would work themselves out. They did not.

Naturally, the fall of communism and the rapid spread of capitalism made the life of most Europeans, including Russians, more comfortable

We will not likely experience food lines or the Iron Curtain ever again. But, as we understand now, our life has not become safer.

All discussions about how to build a new security system have so far revolved around the Ukraine crisis. It must be stopped, of course, but no lasting solution can be possible unless its main cause is removed.

Most members of the Russian elite have lost all faith in Western politics and seem determined to use force to teach their partners to respect Russia's interests. Distrust also remains high in the West and anti-Russian rhetoric has reached the level of the late 1940s-1950s, when the Soviet Union was threatening the vital interests of the Western elites, who wanted to preserve capitalism and democracy.

Russia has so far not offered any plan for resolving the systemic crisis, obviously remembering that it was never listened to when it did so before. Meanwhile, Western discourse is mulling, explicitly or not, several options that partly overlap.

First. Wearing down Russia economically to make its regime fall either by provoking disgruntlement among the elites and pushing them towards a palace coup, or by causing the quality of life to fall in order to spark mass discontent and a grassroots revolution. This scenario was almost openly considered at the beginning of the acute stage of the conflict. However, after the sanctions and hostile rhetoric had produced the opposite effect, consolidating the elite and society around the Kremlin and marginalizing pro-Western elites and sentiment, this policy was pushed aside to an extent. But it can still be seen behind concrete actions, escalation of anti-Russian rhetoric in the West, attempts to export it to the non-West, and even behind Germany's "strategic patience."

Second. Drawing Russia into the Ukrainian armed conflict against its will and choice. This approach is particularly manifest in the U.S., but it is rejected almost completely in Europe, which understands where uncontrolled escalation of the conflict and its expansion beyond Ukraine can lead. The U.S. has seen its policy failing and begun drifting towards the European one.

Third. Attempts to draw Ukraine into NATO, almost successful in 2007-2008 and renewed again lately, have been stopped, at least

declaratorily. Today this would clearly have pushed the situation towards the second scenario. This can apparently happen only if the first scenario is implemented (which is highly unlikely).

Fourth. Recreating Cold-War-era structural confrontation east of the previous dividing line. The deployment of additional U.S. troops in countries neighboring on Russia and ABM systems in Europe are elements of this scenario. Moscow is likely to respond, including by seceding from the INF Treaty. The impression (probably erroneous) is that this would be acceptable for both a certain part of the Russian elite and society, whose distrust and opposition towards the West, developed over centuries and especially after the Cold War, have been exacerbated by the failure to build relations in the past twenty years. Russian nuclear weapons in the European part of the country, along with a revised doctrine of their use, give them sufficient protection from an attack. Russia also has the ability to play on contradictions and create problems for the opposing side, without getting involved in an all-out arms race that emaciated the Soviet Union.

This scenario seems unlikely both because it is being played out by the U.S., which is moving out of Europe, seeking to leave it unstable and divided. Also, the scenario is not very probable because it follows from the impasse Europeans have reached in the west and the east of the continent.

Fifth. Finally, experts are discussing a hypothetical degradation of the current European security crisis and the situation in Ukraine into a big war. This scenario, described not only by alarmists but also by moderate analysts, can easily be triggered by an incident that will lead to escalation amid mutual mistrust, or by a provocation staged by external actors. I would not like to describe catastrophic options, as the situation and nerves are already strained enough. I will only say that this scenario seemed increasingly likely throughout the past year when tensions were deliberately stirred up.

Now, in June 2015, having seen the potential dangers and the fact that Russia is not giving up, the West is beginning to slowly play it back. But a catastrophe cannot be ruled out completely.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The Ukraine crisis has spurred the search for ways to rebuild the previous security system in Europe, mainly through OSCE renovation or even reform (although it is unclear what kind of reform). These ideas are quite popular among minor, non-bloc European countries, and they are also gaining ground in major European capitals. Germans are stepping aside from their ultra-hard policy and are looking for solutions, including with the help of the OSCE, over which Germany will preside next year. The U.S., however, is feeling quite wary, if not altogether hostile, about attempts to reform the OSCE, traditionally fearing competition with NATO, the main instrument of U.S. dominance in Europe.

I assess the OSCE's work skeptically and think that it has done more harm than good over the past twenty years, mainly by helping to create a false impression that European security was "in perfect condition." Looking at the development of European security and the OSCE's role in it, I expected the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, celebrated this year, to end not with a reception, but with a funeral feast. But a disaster intervened. The old abscess erupted into a civil war in Ukraine and fierce confrontation between Russia and the West. The OSCE was useful because it had the ability to quickly provide hundreds of observers who prevented the conflict from escalating, kept the sides from committing outrageous human rights violations, and helped implement the Minsk agreements (reached outside the Organization). Despite all the criticism, its Special Monitoring Mission is doing constructive work. The withering body got a new lease on life.

The OSCE reform discussion has just begun. The points being debated include increasing funding, creating a permanent crisis management center, renewing, in different forms, limitations on the size and armament of armed forces in Europe, and resuming military-political transparency and confidence-building measures. Some have even suggested "testing" Russia's readiness for constructive cooperation whereby it has to agree to the resumption of this process. It is unclear, though, why Russia should agree, if the previous experience proved negative. Transparency and military confidence-building measures

can become an exception in order to reduce the risk of incidents escalating into direct armed confrontation.

OSCE modernization will not resolve the European security crisis. At best, an overhauled organization will service a new Cold War, albeit increasingly less effectively, until a new crisis breaks out somewhere else. In the worst-case scenario, it will turn into yet another forum for fomenting tensions. But this does not mean that the organization needs no improvement to become more efficient. However, it will not be able to solve the European security issue unless it adopts a new collective security treaty, as has been suggested by Russia. But this scenario seems highly improbable now.

Theoretically, there can be an even more far-reaching scenario, which Russia has proposed for years: creating a pan-European human and economic space – a Union of Europe, where Ukraine could become a territory of joint development. Here are some of its possible parameters.

- Establishing an effective system of collective security and cooperation for the whole of Greater Europe;
- Setting the task of creating an equal security space, common human (visa-free travel), economic, and energy spaces from Lisbon to Vladivostok;
- Signing a “Union of Europe” and “Collective Security” treaties by individual countries and organizations: the Eurasian Economic Union, European Union, Collective Security Treaty Organization, and NATO. Those who do not sign and ratify them will be left outside a new community. The problem of “gray” zone countries (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Turkey, etc.) will be solved in this way.

One of the key provisions in a Collective Security Treaty or a Union of Europe (Greater Europe) Treaty should stipulate that existing military-political alliances can admit new members only with the consent of all parties to the new treaty (essentially, a veto, but without rejecting the idea of openness). In other words, the security of member states will be protected from damage.

A potential Collective Security Treaty also includes transparency and confidence-building measures. One of the possible elements could be common recognition of the “unrecognized.”

This scenario could facilitate stable development of the entire international system and Europe as an economic and civilizational space. But, unfortunately, it is the least likely course of events at this point. The Ukraine crisis will continue, and the country will in all probability continue to slide further down, creating new problems and contradictions.

A NEW FORMAT?

The crisis has brought to the surface dormant tendencies that have turned the existing European security system into an anachronism. Extreme distrust on both sides makes restoration of the *status quo ante*, even its improved version, completely unrealistic. Russia feels that it is morally right and is trying to instill its partners with respect for its interests and international law, upon which they have been trampling over the past two decades, while vowing adherence to its principles. They acted this way when they attacked Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Libya, and helped organize “color revolutions,” including the coup d’état in Kiev. In turn, Western partners want to make Russia and the non-West behind it continue to play by their rules.

Rapprochement on the old basis – let alone the creation of a Union of Europe – will also be hindered by deep-running societal factors. Many in the Soviet elite considered the existing system unviable, if not completely vicious, and wanted to move towards democracy and a market economy, including through the Helsinki process. But the number of people in the Russian elite and society who consider their country inferior is infinitesimally small. There are those who doubt if we can pull through. Moreover, there are those who are worrying over high costs and looking for compromises. But the majority of people understand that it would be more perilous to retreat than to go ahead, for they can easily be crushed.

Twenty-five years ago it seemed that we would rapidly build a consolidated society. We did not. Partly because of the West’s policy,

which led pro-Western Russians, who were in the minority at that time, to a defeat and disappearance from the political stage. Systems of values in Russia and major European countries developed perpendicularly: Russia was inclining towards old European standards – the priority of sovereignty, hitherto banned Christianity, and patriotism; the rest of Europe was advancing post-European views.

But the main reason why the situation cannot be returned to where it was is that the world has changed dramatically. The European and Euro-Atlantic space, which a quarter of a century ago seemed destined to dominate in all respects, is no longer an *a priori* leader.

The new Asia is becoming the center of global economy and politics. Non-liberal leader democracy prevalent in the rising non-Western countries, not liberal democracy of the Western European or American type, which is going through a crisis almost everywhere, appears to be the dominant sociopolitical system of the future.

Russia, which was a bit late in making an economic turn towards the East, is now accelerating it because of the stalemate in relations with the West. This turn is becoming not only economic, but also political, and possibly even social and civilizational. In fact, Asia, which has always been associated in the minds of Russians with backwardness, poverty, and lawlessness, is emerging as a symbol of success.

Meanwhile, Europe is losing its magnetism because of a multi-level crisis and economic slowdown. In general, the more Russians learned about the West, the less attractive it seemed, partly due to the deviation from its own principles when it committed obvious acts of aggression, kept secret CIA prisons, and organized mass phone tapping among citizens and even allies.

By now most Russians have achieved a European standard of living, including personal freedom, well-stocked shops, clean public toilets, and the majority of Russians own cars. Russians are not seriously concerned about rule of law or real democracy for the time being.

But disappointment with Europe is dangerous for Russian consciousness, which is going through reformatting after the terrible communist aberration (when many traditional values, and ethnic and cultural norms were thrown away). Russia's national identity

remains predominantly European, rooted in Europe's common cultural and religious heritage, regardless of how its political elites treat this heritage today.

A new system of Russia's positioning in global affairs must take this factor into account, in terms of security as well. Russia needs Europe not so much as a source of advanced technologies, social practices, and capital, but as a cultural anchor. I will risk assuming that, all mutual suspiciousness notwithstanding, Europe also needs Russia as an inoculation of realism at a time when the Old World is sinking deeper and deeper into a realm of its own illusions about what the future should be like.

Other elements of the global landscape have changed too, making it impossible to step into the same security river twice. The main threats (apart from the division of Europe) are external – the Middle East will remain messy and radicalized for decades, and the U.S. is losing interest in European stability.

Partial deglobalization and the creation of economic and political blocs represent a powerful trend. One of these blocs will form around the U.S., which wants to tie down its old allies through the TPP and the TTIP. While the former can benefit not only the U.S. but also their partners, the latter is clearly disadvantageous for Europeans, who may agree to it only because they fear remaining completely alone and unfit for effective struggle and competition in a new world.

Another bloc will apparently appear in Latin America, which has thrown off American hegemony.

A COMMUNITY OF GREATER EURASIA?

A third bloc is already emerging before us. It could be called a Community of Greater Eurasia centered around expanding cooperation between Russia, China, Kazakhstan, and other Shanghai Cooperation Organization partners; potentially India, Iran, South Korea, and Pakistan; and subsequently Israel and Turkey. China is playing a leading, but not dominating role in the association. ASEAN and Southeast Asian countries will be stretched between U.S. and Eurasian projects. Japan will continue to gravitate towards the U.S.

The Eurasian community is evolving around the core, the creation of which was announced during Chinese leader Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow in May 2015 in a joint statement on cooperation in coordinating the development of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt – the Chinese plan for the economic and logistical development of western Chinese provinces and countries west of China towards Europe. Many would like these two projects to compete with each other. But they, on the contrary, supplement each other.

A Community of Greater Eurasia can function organizationally through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which is still semi-dormant and has to be reenergized, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and the SCO Development Bank, which are in need of real projects, through the creation of their own payment systems and reserve currencies, and accelerated development of the logistical and transportation network.

It is in the interests of Russia, China, and other Eurasian countries to have a common project open to Europe with its financial, technological, cultural, and recreational potential, and to the rest of the world, for that matter. It must not be a confrontational project. Countries in Greater Eurasia are likely to see tensions along the eastern periphery of China, and conflicts between China and India, and between India and Pakistan. The former seems to be slowly settled. But the main challenge (common for all of Eurasia, including Europe) stems from the arc of territories and states from Afghanistan to North and Northeast Africa that have been destabilized for decades. Migration, climate change, drug trafficking, and inequality are common problems facing the entire Eurasian continent.

A pressing task in this new world is the creation of a continental security system rather than a regional one like in Europe. The first step could be a Eurasian Cooperation, Development and Security Forum, with functional institutions to be established later to embrace specific areas of cooperation. The Forum should be open to European states seeking to assert themselves in new economic and political markets.

A new community should be based on principles that do not necessarily repeat the Helsinki ones. The most obvious of them are:

- facilitating prosperity, economic development, and logistical ties;
- exercising unconditional respect for the sovereignty and right of countries and their people to determine internal political development without external interference, which can only be authorized by the (expanded) UN Security Council;
- reaffirming unconditional respect for territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes;
- acting together to counter internal and external security threats, especially religious extremism, terrorism, and destabilizing external impacts;
- staying open to cooperation with other countries and regions on the basis of equality and respect for international law;
- developing cooperation to promote mutual enrichment of cultures, prevent information wars and cybersecurity threats.

When it comes to formal establishment of a Community of Greater Eurasia with a Eurasian Cooperation, Development, and Security Forum, the current European security impasse will be placed in a different context; one that better matches the future world and, possibly, makes its resolution easier in the future. If a problem cannot be solved in the given context, you need to go beyond this context.

Creation of common economic and human spaces in Russia and Europe appears a much more substantive and mutually beneficial idea. It was largely overlooked before. Now Europeans, whose previous policy has led them to a dead-end, are returning to this idea by proposing a EU-EAEU dialogue. But it can hardly be productive in a situation where the EAEU becomes more and more integrated with China's Silk Road Economic Belt project. It would be more logical to invite China, which is seeking closer cooperation with Europe, and other Eurasian states to join the dialogue from the very beginning, in order to gradually create a common economic zone stretching from Lisbon to Shanghai or Singapore.

In this configuration, the OSCE could play an important but interim role in settling existing conflicts, and sharing its experience, both positive and negative.

Many European countries will remain in NATO. But broader cooperation will provide the EU with new opportunities and markets, which were proposed by Russia in its Union of Europe concept, that is, common spaces with the EU. It can actually be more attractive and promising in its Eurasian version. I think the Eurasian project will go ahead even without European countries that are EU members. But it would be better if they participated too.

Many anniversaries will be celebrated in 2015: the 200th anniversary of the Congress of Vienna which created the European system that ensured relative peace in Europe (then the center of the world) and its unprecedented rapid development for almost a century; 70 years since the creation of the UN and the IMF; and the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act.

The old system is withering away, partly because of the Ukraine crisis, even though some are trying to use it to revive now defunct institutions and approaches. But there is no need to reject all of its elements. A more reasonable approach would be to raise a new structure within it, including through accelerated creation of a Community of Greater Eurasia, and a broad dialogue on the future within the Eurasian Cooperation, Development and Security Forum.

The Congress of Vienna, the Bretton Woods Conference, and San Francisco Conference where the UN was founded, took place after wars. I sincerely hope that a new system will be created not after a new big war, which could simply destroy the future, but instead of it.

The role of the U.S. in the proposed and intended concept of global development is not so obvious. But this is an issue for the U.S. elite to address. It must decide what exactly it wants: to fall into semi-isolation, leaving behind only ruins, in order to try to come back again? Or hold on to the “unipolar moment,” which almost no one wants to see again? Or become a responsible builder of a new, more democratic, equal, and fair world?

Endowed with the globally-thinking elite, experience, top-class diplomacy, and geographic location, Russia can play an active role in building such a world, while obtaining benefits for itself and its partners.

The Future of Central Eurasia

A New Vector of Russia's International Strategy

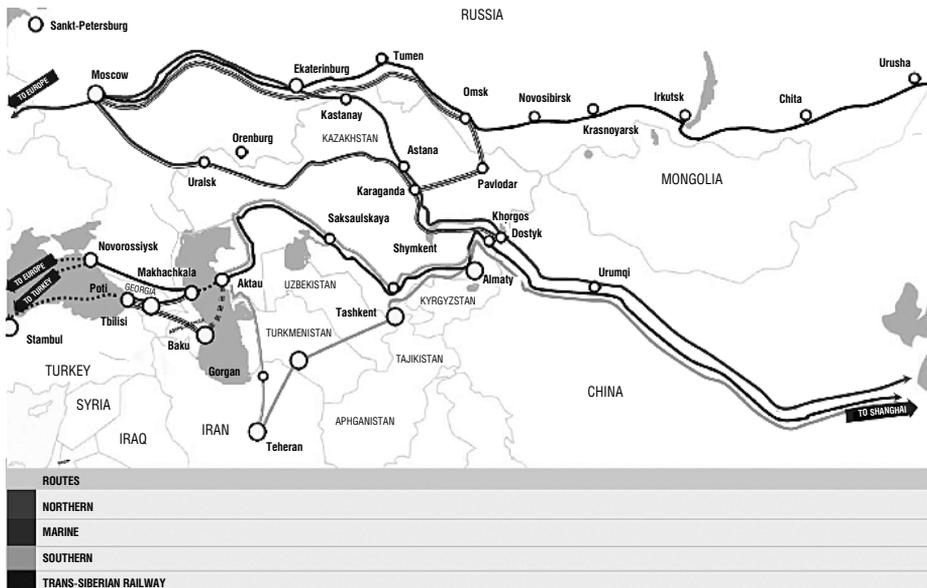
The year 2014 saw Russia turn towards the East, establish a genuine strategic partnership with China, and embark on a radical transformation of its relations with the West. These historic changes coincided with the beginning of a new stage in Eurasian integration and the advancement of several strategic initiatives by Beijing. The most important of them is the Silk Road Economic Belt concept, a large-scale investment and transport/logistics project, announced in 2013.

The first steps to implement the initiative were made in November 2014, when the \$40-billion Silk Road Fund was set up to provide investment support for the project. The Chinese project aims to turn the region into a world center of economic growth and global influence. The Silk Road will link north-western regions of China with markets in Europe and Western Asia. However, the significance of the project is not confined entirely to the transportation of goods; it is a strategic plan for the region's development through the creation of new infrastructures, industries, trade, and the services sector.

Moscow needs to take a proactive stance on this Chinese initiative, because its implementation will affect prospects for Russia's continued leadership in the region, and its position in the world in general.

This article summarizes the main points of the report "Towards the Great Ocean-3. The Creation of Central Eurasia. The Transit Potential of Russia, Silk Road Economic Belt, and Co-development Priorities for Eurasian Countries." The report was prepared under the auspices of the **Valdai International Discussion Club** by a team of scholars led by Sergei Karaganov. Timofei Bordachev supervised the preparation of the report.

Fig. 1. Potential Silk Road Economic Belt



Source: *Infranews*

Russia needs to cooperate with China in creatively developing the Belt project and broadening its potentialities through interaction with the Eurasian integration project. On this basis, Russia will not only give a new impetus to its own economic development but will also strengthen the Eurasian Economic Union with the inflow of Chinese investments in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, which will strengthen their social and economic stability.

Geographically, Russian and Chinese interests overlap, and there are no serious differences between the two countries. The policies of the United States and its allies are pushing Moscow and Beijing towards each other and prompting countries in Central Eurasia to realize that they need to work together to ensure their long-term security and sustainable development. There is emerging a “Central Eurasian momentum” – a unique concourse of international political and economic circumstances for tapping the potential of cooperation and joint development of countries in this macro-region.

THE FOUNDATION FOR EURASIA'S FUTURE

As the cradle of many nations and civilizations, Eurasia saw the birth and triumph of several great empires – the Chinese, Mongol, Russian, and Timurid empires. Despite its glorious history, Eurasia in the 21st century is not a single political and economic entity. It is torn between Europe and Asia, it has no face of its own or a supranational identity, and viewed by many as an area of competition between the leading powers in the region – Russia and China.

This factor provokes external forces to destabilize the situation in the region, drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing, and make other Eurasian countries choose between allegedly mutually exclusive alternatives. However, none of the differences discussed by political analysts and scholars is objective or insurmountable. Moreover, the ancient land of Eurasia offers unique opportunities for developing safe and highly profitable transport and logistics hubs and corridors that connect production and consumption capabilities of such global development centers as Europe and Asia.

The strategic objective of regional multilateral cooperation is to turn Eurasia into an area of joint development, as intensive as in the European Union. Eurasia can have a say in global affairs only if it implements large-scale economic projects that will unite the continent. Cooperation is also required to counter common cross-border and outside threats. These include high volatility of hydrocarbon markets, sanctions as a phenomenon of the new political and economic reality, drug trafficking, environmental migration, common threats associated with the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and the Islamic State factor, and the general threat of Islamism, which China sees particularly in separatist sentiment in Xinjiang. To address these problems, Russia, China and other countries participating in the Belt project could use more actively the mechanisms created by the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and western provinces of China are the natural center of Eurasia. These territories are rich in natural resources, including oil, natural gas and rare-earth non-ferrous metals, and provide

the shortest, most cost-effective and safest transport links between the two colossi of the world economy – Europe and East/Southeast Asia.

Countries engaged in regional cooperation (above all, Russia, China, and Kazakhstan) view Central Eurasia as an ***area of cooperation and harmony***, rather than competition between development or economic models. In order to create favorable conditions for their growth and prosperity, all countries are ready to look for mutually acceptable compromises and respect each other's interests in all areas of cooperation. Such negotiability is an important guarantee of international political stability in the region as the basis for long-term international cooperation.

Considering all these advantages, Central Eurasia can become a new center for attracting capital and investments and, in the geopolitical and geo-economic senses, a key element of Greater Eurasia that embraces the European Union, central Eurasia itself, East, Southeast and South Asia, and the Persian Gulf region.

AN AREA FOR JOINT DEVELOPMENT

The most promising and complementary interstate projects – Eurasian economic integration and large-scale partnership within the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt – should become the main driving forces behind the transformation of Eurasia into a macro-region of joint development.

The Eurasian integration and its institutional shell – the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) which became operational on January 1, 2015 – will help work out a ***legal framework*** for a joint breakthrough and serve as an effective tool for preventing and resolving interstate disputes. In addition, the participation of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the EEU creates a situation where China and the EU markets will be separated by only one customs border. A common customs and tariff space will give indisputable advantages to the Eurasian co-development project.

While the EEU creates legal conditions for building transport and logistics infrastructures and furthering joint development, the Belt project will impart enormous ***trading and investment momentum*** to these efforts. China's experience in developing economic belts

inside the country will be useful in creating new international and transcontinental economic areas which can link resources, production facilities and markets.

Considering the exceptional role of these two initiatives, the synergy of Russian and Chinese efforts towards the economic rise of the center of Eurasia will be a major factor contributing to the success of the Eurasian project. The experience of Russian-Chinese relations shows that Moscow and Beijing can cooperate in many areas by playing a positive-sum game.

Russia, which has entered a period of long-term deterioration of relations with the U.S. and its allies, now needs to create such opportunities for itself that would be least dependent on the West. Russia is interested in strengthening the Eurasian integration project, having more countries joining it, establishing regional development institutions to complement the existing international financial and economic bodies, and excluding military threats and challenges along its south-eastern perimeter, especially in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Another major task is to step up efforts to enhance the economic and political role of Siberia and the Russian Far East, and to make the strategic partnership with China irreversible.

China is interested in gradually forming a system of international trading, economic and political interaction in Eurasia that would provide a transport corridor, relatively independent of traditional sea routes, between China and European markets. Beijing needs favorable political conditions for implementing its investment projects in Kazakhstan, Central Asia, Siberia, and the Russian Far East. It seeks to minimize risks and threats from Islamic extremism, and optimize efforts to develop its own western regions.

For the time being, external factors facilitate, rather than hinder, the implementation of the large-scale Eurasian co-development project. The pressure put on Russia by the West and on China by the East makes their cooperation the most rational strategy. China's economic initiatives and Russia's institutional and legal ones are different in nature and therefore complementary. Central Eurasian countries – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan, and Mongolia, as well as to some extent Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan – can ensure their international political role and socio-economic stability only by participating in major cross-border projects.

The transport and logistics potential of the region is enormous, and so is the co-development potential of Eurasian countries (the creation of cross-border investment clusters and areas of priority development). The Belt project will offer a shorter transportation route between Europe and Asia than that going via the Suez Canal. The new route will be 8,400 kilometers long, of which 3,400 km have already been built in China, and the remaining 2,800 km and 2,200 km are under construction or modernization in Kazakhstan and Russia, respectively.

The already operating section of this route from Western China to Western Europe passes via the cities of Lianyungang, Zhengzhou, Lanzhou, Urumqi, Khorgas, Almaty, Kyzylorda, Aktobe, Orenburg, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Moscow, and St. Petersburg, and provides access to Baltic Sea ports. The bulk of the transit traffic goes via this route. Its major advantage is that it crosses only one customs border between China and Kazakhstan.

Redirecting the main trade flows to this route will significantly reduce costs and insurance expenses since this transport and logistics corridor is much safer and better protected from natural disasters and international political instability characteristic of the South Seas. Reorientation of a major part of Russian energy exports towards growing Asian markets will also increase returns on investments in related infrastructure projects.

RUSSIA'S EURASIAN STRATEGY

The importance of economic upsurge in the center of Eurasia is obvious to Russia, as it will bring both direct and indirect benefits to the state, businesses and the country as a whole.

Firstly, the development of the center of Eurasia holds much economic promise. On the one hand, it will unite the interests of the state and private businesses in developing Russian regions, and on the

other hand, it will help create a long-term infrastructure for profitable operations of numerous private companies interested in production and trade cooperation with other countries in the region.

Secondly, an economically strong and investment-attractive center of Eurasia is a *sine qua non* (indispensable condition) for economic growth in Russian regions – Siberia and, to a certain extent, the Far East. For Siberia with enormous human and resource potential, participation in the Silk Road project will not only increase transit flows but will also help integrate its economy into the open international system.

Transit operations and extractive industries will be the main recipients of initial investments (from states and specialized financial institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund, and others). At the next stage, investments will be made in processing and other industries, including high-tech ones. This stage will require active efforts to attract private investment that can produce a quick economic effect, using their high potential and low competition in the region. The creation of new transport routes is not at variance with Russia's initiatives, such as the Northern Sea Route.

In terms of international politics, the project to develop the center of Eurasia will give Russia an important foothold in global affairs and facilitate its development and strengthening as an international center of power connected with other actors seeking to stabilize, rather than unsettle, the region. Stronger international cooperation around the center of Eurasia is concordant with Russia's commitment to the development of the Eurasian Economic Union as a full-fledged interstate association with elements of supranational integration, and will resolve the problem of choice for many small countries in Eurasia.

In addition, as Russia increases its political power in the context of Central Eurasia's economic development, many other countries looking for a place of their own in the world or not satisfied with their current position can be "turned" towards this ambitious Eurasian project. Moscow can offer advantageous cooperation in the project to countries in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus (and to some other partners, such as Turkey and Mongolia). If the project

succeeds and Central Eurasia embarks on accelerated economic development and multiplies its human resources, there may emerge a new Eurasian identity, which has been so much spoken and written about by Russian philosophers Nikolai Trubetzkoy, Georges Florovsky, and Pyotr Savitsky. In the 1920s, such identity seemed to be nothing more than speculation, but now it may acquire a real geopolitical and economic foundation.

Economic development of Central Eurasia, with Russia's interests respected and potential tapped to the maximum extent possible, is the concern of not only the state but also of the business community. Encouraging private initiative and turning areas east of the Urals into a "Russian frontier" and a territory of unlimited possibilities should become an integral part of the process. If business and the state quickly work out a proper agenda, Russia has every chance to lead this growth with concentrated resource, production and intellectual flows.

A special place in the national strategy of Eurasian co-development should be given to efforts to tap the unique potential of Western Siberia, which is not only rich in natural resources but also has well-developed industrial facilities and enormous human capital. The development of both latitudinal and longitudinal transport routes within the framework of the large-scale Eurasian project will help to solve the problem of Siberia's remoteness from external markets.

Big Siberian cities, above all Krasnoyarsk and Novosibirsk, have everything to become major Eurasian transport and logistics hubs and centers for regional development projects, including their technological, industrial, and educational components. Siberia's water resources and agricultural lands have a great economic potential, too. Therefore, Russia's Eurasian strategy, aimed at using its transit capabilities and ensuring stabilization and long-term development in the whole of Central Eurasia, should focus on the international positioning of Western Siberia and its leadership in a number of cross-border projects.

Another promising area of the project is a common electricity market. Its large size, the number of generating capacities and their interconnection can make this market highly efficient. In addition,

nuclear power engineering coupled with hydroelectric power generation will secure stable electricity supply in Central Asia in winter and summer time. It may be advisable already now to consider extending the common electricity market to Western China with a population of 22 million. In the future, a ring power system may be built to cover Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and western provinces of China.

In order not to miss the “Eurasian momentum,” Russia needs to discuss with its main regional partners, above all China, the new strategy of co-development in Eurasia. It is necessary to set up a high-level commission on cooperation for developing transport and logistics corridors in Eurasia and implementing co-development projects. The EEU needs to establish a working group on the transport/logistics, including air transport, infrastructure, which may include representatives of Kyrgyzstan, and the Eurasian Economic Commission should initiate an EEU transport and logistics strategy (White Paper) reflecting a common position of the participating countries. It is advisable to prepare a joint Russian-Kazakh-Chinese strategic document, entitled “The Energy Belt of Eurasia,” which would set long-term priorities for international cooperation in the field of energy trade, taking into account objective transformations in this market.

A new program, Central Eurasia Dialogue, would help create a political format for systemic dialogue among Eurasian integration institutions and regional partners (China and other countries that are not EEU members yet). It is time to work out at the expert and political levels a long-term program to strengthen other international cooperation institutions, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, in the new context of regional cooperation.

Experts and analysts should assess prospects for international cooperation on the river Irtysh, which is shared and actively used by China, Kazakhstan, and Russia, on the basis of the “common river” principle, similar to the Lower Mekong Initiative, including the creation of an effective basin commission and the attraction of a block investor.

While implementing co-development projects in Eurasia, Russia, China, Central Asian countries, Mongolia and eventually India, Turkey, Iran, and South Korea will find answers to many domestic and international challenges, lay the foundation for the region's sustainable development and preclude its possible explosion from within. Central Eurasia must become a safe and sturdy home for its peoples and a smooth-running common backyard for Russia and China, so that they could address and solve their strategic foreign policy tasks.

The rise of Central Eurasia is one of the three components of Russia's new global strategy. The other two are relations with Europe, a region closest to Russia civilizationally and an important source of technologies and social experience, and Russia's current turn towards the Asia-Pacific region. Russia's internal development should be meaningfully linked to its main foreign policy imperatives. This approach, along with efforts to modernize state governance, change the exhausted economic model, and build up military-political capabilities, will help strengthen Russia's position as a 21st-century world power.

Cacophony Instead of European Concert

The Dialectics of Russia-West Relations

Vladimir Tchernega

The root causes of the current severe standoff between Russia and the West over Ukraine, at times reminiscent of the worst years of the Cold War, have puzzled both pundits and politicians alike. Some of the reasons are on the surface, while others may take a while to unearth. In any case the conflict is not just a routine clash of geopolitical interests. In fact, Russia and the West are experiencing another moment of truth. Both sides will analyze this period and the conclusions will shape the future.

Relations between Russia and the West were exceptionally controversial even when the Russian Empire was considered – albeit formally – part of the mostly-European West. Countless fundamental works explore this vast topic. A journal article is not the best format for an exhaustive analysis, so I will focus on just one aspect. At a certain point I happened to study Russian foreign policy documents of the Holy Alliance period. The modern reader may find it hard to believe that the Russian Empire's involvement in the Concert of Europe affairs as a major player reached as far as Portugal's appointment of the Vice-King of Brazil. Yet the Russian authorities remained cautious, or even hostile, towards ideological Western influences, while some Western elites were very critical of Russia's social system, such as serfdom and the absolute monarchy's unrestricted domination of society and the individual.

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Even in those times this contradiction fueled propaganda battles. In particular, when the geopolitical struggle flared up with renewed force and Russia had to resist one of the Western powers or a Western alliance. A matter of national importance in Russia was responding to Astolphe de Custine's book *Russia in 1839*, a critical description of the country's realities of the day (still a great read these days!) and an omen of the Crimean War. And it has to be acknowledged for good reason. De Custine's book was translated into major European languages and long regarded in the West as a teaching aid and a clue to understanding Russia.

It is worth mentioning at this point that Russia's image of a brutal angry bear was created by nineteenth-century British propaganda when the two empires clashed for control of Central Asia.

True, there were other periods; for instance, during the Triple Entente years when the perception of Russia in France and Britain was almost positive (naturally, the reverse was true in Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire). But even then a number of intellectuals and politicians in allied countries called into question Russia's affiliation with "civilized" Europe.

The October 1917 revolution and the emergence of the Soviet state were an attempt to create an ideological and political antagonist of the West, oddly enough based on an ideology imported from the West. In 1991 that attempt was declared a failure and Russia turned towards the capitalist West again. But this time it seemed to have better chances of, if not integration with the Western world, then at least of doing away with old-time controversies and creating a united ideological, political, and geopolitical space. In contrast to the Russian Empire, where modern industries had just started developing in earnest by 1914 and 80 percent of the population were peasants (most of them unable to read and write), modern Russia inherited from the Soviet Union a powerful, although largely outdated, industry and advanced science, as well as one of the most educated societies in the world. The current confrontation illustrates that Russia's "marital union" with the West has failed to materialize and has been postponed indefinitely. However, this does not mean that bilateral relations have no future. To see how, when,

and on what grounds a rapprochement may be achieved we must first identify the main causes behind the current situation.

RUSSIA'S DIFFERENT PATH

Both Russian and Western researchers blame geopolitics, although there are exceptions. For instance, French expert Philippe Lefort stipulates that the lack of communication has distorted views of each other, causing mutual confusion and misunderstanding.

The two approaches complement each other. The lack of communication and inadequate perception certainly has adversely affected relations in geopolitics, but surely they were not the root cause of the current standoff. At the same time they have aggravated the misunderstanding caused by the differences in social development in Russia and the West since 1991. A combination of these factors has produced a cumulative effect.

The greatest misunderstanding concerns the West's misinterpretation of the impact of reforms in the 1990s on Russia's development and of the ideological evolution after 2000. Although the West agrees that the reforms were half-baked and managed to achieve only part of their aims, the results are rated as overall positive. An example of this is an enthusiastic 2014 article by Strobe Talbott, a former advisor to U.S. President Bill Clinton, in which he argues that Boris Yeltsin was leading Russia "in the right direction" and tried to put an end to Russia's "imperial ambitions."

For that reason most Western experts and politicians initially saw Vladimir Putin's rise to power as a result of a random combination of circumstances. Some speculated about a Boris Berezovsky-inspired plot in the Kremlin or even a special operation by Russian secret services. In any case, almost no one had expected that Putin would stay in power for so long. Western experts not only grossly underestimated Putin's personality, but they also misjudged the entire political, social, and economic situation that emerged in Russia largely as a result of the aforementioned reforms.

A great deal has been written about those reforms in Russia. Opinions vary from unequivocally negative to more balanced. But very

few observers would argue that Russia has experienced the emergence and development of a socio-economic system with fundamental principles very different from those of the European model. Borrowing inspiration mostly from the ideas of U.S. economist Milton Friedman, young reformers opted for the ultra-liberal, monetarist model, which was absolutely hostile to the traditions of Russian society. Not even considered as a possibility, the European model was based on a well-verified balance of government intervention and free market, and on a tight inter-connection of economic and social policies.

The net effect was the collapse of a greater part of the manufacturing sector, degradation of science and education, impoverishment of a tremendous section of the population, the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor, political reshuffles, and the risk of the country's disintegration. The link between a democratic system and prosperity failed to become ingrained in the public mind. As the Council of Europe said in its 1999 report on Russia (and also Ukraine), the country's population had become disillusioned with the market and the state.

This situation by no means contributed to developing an awareness of the importance of personal rights and freedoms for social and economic development based on individual initiative and civic responsibility. Hatred towards the class of the new rich, which, in the opinion of the majority thrived on embezzlement and corruption, left no chance for the principle of private property to take root, which is crucial for the establishment of a genuinely free market economy.

In that context the rise to power of a Putin-type leader was highly probable, if not inevitable. It was quite natural that Putin managed to gradually reduce "the space of democracy and freedom," as Western media puts it, without encountering special resistance, since neither was a priority for an overwhelming majority of the population. On the contrary, a steady rise in the standard of living, elimination of the threat to the country's statehood, and political stability were very much appreciated.

However, as it became more capable, the Russian state showed a distinct trend to subjugate civil society. Firmer orientation towards

state capitalism and the growing role of bureaucratic machinery merely exacerbated that trend. In fact, civil society institutions, political parties, and private capital had increasingly less influence in determining the country's further development, while the class of civil servants and career functionaries enhanced their influence to lay hands on and use basic resources for their private needs (Russian Academy of Sciences member Yuri Pivovarov, who has examined this "new bureaucratic revolution," coined the phrase "power property" to describe this phenomenon).

Meanwhile, with the collapse of previous ideological benchmarks a large share of the population promptly drifted towards conservative and traditionalist values. The revival of the Orthodox Church contributed to this. With time (even for many atheistic Russians) belonging to the Orthodox tradition became part of a new national identity. In the context of a spiritual vacuum that phenomenon was natural and initially rather positive. However, in the longer term the traditionalist trend could only lead (and has led) to a considerable weakening of liberal-democratic ideas.

Much in need of at least some ideological adornment of their policies, the Russian authorities have not stayed aloof from this process. Increasingly perceptive to conservative and traditionalist ideas, the Russian establishment has never missed a chance to underscore its commitment to the "good old ways." Yet Russia has not yet developed a prevailing, systemic ideology, which normally works to cement society. Attempts by some governing and semi-governing quarters to put forward an upgraded edition of the triple formula "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Populism" have not been successful. Firstly, most of the elites have showed little enthusiasm and are unlikely to ever show any. The sole idol they worship and the only ideology they profess is cash. Secondly, promotion of democracy still remains the officially proclaimed course, and the very existence of this target is a cap on any attempts to proclaim an outspokenly authoritarian ideology.

Everything was reversed in the West. While the Russian elites were very successful in building a society where the abyss between the rich and the poor grew wider and deeper, Europe was exerting ever more

tangible efforts to enhance society's civic unity. The policy of promoting civic unity began in the 1960s. At that time, the policy was regarded as a mandatory condition for sustainable economic development and the ability of the state to resist external and internal threats.

With this in mind, advanced European countries in the 1970s through the 1990s brought into being what was promptly called the "European social model." Its distinctive feature was a transition from the social welfare policy (support for the poor with various grants and fringe benefits) to the creation of a social and economic environment where an overwhelming majority of citizens, in particular, socially vulnerable groups (disabled people, families with many children, children in distress, migrants, ethnic minorities, and senior citizens) would have a real chance of becoming integrated in society as full-fledged members.

In broader terms, the European social model bears the following features: a tight link between economic and social policies; a robust systems of social solidarity; the availability of good housing, education, and medical services; shrinking poverty, and a narrowing gap between poor and wealthy citizens (achieved mostly through the differentiated system of taxation and contributions to social funds).

Naturally, this model is costly, for it requires considerable social investment. But the costs pay a return by providing an unprecedented level of civic unity in European societies. In fairness one has to admit that in recent years the economic crisis and austerity measures have curbed somewhat this type of public spending. Yet in Germany and France austerity spending is still at 40 percent of GDP. In contrast, Russia's parameters before the 2008-2009 crisis did not exceed 23 percent.

The European social model is one of the components of the European Union's "soft power" and its strongest appealing feature. The Russian authorities moved in the opposite direction and in doing so they grossly underestimated that factor in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries.

In the United States, the situation was and still is less unequivocal. On the one hand, the U.S. borrowed some traits of the European

model. On the other, the gap between the rich and the poor has grown far wider in recent decades. Yet the U.S. has managed to retain a rather high level of social unity, mostly because the middle class constitutes a majority of the population, just like in Europe.

Western societies also owe their stability to smoothly operating democratic institutions, independent courts, and, respectively, a rather high level of legal protection for the individual, civic institutions, and businesses.

Social unity, in turn, has proven to be the most important factor for these societies' stronger ideological unity. For quite some time some intellectuals (André Glucksmann in France, for instance) and politicians have worshiped liberal democracy and human rights. With the disappearance of Communism as the rival ideology, both of these concepts developed into a sort of secular religion, which began to successfully phase out real religion and continues to do so today.

In this context it is quite natural that geopolitical rivalry with Russia in Ukraine is presented by the Western mass media as a clash between Good and Evil. On the one hand, there is the West—the European Union, in particular—the “champions of social justice, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and prosperity;” and, on the other, “despotic, aggressive, and corruption-riddled Russia.” The serious problems of the newly-founded Ukrainian state were practically ignored; for instance, the rifts between the country's East and West, the oligarchic economy, and the impoverished population. In fact, it was stipulated that the “establishment of a truly democratic regime” would provide the universal remedy to cure all ills.

The civilizational gap between Russia and the West entailed dire consequences. Firstly, it served as a pretext for barring Russia from Europe, ostensibly because the Russians reject democracy and human rights at the genetic level and can only exist under despotic rule, which they try to transplant to neighboring countries.

Secondly, Russia ignored the fact the foreign policies of Western countries have become far more ideological (although a great deal of ideological rhetoric was heard throughout the Cold War). But the feeling of triumph that followed the victory over Communism, so

well seen in Francis Fukuyama's worshiped book *The End of History and the Last Man*, threw that ideology factor into a fresh perspective. Incidentally, this explains the noticeable growth in the share of political activists among U.S. ambassadors – a fact highlighted by the head of the Washington Center on Global Interests, Nikolai Zlobin: whereas under Bill Clinton that share was no greater than 30 percent, during the Barack Obama administration it has reached 60 percent. The ideological and political bias and lack of professionalism of these politicians resulted in the U.S.'s mistakes in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Ukraine.

Excessive ideologization is one of the reasons why the West, including the U.S., often fails to understand Russia's pragmatic approach to foreign policy. Although it serves pragmatic interests, U.S. foreign policy carries a strong messianic component. The officially proclaimed task to promote the universal values of democracy and human rights worldwide is not sheer propaganda, even though it is subordinate to these interests and is being used as one of the tools to attain such aims. To a certain extent this is characteristic of the foreign policies of Western European countries. This was one of the factors behind Europe's decision to impose anti-Russian sanctions over the crisis in Ukraine to the detriment of its own economic interests. The Russian authorities were quite amazed to discover that the economic benefit is not always the paramount value.

WHO WON?

The delusion that the Soviet Union collapsed because it lost the Cold War is another source of "misunderstanding" between Russia and the West, in particular, in relations between Russia and the U.S. Indeed, this delusion is deeply ingrained in the Western public mind and is shared by some quarters inside Russia too. The advocates of this viewpoint ignore the fact that the Cold War had ended several years before the Soviet Union ceased to exist, and that most Western leaders supported Mikhail Gorbachev to some extent. In reality, the Soviet and Communist system lost the economic and political competition with the West and was doomed irrespective of the Cold War factor. The latter merely accelerated the inevitable outcome.

This explains why the overwhelming majority of Russians did not feel that a foreign player had defeated them. They were not hostile towards the West, but at the same time continued to regard Russia as a great power worthy of treatment as an equal partner. Even Yeltsin tried to make Western partners feel this, although those were feeble attempts. Under Putin that sentiment began to be felt in Russia's foreign policy in earnest.

However, Western countries – as clearly seen today – expected Russia to behave like a loser country and agree to take any place in the new international world order the U.S. and its allies assigned. Eventually, that contradiction could only result in tensions and conflicts, and this is precisely what happened after Putin took power. In his well-remembered Munich speech in 2007, Putin unequivocally described the problem of Western, above all American, diktat.

Another sort of misunderstanding that added to existing tensions was the role of NATO and the organization's eastward expansion. In May 2014, I was watching a discussion by experts and politicians over the crisis in Ukraine on the French television channel France 5. At a certain point the host explained: "But why are the Russians so scared of NATO? After all, it's just a discussion club that is hopelessly pressing for an increase in military spending?" True, it was a joke, but it reflected the rather positive vision of NATO by most Western Europeans.

Russia feels that NATO has been redundant since the Cold War. Yet Western countries regard this organization as very useful because they save on military spending and thereby are able to compensate for lagging behind the U.S. economy. After all, Western Europe has to spend much more than the U.S. to maintain social unity and the bulk of the burden of military spending is on the economic sector. Even recently, despite warnings spread by Western media, military politicians, and the military of a "soaring Russian threat," Britain, Germany, and France have continued to reduce their armies. After the barbaric terrorist attack against *Charlie Hebdo* magazine and the following surge of fear in the face of militant Islamists, French President Francois Hollande merely "slowed down" the program for cutting France's ground forces in 2009-2019 (from 314,000 men, including civilian personnel, to 234,000).

Most Russians view NATO as a military and political alliance led by the U.S. that uses military force every time its geopolitical interests require it. A case in point is the bombing of Serbia in 1999. By contrast, the majority of people in the West sincerely believe that the alliance brings its members and neighboring states nothing but “security, stability, and a chance for prosperity.”

In this sense a great role was played by the fact that NATO enlargement was accompanied by a powerful brainwashing campaign, which invariably went into high gear each time the bloc moved closer towards Russia. In fact, at a certain point it grew into a genuine information war.

That propaganda made Western public opinion agree with the image of Russia as a pseudo-capitalistic copy of the Soviet Union, with the sole difference in that the copy looks far worse than the original. While the Soviet Union evoked not just fear, but certain respect and even interest, and, which is still more important, it was considered “predictable,” modern Russia is seen as a uninviting country that, after the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, began to look “unpredictable and aggressive as well.”

This is precisely why the support furnished by the U.S. and its allies for the *Maidan*-fuelled coup in Kiev, which propelled to power an outspokenly Western-leaning government, was perceived by the political establishment, the mass media, and public opinion in the West as “only natural.” On the contrary, Russia’s response (Crimea’s reunification with Russia, support for the “anti-*Maidan*” uprising in eastern Ukraine) was labeled as “unexpected,” “disproportionate,” and a crude encroachment on the existing international order.

Of course, the geopolitical clash between the West and Russia over Ukraine could have been avoided, but one cannot say it was unpredictable. Some specialized Western periodicals acknowledge this. For instance, French magazine *La Revue Defence Nationale* argues that the risk of such a clash had been predetermined first and foremost by U.S. foreign policy against Russia, adopted in the early 1990s. The point at issue is the modern version of the “rollback policy,” declared by John Foster Dulles during the Dwight Eisenhower presidency

and which was far more aggressive than the previous “containment” strategy. Among other things this policy envisaged the expulsion of the enemy, i.e. the Soviet Union, from disputed strategic areas. In relation to modern Russia, special importance was attached to the establishment of Western control over Ukraine through its adoption into the European Union and NATO. By contrast, Russia itself was offered no full-fledged “European” or “Euro-Atlantic” prospects.

A DOOR INSTEAD OF A WINDOW

The conflict between Russia and the West has highlighted the existence of a systemic crisis in their relations stemming from the combination of mutual ideological and political estrangement, and geopolitical rivalry. On the one hand, Russia, which in its 1992 application for admission to the Council of Europe sincerely proclaimed its intention to promote “European values” at home; that is, democracy, individual rights, and the rule of law, was moving along that road ever more slowly and with interruptions. After 2000 an obvious regress developed, manifested in the concepts of “controllable” and “sovereign” democracy. Full-fledged institutions of civil society did not develop and the authorities turned explicitly paternalist. The Russian judicial system remained tightly pegged to the authorities and remained largely an institution of the administrative and repressive system, and not justice. Law enforcement was riddled with corruption. In socio-economic terms, Russia was moving in the opposite direction away from Europe.

With a certain degree of abstraction one may postulate that Russia in the 1990s to a certain extent replicated the experience of Russia under Peter the Great. The Russian Emperor cut through a window to Europe, but at the same time, as Russian historian Vasily Klyuchevsky has noted, he mostly borrowed the military and technical component as well as certain elements of the administrative machinery. Europe’s social practices (the actual abolishment of serfdom and emphasis on the free individual in developing the economy) were utterly ignored. When the Communist system collapsed, the modern Russian elites, just as a large share of the country’s population, mostly borrowed the superficial aspects of European lifestyles, the attributes of the “society

of consumption.” However, the frequently mentioned “European values” have failed to be properly ingrained either in government policies or in the public mind.

On the other hand, the West, which began to repel Russia back in the 1990s, eventually exacerbated that estrangement with its eastward geopolitical expansion. The West’s strategic mistake was that it did not offer Russia any alternative other than bowing to Western interests. Today anti-Russian sanctions, fitting in with the logic of the very same “roll-back strategy,” have turned things from bad to worse. Growing anti-Russian rhetoric follows the same track.

In short, there are solid reasons why Russia feels insulted by the West. However, it should be remembered that Russia has been drifting away from the West for a long time. Russia is responsible for its ideological and political self-isolation and aggravation of internal development problems.

There is little doubt that the West has been acting so confidently and aggressively not only because it is certain about its “historical rightness.” Russia has taken the liberty of being weak and has not created a firm, advanced, and diversified economy and an effective social system. It has always been the case that those who are weak usually have little say in international relations. The popular postulate that the West is always ready to launch an onslaught against Russia every time it grows stronger is not historically correct, and in relation to the current situation is very wrong. In the past Russia frequently united with other states against an excessively strong power (such as Napoleon’s France). The current situation is largely explained by the fact that Russia has been trying to behave as a great power without the required resources or sufficiently strong and reliable allies. In that connection it is appropriate to recall a remark made by the Russian Empire’s foreign minister, chancellor Alexander Gorchakov: “Greatness is not proclaimed, it is to be acknowledged.”

Awareness of this fact is crucial to finding a way out of the systemic crisis. An economically strong, socially united, and democratic Russia, integrated with the system of “European values,” would not likely be subjected to such geopolitical pressure.

Russia today has no alternative to resuming cooperation with the West, above all with the European Union. Economic weakness means that Russia cannot count on victory in a war of attrition. However useful and necessary, “the turn towards Asia” (not the first time in Russian history), wider cooperation with China, and the Eurasian Economic Union project are unable to provide such an alternative. Firstly, Asian partners, including China, are unable to substitute for the West as a source of advanced technologies and investment, which are essential for a genuine advance and diversification of the Russian economy.

Secondly, Russia under any circumstance will remain on the European continent, which accounts for more than 80 percent of its population and the bulk of its economic potential. Despite the current confrontation, Russia and the European Union remain tightly interdependent in trade and the economy. Unlike in the Soviet era, there is no ideological confrontation between them (just as between Russia and the West in general). Despite the dissonance with the European Union in socio-political development, Russian society belongs with European culture, which is a reality no one is destined to change.

Fortunately, the European Union and the West in general are not interested in prolonged confrontation. As previously, both sides need cooperation along many lines. Even the U.S., increasingly more concerned about the problem of deterring China, does not want to see Russia vassalized by an Asian giant.

At this point it is crucial that a compromise on Ukraine is found as soon as possible. From the standpoint of *Realpolitik*, even “freezing” the conflict in its current form would be a lesser evil, making it possible to not only stop the loss of human lives, but also to considerably ease the risk of a “big war,” if not eliminate one altogether. At the same time a “frozen conflict” makes it possible to gradually proceed from confrontation to restoring cooperation.

In the longer term, Russia will have to make a choice: either to follow “a different road,” away from the mainstream of European development, inevitably leading into a dead end, or to start searching for ways of real rapprochement with the European Union. I have in

mind not just wider and deeper cooperation in various fields, but also the adoption of the fundamental goal of getting Russia involved in the process of “Eurointegration” – encompassing not just the economy, education, science, and culture, but legislation, law enforcement, and, finally, the political system. Democracy, independent courts, the inviolability of private property, and the rights of the individual are linked inseparably. Without them Russia has no future. References to the success of the Chinese model, quite popular with some Russian quarters, should not mislead anyone. China, just as South Korea in its day and a number of other Asian countries, will inevitably enter into a phase where further development will require democratic reform. Even now official Chinese media have been pointing with alarm to what they describe as the Westernization of the country’s middle class and the risk of further proliferation of “the Hong Kong virus.”

As for the European Union, there has always been the understanding that without Russia it is impossible to guarantee security on the continent. The first signs have emerged of an awareness that the European Union without Russia will never acquire the strategic might that is crucial for achieving greater independence. Although the modern context is not the best for pushing ahead with this goal, with time it will manifest itself ever stronger. In any case, U.S. pressure on Europe over the issue of anti-Russian sanctions and belligerent rhetoric in the U.S. Congress have stirred into activity those European circles that believe mutual estrangement between the European Union and Russia benefits the U.S. and harms Europe.

Noble Idealism

Perestroika Has Won After All

Anatoly Adamishin

The spring of 2015 marked the 30th anniversary of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *perestroika*. A unique period in Russian history, the paradigm of the Soviet Union's development underwent a cardinal change in a peaceful fashion. In fact, the system of priorities was revised and new policy guidelines were identified. A powerful wave of enthusiasm and a sincere desire for change swept over society. Yet the disappointment was prompt and bitter. The reforms of the late 1980s ended in a profound socio-economic crisis and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. We are still experiencing the aftershocks of those tectonic tremors and are asking the same, still unanswered, questions, while clashing in disputes that should have been finished years ago. *Perestroika* and its foreign policy remain underestimated in Russia. Until we take an impartial look at this crucial stage in Russia's development, I fear we will remain trapped in the vicious circle of historical doom.

WERE THE DRASTIC CHANGES WORTH IT?

In January 1986 one of my colleagues at the Foreign Ministry, Oleg Grinevsky, all of a sudden poured out his heart to me: "There was no point in launching *perestroika* in a country that was not ready for change. We opened the floodgates only to make things worse. In our society, with its very modest demands, things could have simmered

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for a long time. True, we were lagging behind, but lagging behind does not necessarily spell utter failure.”

Another colleague, Yuli Kvitsinsky, very disappointed at our “loss” of East Germany, exclaimed once: “But for Gorbachev, we could have held on for another twenty years.” The question remains if anyone would have been able to hold out. Party functionaries would possibly have managed because many of them were removed from the people and were relatively well off in material terms. But what about everybody else?

The way I see it, *perestroika* was an imperative of the day by virtue of several factors.

1) A nation in distress. The economic engines had ground to a halt, while social and political institutions that for many years had stood in the way of genuine development were unable to restart the engines. A friend from university, Boris Vladimirov, a functionary at one of the departments of the Communist Party’s Central Committee, told me in February 1982 that they were receiving heart-breaking messages from the provinces – not angry, but quite sad. People were complaining that they could not buy meat, milk, or eggs for years and that potatoes and cabbage were the only basic foodstuffs available. The worst thing, Boris said, is that those pleas for help did not reach anywhere.

In 2013 I asked my good friend Abel Aganbegyan, a classic of our economic thought, to briefly outline the situation the Soviet Union found itself in the spring of 1985. Here is the gist of his analysis: “Of the fifteen years of stagnation, the last few saw practically no growth of GDP, capital investment, or industrial production. We kept living on revenues from oil and gas that we were exporting for next to nothing. From the standpoint of scientific and technological progress, the country was hopelessly falling behind, above all in such advanced industries as electronics and computer manufacturing. In space technology, where we had once been in the lead, the Americans had gone far ahead. The budget deficit, just like other negative financial parameters, was a secret. Agriculture was stalled at the 1978 level. By 1981, grain imports stood at half of what the country was producing. And yet the government was unable to feed the people. Retail trade shortages were soaring. Direct distribution of goods through corporate cafeteria and departmental

food distribution outlets closed to outsiders were becoming increasingly more common. Housing construction was declining. The average life expectancy declined to 66 years from 70 years in 1964. The country was at a dead end with no way out in sight.”

In December 1983, when I was among the speechwriters working on Yuri Andropov’s speech for a conference on economic affairs, I made the following note: “As a result of poor adjustment of plans, twenty to thirty percent of industrial capacities in some branches are idle, one billion rubles worth of equipment of both domestic and foreign manufacture lies gathering dust. A total of 200 billion rubles in cash are in Sberbank saving accounts, of which three quarters is in circulation and another 60 billion is at the people’s disposal on hand. At the same time, retail targets are not being met in all republics. There is no demand for available goods. The amount of cash in circulation keeps increasing. A tremendous amount of money is not being used. Underground millionaires are looking for loopholes in foreign trade organizations, opening anonymous accounts in foreign banks, concluding covert transactions, and taking huge amounts of rubles out of the country to exchange the national currency at a very low rate. The worst thing is that we have “eaten” our future! In the 1990s production rates were doomed to slump as low as one percent, because for a long time there had been no investment in basic industries that should have guaranteed an upturn: machine-building, metallurgy, railways, and machine tool engineering. Where did the people’s money go? The main spending articles are defense, agriculture, housing construction, and assistance to other countries (Vietnam, Mongolia, and Cuba). Real incomes are shrinking as a result of creeping inflation. We have repeatedly sped up money printing ever since 1965.”

As for the socialist countries, I quote testimony by Oleg Bogomolov, the then director of the Institute of the World Socialist System: “This is the most important sphere, but too little attention is paid to it. Our friends [a reference to the Socialist countries in those years] are getting ahead. We are playing a backward, retarding role; moreover, we are subsidizing them both overtly and covertly. Our enormous R&D potential is not used to meet our foreign economic

needs. The military-industrial complex is its sole domain. The slogan of the day 'Blending science, industry, and foreign trade' (the way East Germany's integrated plants operate) remains on paper, as even the existing resolutions on that score fail to be implemented. Only 18 percent of mutual supplies of machine-building industry products within COMECON match world market requirements. For critical technologies and know-how the socialist countries have to turn to the West. Our manufacturers have no incentives to produce export-oriented items because they get none of the revenues, while their employees have to excel at work to guarantee quality. Manufacturers' rights, expanded for a short while during Alexei Kosygin's premiership, have been axed again."

2) **The likelihood of risky political developments.** On the eve of *perestroika* smoldering discontent could be sensed everywhere in Soviet society. Although not "structured" in modern parlance, the feeling that "life cannot go on like this" was becoming increasingly prevalent. U.S. columnist Flora Lewis, an expert on Soviet Russia, wrote at that time: "What must worry us is not that the Soviet Union will go on and on unchanged and insensitive to the aspirations of the ruled. It is that one day this society may explode with all the raging fury of the revolution against czarist tyranny in 1917, but with far greater menace."

There were other kinds of risks. It is not accidental that the Brezhnev era leadership was ready to welcome the rehabilitation of Stalin. According to my observations, this sentiment was the strongest among middle-ranking party functionaries, for they felt the marasmatic manifestations of stagnation more than anyone else. In those days many had the premonition that "the total mess" (*bardak*, a word that was on everybody's mind) will end only with the advent of another Stalin. Not Stalin the Terrorist, but Stalin the Tsar, who would restore order with an iron hand.

They were wrong. Unpredictable Russia brought to the surface Mikhail Gorbachev with his promise: "***I will give you freedom.***" *Perestroika* was crucial as it prevented both a social upheaval and a new version of Stalinism.

3) The role of personality. All good and bad fundamental shifts in Russia come from the top and have long been cyclical: short periods of freedom, democracy, and liberalism – whatever one wishes to call them – give way to prolonged periods of non-freedom. Alexander II followed Nicholas I. After the Tsar Liberator there was a long period of reaction up until the revolution of February 1917, when for a short time Russia was “the brightest democracy on Earth.” Next came the long Stalinist dictatorship, followed by the brief Khrushchev “Thaw.” Then another twenty years of moderate authoritarianism and, lastly, Gorbachev.

The arbitrariness and tragic mistakes of sovereign rulers have been paid for with blood: the Crimean War, World War I, and the revolution for which Nicholas II and the stupid and egoistic elite bore the brunt of responsibility, the Great Patriotic War, with millions who also perished through Stalin’s fault, and finally, Afghanistan.

Perestroika became possible only when – maybe for the first time in the entire history of the Soviet state – the reins of power went to a person who placed the interests of the country and its people above his own determination to stay in office at any cost. Gorbachev was a firm advocate of morality in politics. People possessing such qualities were very rare: the sacrifices that Soviet society had to suffer for the sake of ideological values had left a lasting imprint not only on life, but also on the mentality of people, including the ruling class, and greatly distorted their mode of thinking, making it one-vectored and aggressive.

The changes were just waiting for the one who would dare bring them to the fore. Volunteers were few. I can name just two such personalities in the whole period before *perestroika* – Khrushchev and Kosygin.

It is natural for people to remember what happened, but to seldom give thought to what could have happened if events had taken a different turn. In this particular case what if Gorbachev had decided against such a troublesome undertaking as *perestroika* and had chosen instead to govern the nation in the way his Kremlin predecessors had done. My friend Kvitsinsky was right: Gorbachev would have certainly

stayed in power for a long time. Yet he chose a different fate for himself. And, incidentally, he has remained a person of very moderate means which is not very common with our leaders.

The “what if” formula is fully applicable to the fourth factor: ***foreign policy***. Towards the end of Brezhnev’s rule, the Soviet Union’s international position was precarious and vulnerable. Figuratively speaking, it was a one-against-all position. The dangers were not just local. The risk of a nuclear Armageddon kept growing. Nobody wanted that, but no one was able to vow it would not happen. By 1982, the year Brezhnev died, the aggregate yield of Soviet and U.S. nuclear warheads (both installed on operational delivery vehicles and in storage facilities) was so great that there was an equivalent of four tons of TNT per each human on the globe. That alone made *perestroika* an absolute must.

In order to avoid disaster, a new type of relationship had to be negotiated with the United States. Before Gorbachev not a single politician had dared make peace with a class enemy. The problem of preventing a nuclear war had been addressed by building up weapons stockpiles in order to prevent a situation where one country would possess more weapons than the other.

I can anticipate the question: If *perestroika* was so critical for the country, why then did it end in failure, loss of power by its leader, and the breakup of the Soviet Union?

My answer is this: *perestroika* and the Soviet Union fell victim to a power struggle (“the key question of any revolution” as Vladimir Lenin once put it) and, respectively, division of property. By 1985, thanks to its previous leaders, from Stalin to Chernenko, the Soviet Union had been brought to such a state that its rescue would have required tremendous efforts by the entire ruling class. But the country was split along confrontational lines between rival factions, from orthodox conservatives to ultra radicals. For most of them the chief motif was certainly not preserving the Soviet Union, let alone reforming it into a democracy.

Gorbachev lost, but the policy of *perestroika* that he launched made it possible to achieve two important things: first, cardinal improve

the country's international standing and, second, implement profound democratic reform within the country. Although many of these gains were later uprooted like what had happened on many occasions before. But just as in the previous brighter years of Russian history, some gains became deeply ingrained in political culture. It is from these strongholds that the way will be paved towards a Russia of honest people that Dostoevsky had dreamed of in his day. Historical experience indicates this is inevitable. It only remains to be seen when this will happen.

PERESTROIKA'S FOREIGN POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS

Boris Yeltsin was fortunate to inherit Gorbachev's *foreign policy* legacy. That policy was in stark contrast to the one pursued from Stalin to Brezhnev. It was finally adjusted to the Soviet Union's real needs. In practical terms this means that the Gorbachev team:

- put an end to the “who-will-bury-whom” ideological confrontation between the East and the West and removed the enemy image from the public mind and politics;
- ended the 40-year-long Cold War with the United States and its allies;
- halted the arms race that was ruining the country, and agreed with the United States on the physical elimination of an entire class of weapons –intermediate and shorter range missiles that posed a direct threat to the Soviet Union's security;
- doing this greatly eased the threat of a nuclear war, although it did not eliminate it altogether because nuclear weapons stockpiles are still unreasonably large;
- had the courage to end the nine-year-long war in Afghanistan, pull out Soviet troops, and leave a government friendly to the Soviet Union (it would fall only after Yeltsin stopped supporting it);
- contributed to the settlement of a number of regional conflicts, for instance in Angola, Cambodia, and Nicaragua;
- restored to normal once hostile relations with China (this point is especially often forgotten) and was the first to develop the awareness that the centers of power were drifting towards the Asia-Pacific Region;

- not only restored diplomatic relations with Israel, but also established cooperation with it;
- after two bloody wars influenced the process of Germany's unification in a way that ended with the historical reconciliation of Germany (remarkably enough, it managed to avoid the sad experience of World War I, when the Treaty of Versailles immediately sowed the seeds of another conflict);
- refrained from attempts to use force to keep Eastern European countries in the orbit of the bankrupt Soviet regime; the former Socialist bloc saw no uprisings that might have placed a difficult choice before us (Romania was the sole exception, but even there the future of the country was shaped by its own people, without outside armed intervention);
- made a decisive contribution to turning Europe from a potential battlefield of another war into a zone of cooperation and booming international exchanges;
- turned the country towards a Europe sharing common values;
- brought to the forefront in both domestic and international terms the rights and freedoms of people, thereby greatly contributing to the growth of the Soviet Union's prestige, which by March 1985 had shrunk to zero;
- set the course towards integration with the global economy;
- opened the Soviet Union to the rest of the world and the world to the Soviet people for the first time in many decades;
- eased and in many cases lifted the financial burden estimated at billions of rubles that had been spent on support for genuine and ostensible national-liberation movements and on buying the loyalty of devoted and not quite devoted friends;
- started putting in order the military sphere: the armed forces and the military-industrial complex were stripped of the decisive say in foreign and defense policies.

I can say with certainty that each of the aforesaid moves *is consonant with Russia's national interests*. It is not an exaggeration to say that in less than seven years (1985-1991) the world changed beyond

recognition. Gorbachev's foreign policy determined the course of global affairs in many key aspects. At the will of the previous rulers the country continued to live the life of a besieged fortress, which excused cruelty and repression inside. *Perestroika* left Russia in an unprecedentedly favorable international environment. In fact, it had no foreign enemies that might pose a kind of threat that in the past required an all-out effort to ward off. (Here I do not speak of how *perestroika*'s legacy was managed afterwards.)

WHO LOST EASTERN EUROPE?

Yet Gorbachev continues to be rebuked “for making absolutely unprecedented *concessions to the West* and for catastrophically harming the country's positions.” Most critics fail to specify, however, what sort of concessions and what positions they have in mind. The more seriously minded usually say that under Gorbachev we lost the geopolitical battle and ceded positions in Eastern Europe gained through a victorious war. This kind of reply rests upon formal logic: “*under*” **does not mean “due to.”** A prolonged struggle cannot be lost overnight. Empires do not fall in the blink of an eye. The key question is: Were the methods that maintained the whole postwar order right and proper?

Even if the eventual outcome is to be interpreted as our loss, the bill delivered to the Soviet Union that was first associated with Stalin's despotism and then with Brezhnev's stagnation and armed enforcement of Socialism had been growing over time. Then came the time to cash the check.

Our departure from Eastern Europe was forced, including from the German Democratic Republic. The reason is simple: very few people in Eastern Europe wanted us to stay. In retrospect it is clear that the tactic of keeping Eastern European countries under the Soviet Union's command was a sure way into a trap. After the end of World War II, Stalin betted on *territorial gains* and converting them into social benefits: “Where the Soviet soldier reaches, there is socialism; where the American appears, there is capitalism as before.”

Stalin's Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov regarded the Soviet Union's territorial acquisitions as his greatest achievement – the

recovery of the losses the Russian Empire had sustained during World War I and in the early years of Bolshevik rule. Brezhnev's Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko took the greatest pride in perpetuating the postwar borders in Europe, the way they were drawn as a result of Stalin-Molotov policies.

Such reasoning looked quite fair in the light of the experience of all previous wars. But in the nuclear age Soviet security was far less dependent on a buffer zone near its borders. *The geostrategic dogma* remained in force for four decades. In shaping our defense policies, we primarily bore in mind nuclear warfare and offensive operations in Europe. We spent a quarter of our gross domestic product for this purpose (another quarter was used to subsidize prices). In the meantime, the implementation of either scenario looked increasingly more doubtful. Moreover, we assumed a colossal imperial mission as if the other burdens were not heavy enough.

We made huge investment in the conquered countries in the form of free aid, supplies of raw materials at huge discounts, and spending on infrastructures to accommodate hundreds of thousands of troops. But few Czechs or Poles were grateful to us. Discontent over the existing way of life, largely regarded as a derivative of Soviet dominance, was universal and it erupted many times in dramatic ways.

"Anti-socialist" demonstrations in Berlin (1953), Hungary (1956), and Czechoslovakia (1968) were suppressed by force. It is not accidental that the East Germans were the first to revolt against a crackdown on small private businesses, collectivization, and fast-tracked development of heavy industries. Add to this the single-party system and accelerated creation of the armed forces, which devoured a disproportionately large share of the state budget. There were trials and executions, and the eventual emergence of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Yet the contradictions remained and were bound to explode sooner or later. I recall a caustic remark popular in those days: even the Germans are unable to make the Soviet system work.

In Poland in 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski managed to avoid Soviet military intervention, but the Polish United Workers' Party remained in a very precarious position. In fact, it was ousted from power in the first free elections.

Incidentally, in their own protectorate of Western Europe, the Americans governed life in a way that never required to use force.

By the time Gorbachev rose to power, demand for change, long driven deep inside all Warsaw Pact countries, had come close to the boiling point. Sensing blood, the United States and some of its allies stepped up their inciting and propaganda activities. The Soviet Communist Party's ruling Politburo under Gorbachev by no means dropped the intention **to preserve the Socialist bloc**. It kept making decisions in favor of generous aid to the Warsaw Pact countries. In April 1985 the Warsaw Pact was extended for another twenty years (It would be disbanded in six years later). Active measures were taken in order to involve Eastern European countries in economic cooperation. Not all of them were unsuccessful; for instance, the joint project to lay the trunk pipeline from the Yamburg gas fields to the Soviet Union's western border. Regrettably, there were more failures than victories on the economic front. At the end of the day, we even remained in debt to our former allies.

The greatest hope was that Eastern European capitals would see the advent of their own reform champions – their own Gorbachevs, leaders capable of giving a powerful boost to “socialism with a human face” as soon as they were free from the Kremlin's yoke. But officialdom in most of those countries was extremely Brezhnevist, while a majority of the population no longer wanted “humane socialism” or any socialism at all, let alone a system pegged to the Soviet model imposed on them. The economic situation was dire, with low standards of living, incompetent bureaucracy, and political repression.

That is when the long-term effects of the never-let-you-go tactics surfaced, including attempts to quash by force the desire by the Czechs and Slovaks for democratic reform. Sadly, it was as late as November 1989 that the five states responsible for suppressing the Prague Spring uprising issued a collective statement to condemn the intrusion and to renounce the Brezhnev doctrine. Additionally, the Soviet Union issued its own declaration to express regret over the erroneous decision made in the summer of 1968.

I suspect we were largely unaware of how serious the situation in the Socialist countries was in those days. In the autumn of 1987,

speaking at the Foreign Ministry's board meeting after his return from Poland, Eduard Shevardnadze said: "The main problems have been overcome, and if the Polish comrades proceed in the same fashion, Poland will be a reliable link."

We had poor knowledge of the real situation also because our Warsaw Pact allies preferred not to bombard Moscow with bad news – if, of course, the leadership itself was fully informed. Another reason was that Soviet embassies were usually led not by career diplomats, but by Communist Party functionaries who rarely presented an objective picture. The Kremlin expected that they would present the situation the way the ideology required it, and not the real state of affairs.

We understood that keeping those countries in our orbit was possible only through the use of force once the new authorities in Eastern Europe unequivocally pointed to a door. Vaclav Havel, elected president after the Velvet Revolution, said in no uncertain terms that Soviet troops must leave Czechoslovakia by the end of 1990. Reformers in Hungary demanded the same, while opening the border with Austria to East Germans and, as it later turned out, getting financial rewards from the West Germans in exchange. In Bulgaria, Todor Zhivkov left office after 35 years in power.

Poland's Solidarity was the only political force in Eastern Europe that in no way demanded a Soviet pullout for some time. The new Polish leaders even asked the Kremlin to keep troops in Poland until allied Germany reaffirmed its commitment to the post-war borders, which Poland owed entirely to the Soviet Union and to which it had no objections at all.

As the Soviet bloc started falling apart it took great courage to remain committed to the proclaimed principle that people have the right to decide their own future. Fortunately, very few of those responsible for making decisions contemplated action from a position of strength. The Gorbachev team, including Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov and KGB chief Vladimir Kryuchkov, firmly opposed the use of force. A Politburo special resolution stated the same. All analysts agreed that any attempt at military suppression would first spell disastrous effects for our country. It would fuel the soaring hatred of

the Eastern Europeans, create universal estrangement in relations with the West, and further hurt the economy. We would have been left all alone with our problems.

I would add that Gorbachev had a precedent to rely on – the Soviet Union’s earlier decision not to “defend socialism” by force. I mean Poland in 1981. The Brezhnev doctrine was buried during its architect’s lifetime. Gorbachev just went ahead with this policy.

As soon as the people realized they were free to take to the streets without the risk of being shot, they did so. Eastern Europeans were eager to get out of the bearish imperial embrace and away from socialism made in the USSR. Geopolitics merged with ideology. Take the GDR (East Germany). Its citizens were fleeing the country by the thousand because there was one more powerful incentive – German unity.

Seeing an empire fall apart and realizing that only violence might stop the process for a time – yet the use of force is impossible – was a dramatic experience that I would not wish anyone to have. In economic terms we could no longer afford to continue supporting our allies. COMECON had long turned into a phantom. The new rulers that replaced the Communists in the COMECON member-states demanded its elimination. The Eastern Europeans displayed a similar “initiative” regarding the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Moreover, oil prices had slumped 60 percent: the hand of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia seeking vengeance for Afghanistan was surely at work here.

It is a hard fact that in those months when events overlapped one by one and the risk of making a mistake was high, the leader of the *perestroika* made not a single irreparable error.

The popular masses were outpacing politicians; they were about to go out of control, but what looked at a certain point like an imminent clash, incredible in terms of scale and passion, was ***successfully avoided without bloodshed***. The risk that the Soviet Army might be provoked into a response was neutralized. The inevitable divorce with the “countries of popular democracy” was not overshadowed by violence. Under Gorbachev, nothing happened like Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1979, or the violent crackdown against the Russian parliament in 1993.

I will not downgrade the discussion to the level of those who accuse Gorbachev of treason. But I must admit some reproaches are an expression of sincere concern about the country. Mainly, they stem from the bitter recognition that we lost the competition between two social systems. But those responsible for the failure should be looked for not in 1985, but much earlier. Indeed, is there a point in our past when one could say without hesitation that before that everything was fine?

The problems Gorbachev had to address had piled up over *decades of deficient governance*. The historical dispute between capitalism and socialism (to be more precise, its unsuccessful model) had been lost long before Gorbachev. He was merely bargaining over conditions of concluding peace, because the competition had acquired a shape of the Cold War with all its materialistic background like the arms race, declared to be a form of class struggle. And Gorbachev was compelled to carry on diplomatic bargaining abroad when the internal struggle flames were about to envelop the house.

EMERGING FROM THE AUTHORITARIAN MATRIX

There is another “What if” question: *Did Gorbachev do the right thing by ending the Cold War?* I have heard some critics say: “Just a bit more and the Americans would have lost, if not for Gorbachev who saved them.” Apparently what they had in mind was that our huge military potential was really not inferior to that of the U.S. Thanks God, no one dared check this in practice. But one aspect of parity was not enough. In all other respects we lost. We lost without a single shot fired, to be more precise, without a single missile launched. Incidentally, that kept “winding up” the post-Soviet establishment – it had certainly not suffered a military defeat (by contrast, the U.S. establishment, which never had a chance to experience what war is like, developed the delusion that it was omnipotent, which led it to Afghanistan and Iraq.) But if dreams of *revanche* are brushed aside, if our target is peace, Gorbachev did everything right.

Eastern Europe’s drift away from us – and let me reiterate, not against the will of the people of those countries, but of their strong

desire – worked towards peaceful development. It was hardly a loss, rather it was a relief from a burden, since in our “empire” we contrived to generate more losses than gains. Reconciliation with Germany, our most important partner of all the Western countries, also worked towards peaceful development. So did the exit from confrontation with the U.S. and its allies, and normalization of relations with China. From the standpoint of peace prospects, the outcome of the end of the Cold War was quite acceptable for Russia.

It is an entirely different matter as to how the opportunities for a peaceful Russian-Western cooperation that opened up in the early 1990s were used and what has taken us to the crisis of 2014. This is a separate topic for discussion. But even that crisis could have been far more serious if not for the positive experience of overcoming acute situations, and the experience of cooperation in the post-*perestroika* years in trade, economy and other spheres, which soared to new highs after the end of the Cold War.

Gorbachev’s approaches might look somewhat idealistic. To his critics they looked even naive. But this was *noble idealism*. It heralded a U-turn away from a class ideology. Its projection to international relations implied an antagonistic struggle between two social systems until the opponent was annihilated. Gorbachev’s idea was to replace the concept that relied on division and enmity with the priority of common humanitarian values, social justice, and the emergence of a democratic world order.

Gorbachev’s idealism by no means interfered with his quite pragmatic foreign policy. In fact, it was rather helpful, for it prompted thoughts about the future and also encouraged “breakthrough” ideas.

Gorbachev’s new thinking cropped up on fertile soil. It derived strength from the firm wish of the advanced section of society to work for the sake of the people and to make government policies serve the people’s interests. It continued in more advanced forms – the Khrushchev Thaw in international relations and the easing of tensions of the early Brezhnev era. Manuscripts do not burn. Good ideas do not vanish without a trace.

And still, in my opinion, President Gorbachev's greatest merit lies outside the realm of foreign policy. It is the rare and, unfortunately, unused chance that his *perestroika* gave Russia. It was a great and ***bold attempt to pull Russia out of the authoritarian matrix*** dating back to the Mongol Yoke. To reform the country without oppressing the people and squeezing them to the last drop the way Emperor Peter I and Stalin did, and give them the rights and opportunity to build their own lives. It was a unique attempt, because not a single person before or after Gorbachev has offered the nation the choice of stepping off the track the country had trodden for centuries.

Now we are back on the same track again. Where will it take us? No optimistic prospects are in sight.

Gorbachev and his team were well aware that like the Paris Commune of 1871 they would have to "storm the heavens." The strategy of *perestroika* confronted a robust system. Just a few figures say it all: during the years of stagnation (1971-1984) the staff of the bureaucratic machinery grew by 4.6 million to 17.7 million in September 1985. It was a united, experienced army with no scruples, and well aware of what it was fighting for. One has to admit that the *perestroika* leadership chose rather mild measures in their struggle with bureaucracy and its vanguard, the privileged class of functionaries and administrators. It was believed that cutting the roots would be far better than aggressive purges. But the *nomenklatura* was very resourceful in inventing ways of resistance. The ruling elites headed by Russian President Yeltsin decided the fate of *perestroika* and Gorbachev. ***They won the struggle for power.***

As soon as they saw the real strength of the ruling *nomenklatura* class, the leaders of *perestroika* thought it might be a good idea to seek support from the public at large and from constructive grassroots initiatives. But they hardly suspected to what extent society had been crippled by decades of hardships, poverty, and purposeful, deliberate brainwashing. The people are not to blame for being subjected to monstrous experiments. But Gorbachev's firm belief that the people "stand solidly for *perestroika*" was a delusion, however sad this recognition may sound.

The leaders of *perestroika* never managed to achieve in-depth realization of what kind of society had been built, something Yuri Andropov had called for in his day. Setting in motion a country that by and large was unprepared for reform and accustomed to the previous placid existence and unaware of the perils of stagnation required far more time than was available in reality. In March 1987 Gorbachev thought “we shall achieve the first results in three-four years’ time, if we manage to hold on.”

Regrettably, the demagogues and populists were able to derive more benefits for themselves than those who had brought *perestroika* and *glasnost* into existence. It was an illustration of the classical pattern at work – some stand up for the people, while the people prefer to follow somebody else. Those who by and large do not care about the people. Power and money are their sole beacon.

Contrary to what incompetent propagandists keep saying, ***it was not Gorbachev who ruined the Soviet Union, but the top of the state machinery who revolted against his democratic reforms.*** Boris Yeltsin’s deadly enmity played a disastrous role. Leonid Kravchuk, the former ideology chief of the Communist Party in Ukraine, made the second largest personal contribution to the breakup of the Soviet Union. Ancient Romans in such cases used to ask “*Cui bono?*” (“To whose benefit?”). It was the top tier of the political and economic bureaucracy that benefited the most from the fall of the Soviet Union.

People are gradually developing an awareness of what happened. According to opinion polls conducted at the end of 2012, only 18 percent blamed the Soviet Union’s breakup on Gorbachev compared to 45 percent twenty years ago. There is a growing understanding that *perestroika* released long-simmering negative energy and prevented internal cataclysms. It is noteworthy that well-educated people generally approve of *perestroika*.

I hope that in the long term the just and fair attitude towards Gorbachev will gain the upper hand. I agree with Russian political scientist Dmitry Furman, who wrote: “Gorbachev was the only politician in Russian history who, having all power in his hands,

consciously agreed to its limitation for the sake of ideal moral values, although by doing so he ran the risk of losing it altogether.”

One of Russia’s characteristics has often been a tight alliance of political and economic machinery, on the one hand, and of the omnipotent class of state bureaucracy, on the other. Yet there have been attempts to curb it: Stalin used purges, and Khrushchev and Gorbachev implemented reforms. In that respect there has definitely been an unmistakable pullback away from Gorbachev’s innovations. The arbitrariness of bureaucracy, corruption, and other forms of parasitism are now stronger than ever.

I would like to end these notes with a quote from my preferred writer Venedikt Yerofeyev, who tried to predict our future in 1989: “Russia has no joy about anything; nor does anyone feel sad, in fact. It is rather in anticipation of some kind of still vague-looking grandiose filth; most probably, a return to the infamies of the past.”

In short, Gorbachev warmed our souls, now again...

Interests and Strategies



Kianoush Ramezani

“It is the consciousness and maturity of the elite, which should not only be focused on self-interest, but should also have state and social responsibility. It is highly important that its vision of national interests conforms to public opinion.”

Politics for Everyone?

Looking for the “Right” National Interests

Andrei Skriba

After the breakup of the Soviet Union an overwhelming majority of countries seemingly came to a consensus that the democratic path was inevitable, so many scholars and experts began to discuss the new era of peace and good neighborliness. The tacit consensus envisioned the unavoidable gradual integration of developing countries into the Western system, and some people began to entertain dreams about the end of history and triumph of Western liberal democracy.

Although acknowledging the high efficiency of Western institutions, by the early 2000s it had become clear that developing and transition countries were not going to blindly copy those organizations. The cultural identity, religious specificity, and aspirations of those countries' elites ran counter to the changes that had recently seemed inevitable. As a result, the world slowly began to return to a habitual competition between states, each with their own and, naturally, conflicting interests.

Severe global turbulence – competition, globalization, democratization, conflict over economic benefits, political expediency, and new threats to security – caused many countries to rethink their national interests. For some it was simply a matter of rearranging priorities, while others had to return to the old agenda or look for a new one to survive in a rapidly changing world.

Russia was not immune to the problem of national interest. For more than two decades Russia had been squeezed between historical memory and dissatisfaction with its current status, between Western pressure

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and lagging behind a prosperous Asia, and between great ambitions and an inability to translate them into action. Finally, as was graphically demonstrated in 2014, Russia found itself trapped between rejecting the Western path and not having its own effective development model.

NATIONAL INTEREST IN THEORY

Although the term “national interest” entered into scientific use in the middle of the 20th century, discussions about its *sources and motivational nature* still continue.

In the first case, the question is the source of power and who should use it – society (the nation) or its institutional superstructure (the state). These discussions stem from the philosophical teachings of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Hobbes argued that *the state should be above society* (even though it is created by society) and should protect it from human problems that, considering human nature, are ineradicable. Locke’s ideas in this sense were directly opposed to those of Hobbes since they placed *society above the state*. In Locke’s view, as people enter into a social contract to form a government, they have the right to demand from the state a policy that they deem right and rational.

It turns out that there are two main sources of national interest: the country’s leadership (elites, decision-makers), which is interested in retaining its status; and society, with its own views on domestic and foreign developments. Below we will see that these sources are not an integral whole.

Several theories have been offered to explain the motivational nature of national interest; *realistic theories* assign primary importance to protecting the state from external threats. The founder of political realism, Hans Morgenthau, was one of the first to link national interest to foreign policy. He believed that national security, territorial integrity, and non-interference in internal affairs were integral parts of the national interest. Other realists share his views, including James Rosenau, Walter Lippmann, George Kennan, Kenneth Waltz, and Edgar Furniss.

Objectivist approaches were just as popular, since they viewed a country’s population as a community of people united by mutual

respect and common political values. Their objective national interests stemmed from the fact that the personal interests of individuals were placed below a more common overall goal. That goal was formulated with due account of the objective features of a nation – culture, religion, place of residence, etc. **Geopolitics** is the best known of these approaches. For instance, Friedrich Ratzel pointed to interrelation between the interests of the people and the state's space (Raum). Karl Haushofer developed these ideas, which ultimately influenced the foreign policy of Nazi Germany.

Although these approaches were very popular, some scholars were skeptical about the objective basis of national interest. For example, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle argued that any reflection on an objective national interest is subjective. Arnold Wolfers wrote in the spirit of contemporary constructivism that national interest can mean different things to different people. And Raymond Aron believed that the pluralism of goals, means, and resources available to individuals and groups within states do not produce a certain resultant power and do not mean it is possible to estimate the “national interest” unequivocally.

Other approaches determined national interests as an integral part of **diplomacy**. The interests themselves turned into narrower goals and tasks aimed at strengthening the state. These could include access to seaports, the deployment of military bases on foreign territories, friendly relations with neighboring countries, etc. In this case, national interests were separated from broader ideals of society and were interpreted as “state interests.”

Sometimes scholars link national interests with an **idealistic** perception of international relations. In some cases, when it comes to the interests of the state, this implies a system of relations that is the most comfortable for the country. As a rule, a balance of power serves as such a system. In other cases, the source of idealism is a society that views principles of morality as the basis of national interest and the solution of global problems as the main goal of foreign policy (**the liberal approach**).

Such different ways of defining national interests ultimately gave rise to a great variety of interpretations. The most popular are:

- traditions and social values on which the state leader relies when choosing a foreign policy;
- interests formed in the process of dialogue between the authorities and the people; the state turns to society to formulate such a dialogue, then takes it to the international level for negotiations;
- the goals of the most influential group of individuals; when foreign policy is used to legitimize their own interests to the detriment of the rest of society;
- interests based on objective qualities of society, including the need to ensure security and strengthening the state (these are placed above international order);
- the most favorable external environment which guarantees sovereignty for every international actor;
- an international community built on the principles of morality and mutual respect, which is placed above the national (state) interest.

At first glance, the above interpretations seem contradictory, although all of them are correct in a way. In practice, national interests are a vague notion that includes all of the above in one way or another: the interests of the ruling elite, its desire to ensure state security, and the interests of other, non-state players, both inside the country and abroad.

Of ultimate importance is balancing all of these interests. On the one hand, the context in which interests are formed is important. For example, in a tense international situation it is quite natural to give priority to state security over people's well-being. And vice versa: in peacetime, society and politicians think more about how to achieve economic prosperity. American studies call this problem a "threshold question:" upon achieving what level of significance does a particular interest acquire nationwide and paramount importance?

On the other hand, this threshold is unique for each state, since it largely depends on the situation inside a given country. For example, openness to the outside world poses a major threat to dictatorships and totalitarian regimes, while it is a natural necessity for liberal

democracies. Therefore, in the first case, the imperative of personal safety and retention of power will always prevail over economic prosperity. Thus, the hierarchy of people, groups, and their goals as determined by the institutional environment – political interrelations and interdependencies inside the country – acquires key importance.

THE SUBJECTIVITY OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

For centuries the political systems of countries ensured that the elites had an absolute monopoly on national interests. Various scholars justified this practice, including Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli. Monarchies or other forms of absolutism made it possible for rulers to make decisions single-handedly and impose them on the rest of society. Such decisions often were opportunistic and concerned conspiracies, intrigues, dynastic alliances, and personal ambitions.

Resulting in tectonic shifts to political systems, the development of capitalism and bourgeois revolutions dealt a severe blow to absolutism. Monarchical power was either restricted by a constitution or abolished altogether in favor of other forms of government. The old aristocracy gave way to the possessors of big capital (the bourgeoisie), who lobbied for their own interests and actively influenced domestic and foreign policies. As a result, politics was no longer as unpredictably volatile as it had been and rested on a broad and long-term foundation – an alliance of power and money. National interests also became long-term and acquired a more objective content. In the middle of the 19th century, Britain's Lord Palmerston said: "We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. *Our interests are eternal and perpetual.*"

By the beginning of the 20th century, capitalization was followed by the democratization of social and political life. New political systems provided more extensive rights to civil society, which could finally influence national interests. In some cases this influence was indirect, such as through election campaigns; in others it was direct, such as when citizens united in groups (trade unions, public associations, and other NGOs) to become a real political force.

At first glance, the changes only exacerbated the inherent conflict between society and the state, thus complicating the search for a

common denominator. Indeed, in young emerging polities, conflicts between the interests of various groups often fueled crises, revolutions, and even civil wars, in which centuries-old states collapsed.

However, as the situation in a country stabilized, it became clear that the involvement of more domestic actors in the political process did bring the country closer to finding a national agenda “for all” or, at least, caused a country to look for it. And although natural competition between elites and civil society did not disappear, the established rules made both parties more responsible.

Both political and economic elites realized they should not only deal with external threats and pursue their own affairs, but also meet society’s needs. National interest gradually began to shed its “elitist selfishness.” Society, in turn, also made its own, albeit small, contribution to the political agenda, becoming less radical in political judgments and actions (19th-century England is a vivid example of this, where timely democratization created a broad national dialogue and, in fact, saved the country from a revolution). Most importantly, citizens received the constitutional right to revoke the mandate of the elite, even before it expired, if they discovered that the elites’ actions ran counter to national interests.

The general trend of capitalization and political democratization had geographical irregularities and distinctive features. Countries in Western Europe, as well as their former and most progressive colonies – the United States, Canada, and Australia – covered this path the fastest. Their national interest was to preserve domestic achievements and realize their fullest potential as leading powers.

In other cases, political evolution had its own specifics. Above all this concerns European countries whose interests were largely impaired by the outcome of World War I. All of them experienced authoritarianism and concentration of power in the hands of new forces that offered more attractive agendas to the people. For post-imperial Russia this was the Communist idea, which made it possible to unite the disintegrating country around the idea of building a superclass society. For Germany, the way out of humiliating defeats was in fascism and revanchism, which mobilized the nation around the interests of revival and expansion of “living space” (*Lebensraum*).

In other European countries, as well as countries in Asia and Latin America, reforms fell under the strong influence of religious, ethnic, and cultural specifics. Some countries, such as China and Turkey, went through various stages to finally develop their own special, socially acceptable models. For other countries the entire 20th century turned into a continuous and fruitless search for such a model, as the interests of frequently changing elites and dissatisfied societies constantly clashed. Muslim countries deserve special mention because religion was the core of their national interests. In addition to windfall oil revenue, religion was the foundation of authoritarian and monarchical regimes. The religious element was lacking in other countries that were just as rich in resources, but less stable politically (such as Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, and secular Iran).

In the second half of the 20th century, the national interests of many countries mixed with ideological rivalry between the capitalist West and the communist non-West. At that time the term 'national interests' entered into scientific use and the state-centric understanding of these interests experienced a new renaissance. The confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States once again highlighted the interests of security, protection of sovereignty, and territorial or political gains. In foreign policy the focus was on preserving the balance of power between the rival blocs. This background strengthened the political elite; yet far from setting it in opposition to other participants in the political process, circumstances sometimes even brought political leaders closer together.

Generally speaking, as countries and societies evolved, the objective basis of national interests expanded. Firstly, the elites, which still were the main sources of national interests, became more capacious and inclusive. Secondly, in most cases they could no longer ignore the views of the people they represented. As a result, national interests became more rational. They were enriched by economic interests, cultural identity, and religious affiliation (and, temporarily, ideological struggle) and began to take into account the level of a country's development and the extent to which citizens were happy.

The decisive factor was whether or not effective institutions could consolidate this evolution, thereby establishing a broad dialogue

among all participants in the political process. If such efforts succeeded, mechanisms for implementing national interests could conform to the new realities. Otherwise, a change in the ruling regime only redistributed private interests within national interests, and irresponsibility among the elites sooner or later manifested itself again.

NATIONAL INTERESTS TODAY

The era of ideologized interests ended quite unexpectedly for many of its key players. It is no exaggeration to assert that the breakup of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the entire socialist bloc threw the international community off balance.

For the United States and its closest allies, the formal defeat of their main geopolitical enemy revealed opportunities unknown until that time. According to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, the collapse of communism was followed by the breakdown of boundaries and obstacles, and globalization revolutionized the world. “And at the center of this revolution America stands,” he said. However, euphoria quickly encountered a conceptual contradiction. The former America was a symbol of protection for liberal-democratic values, while the third wave of democratization had already swept the new world. Strobe Talbott asserted this deprived Western democracy of its exclusiveness and destroyed the myth that some people and cultures were inherently non-democratic. This conclusion naturally evoked the question: How can the U.S. explain its former interests in other countries and regions when it no longer needed to provide protection from the communist threat?

Former Soviet countries, as well as many other post-socialist states, were going through painful political and economic reforms at that time that hindered national consensus. Previously united by an ideology, the societies and elites in those countries now found themselves on different sides of the barricades. In a democratic environment, society began to rebel against government inefficiency and waited for a new policy, while elites experienced an obvious lack of national ideas. Many Third World countries faced similar problems, as conflicts of interests in these countries prevented their governments from formulating national political agendas.

Processes that consistently eroded state sovereignty and undermined the very possibility of forming a separate and distinct national agenda also impeded the search for new national interests.

Firstly, there is **globalization**, which erased economic and information boundaries. Transnational capital created not only opportunities for development, but also threats because it often was beyond government control and sometimes even interfered in state affairs. In addition, information flows, which governments could not control either, made the world too blurred for creating distinct national identities. At the same time, neoliberals viewed these processes as a long-awaited blessing, since they believed that national interests should give way to global human interests in the era of globalization.

Secondly, after decolonization and a new wave of democratization, transition countries experienced a sharp escalation of the **ethnic problem**. The issue is not conflicts between countries (India vs Pakistan, Arab nations vs Israel), which, on the contrary, helped strengthen social consolidation, but the lack of national homogeneity in many countries. At best, societies could not unite around a common idea. At worst, the absence of homogeneity served as the reason for the disintegration of countries such as Yugoslavia or Sudan, and to a large extent is responsible for what is happening today in Ukraine. The ethnic issue also played an important role in the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Thirdly, we cannot ignore the example of the European Union, where **economic and political integration** affected national interests, causing EU member countries to look for compromise. On the one hand, there was a definite plus, as integration thus guaranteed peaceful negotiations and mutually advantageous cooperation. It seemed to be particularly favorable for former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe; countries that had relatively quickly and successfully overcome the “shock therapy.” On the other hand, however, integration generated supranational bureaucracy, which developed its own interests over time. These interests frequently ran counter to the national agenda. This was vividly manifested by the European policy towards Russia in 2014, when the EU strengthened **politically** by exploiting the image of an external enemy, even though sanctions were **economically** disadvantageous to many member countries.

Samuel Huntington believed that in the absence of a clear-cut national agenda transnational and non-national groups would prevail in foreign policy. It is too early to draw a conclusion about global domination, yet there is no doubt that the interests and policies of many countries over the past quarter century have been consistently losing their “nationality” to increasingly conform to the surrounding disorder.

On the one hand, some *states and elites* were not interested in changing their priorities from defense to internal development and tried to remain strong. They were supported by the military lobby, an influential force during the Cold War. Together they began to look for new justifications for old policies. For Western countries and the U.S. in particular, the justification was protection from “underdemocratized” regimes (Iraq, Yugoslavia) and, later, the threat of terrorism, which was a pretext for intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan. By the end of the 2000s, a new rhetoric emerged about external security threats, above all Russia, Iran, North Korea and, in the longer term, China. Many countries adopted the same tactic – the search for an external enemy for the sake of strengthening the state. Russia is no exception.

Big business, which despite its independence has maintained close ties with political elites, tried to derive benefits from the Cold War legacy. For example, U.S. oil companies won lucrative contracts in a politically renewed Iraq. Yet economic interests not only served as stimulation, but also defused international tensions. Relations between the U.S. and China, and between Europe and Russia remained peaceful for a long time largely due to economic interests.

International instability made national interests hostage of the political process to an even greater extent than before. Elites in both democracies and authoritarian regimes often did not even try to fight back; rather they sought to adapt to the constantly changing context and derive the maximum benefit from it. This is not surprising considering it was the lack of initiative regarding external chaos and compliance with someone else’s imperatives that often helped these elites retain their influence and power.

Civil society stood opposite the elites. Naturally, it protested against the elites’ inaction and the strengthening of the state, often carried

out under false pretexts. But its protests were not consistent and did not always produce the desired result. For example, in economically successful Western democracies a well-off and contented populace is largely passive; it is a group partly frightened by the uncertainty of the future, but which is not yet ready to take decisive action. In transition countries, society is either not yet mature enough to defend its own interests or is under pressure from an alliance of the authorities, big business, and the military. When in some cases protests do achieve a critical mass, the authorities often imitate reforms and a change in elites. This happened in post-Soviet and Arab countries after the “color revolutions:” foreign aid helped them change political regimes, but there are still no signs of emerging national interests there.

All this has affected modern scientific studies, which do not raise the issue of the motivational nature of national interests or dialogue between society and the authorities. Scholars have focused on foreign-policy practices; namely, in what way an action meets or jeopardizes national interests. At the same time, it remains unclear what is meant by those interests and whether they can be considered truly national. Apparently, scholars have come to a tacit understanding that national interests today are a set of vague priorities and guidelines for how to behave with the rest of the world (Joseph Nye, John Mearsheimer), and therefore they prefer to study not their sources, but narrower and more specific manifestations. But is this right?

LOOKING FOR THE “RIGHT” NATIONAL INTERESTS

One can say that vague national interests deepen the gap between an idea-driven society and practice-oriented elites, depersonalize the state, and cause international instability. Others may argue that vagueness smoothes things over and protects the world from the former irreconcilable confrontation. However, the most important thing is that without clear national interests the state cannot effectively develop and simultaneously compete with other countries and defend itself from external threats. As Joseph Nye wrote, society must defend and promote its main values abroad, or it will lose its identity and dissolve in world chaos.

One solution to this problem may be harmonization of interests inside a country. After ideological competition, which formerly united various interest groups against a foreign enemy, disappears, the lack of harmonization instruments is felt ever stronger. Meanwhile, these instruments should bring the country closer to settling accumulated differences between the elites and society, and between the objective basis and subjective desires.

We can single out three levels of national interests: the *public* level, which is the objective basis of national interests. It is here where the cultural, religious and civilizational foundation is laid. One should not exaggerate the influence of this level because societies cannot and should not engage in policy-making. Otherwise, policies will become even more erratic and inconsistent. However, the stability of the political system largely depends on society; therefore the government should not ignore its opinions. This is why Western democracies seem to be an optimal example of interaction and mutual control between the state and the people. Without grassroots control, authoritarian regimes may be effective, but they may also lead the country into a crisis if they pursue their own narrower interests.

Next is the *country* level, where separate public interests are brought to a common denominator and combined with the interests of the state (security, political stability, protection of sovereignty) and elites (retention of power, economic benefits). Two circumstances are very important here. Firstly, it is the consciousness and maturity of the elite, which should *not only* be focused on self-interest, but should also have state and social responsibility. It is highly important that its vision of national interests should not descend to the first level (for imposing information, or giving formal approval), but regularly prove how it conforms to public opinion. Secondly, it is the role of the intellectual elite (the scientific community) to conceptualize national interests; that is, to sum up the country's objective features, the subjective desires of influential groups, and commitment to long-term development.

An overwhelming majority of countries, including advanced Western countries, have lacked this second level in recent decades. Economic elites often lost their "nationality" and only considered their personal benefits. Political elites did not think of long-term goals and tasks, but of how

to retain power and win elections. Intellectual elites were sidelined and did not play conceptually unifying roles. As a result, the impression has formed in the last two decades that the world has been moving by inertia and countries survive only thanks to their previous achievements.

The third level is *foreign policy*. It is here that national interests intersect with the external environment and the interests of other countries. At this level, it is important that the state (officials, elites, decision makers) balance national interests in accordance with global processes. In particular, it should make them active to preserve and multiply the country's influence; make them attractive so as not to provoke conflicts; and constantly think of their competitiveness in order to protect the country from destructive outside influences.

The discussion of these three levels does not at all mean that the author has an idealistic view about which national interests cover the aspirations of all citizens of a given country. It is obvious that the interests of elites will always differ from the interests of the rest of society, and that national interests and their practical implementation will be largely an elitist, rather than democratic, product. In addition, international relations are developing too quickly to allow long-term discussions of problems, threats, and ways to counter them. And lest one forget the old rule: in the face of a growing external threat, priority is often given to matters of state security, rather than social welfare.

Crisis phenomena manifest themselves in the termination of essential dialogue in many countries where it was started by the development of capitalism and democratization. The interests of political elites are rooted in past reality; those of economic elites are increasingly losing their "nationality," and society, unable to offer a political agenda of its own, is silent, cautious, and often passive waiting. These factors harm countries, their people, and the entire international system. That is why societies and elites need a new rapprochement to make national interests more homogeneous and targeted.

CONCLUSIONS FOR RUSSIA

National interests are a vague category, including the interests of ruling elites and big business. National interests are close to the elites,

business leaders, and public sentiment. A country's interests ensure state security and protect sovereignty, and reflect policies to maintain (or change) the international status quo. Over the last few centuries national interests have come a long way from a subjective motivation by the ruling aristocracy to reliance on private capital and the objective peculiarities of the people.

The disappearance of ideological competition meant that national interests lost part of their content. The gap between the national component (society) and representatives of practical interests (elites) continued to grow. Globalization, transnational capital, and groups and institutions, which are devoid of nationality, gradually eroded the interests of many countries. Nation-states also faced the problem of unity and integrity.

Russia has not escaped these challenges. In the 1990s Russia lost much of the territory it had gained and addressed the difficult problems of separatism in the territory it retained. In the 2000s Russia tried to formulate new national interests, but did not succeed due to a lack of understanding. The problem was put aside indefinitely, sidelined by other social problems. But in the mid-2010s, a new conflict with the West forced Russia to ask the old questions again: What are its diverse interests? What does it want? What should it seek in addition to guarantees of security and sovereignty, which are vital to any country?

In order to formulate its political agenda and development strategy, Russia today, like many other countries, needs a link between the state/elites and civil society. Indeed, both the Russian state and society are still in transition from the Soviet system to capitalism and democracy. Under these conditions, strengthening the state is not just natural, but necessary, since it gives citizens and elites time to come to a self-awareness of their new status. However, long-term transformations have dictated new trends for the country's development. To miss them is to exacerbate the gap between the views of the elites and a changing society.

Society is ready for new national interests to appear that will pave the way for effective and long-term policies "for all." Now the situation hinges on those who will formulate them correctly.

Why Are National Interests Necessary?

Self-Restriction as a Blessing

Mikhail Troitsky

International relations are concerned with national interests and how they evolve. Some researchers insist that there are obligatory and unchangeable interests expressed in terms of power or prosperity. Others suggest reconstructing national interests depending on how a country acts in a particular situation. Still others hold that national interests are relatively stable, but can vary considerably due to external factors, such as emerging or disappearing norms, institutions, or circumstances.

Assuming that evolution actually takes place, one could legitimately wonder how national interests are stated and for what purpose. We are interested in “non-trivial” interests; that is, interests that go beyond the obvious security needs of a state and its economic survival in the face of external threats.

A country’s current interests are stated explicitly in both official doctrines and unofficial publications. The opinion of leading experts is normally taken into account when such decisions are made. In the majority of leading countries, the government adopts official documents such as foreign policy or national security doctrines, concepts, or strategies. Unofficial, yet integral and influential, doctrinal texts are more difficult to find, but they exist in many countries. Experts who watch Russian foreign policy pay special attention to Academician Yevgeny Primakov’s annual speeches at the Mercury Club. Another example is a report by the non-governmental Commission on America’s National

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Interests released by a group of experts from George W. Bush's election support group in 2000. Many of them, including Condoleezza Rice and Robert Blackwill, were later appointed to key foreign policy positions in the Bush administration. Although the administration diverted from some, but not all, of the commission's recommendations, the report can be considered a canonical model for identifying and evaluating the national interests of a major power.

The authors of the report sorted through U.S. national interests to exclude everything that would not result in immediate economic gains to the country or directly affect its security. The restrictive interpretation of "national" interests was offered in contrast to "global" or simply "alien" interests. For example, Rice, Blackwill, and their colleagues criticized the outgoing Clinton administration for what they called indiscriminate interference in crises and conflicts outside the U.S.

Does Russia have to state its national interests in the same way? And who should define those interests and how?

THE FUNCTIONS OF INTERESTS

National interests are a public declaration of a country's needs and intentions based on an assessment of the current situation. Such a declaration performs several key functions.

Firstly, it establishes a hierarchy of foreign policy priorities to avoid the ineffective use of resources and overextension. This was the main purpose of the report prepared by the Commission on America's National Interests, which did not invent anything new, but simply put well-known interests in order of priority, substantiating their choice.

Secondly, an official or semi-official statement of national interests puts reasonable constraints on the government, which often uses foreign policy to gain political advantage over the opposition. In addition, clearly stated national interests provide society with strict criteria for evaluating the policy conducted by those who make foreign policy decisions.

Thirdly, national interests ensure both continuity and timely adjustment of key aspects of the policy. It is particularly important that proper definitions contained in official documents prevent the state from turning foreign policy into a continuation of domestic policy. Regardless of how

well democratic institutions are developed, in the majority of countries numerous actors with private interests seek to push them to the national level and garner government support. In this respect, national interests are a system of interconnected and logically coherent statements on what can be beneficial for a particular state in a given period of time.

In a harmonious system of national interests, one cannot easily manipulate its parts. In fact, in most cases one or several interests cannot be restated without affecting the others, as those “retouched” for the sake of some immediate goals or influential groups will undoubtedly collide with other national interests. *Kommersant* international affairs observer Yelena Chernenko has rightfully noted that Russia cannot give up on its commitment to the inviolability of borders and state sovereignty without correcting the underlying doctrinal principles of its foreign policy.

Finally, a country pronounces national interests publicly in order to be more predictable to the outside world. The state largely restricts itself by declaring its interests and readiness to pursue them by all means, while pledging to refrain from actions that would clearly be at odds with such declarations. Such firmness in pursuing these interests is usually accompanied by attempts to explain why they do not threaten other countries and can on the whole be acceptable to them. The declaration of national interests as a foreign policy instrument can be effective if there is a balance between a state’s ambitions and its guarantees to refrain from zero-sum games. For instance, if national interests are stated in a manner that multiplies influential opponents and increases international resistance to a country’s foreign policy, then this can hardly be the best way to do it.

Any violation of declared national interests can result in serious external consequences. In fact, how can anyone trust existing or future declarations if the authors themselves ignore them so easily? What would be the price of mistrust? An exorbitantly costly arms race is just one of the most common consequences a major power that has lost the trust of the rest of the world (or its part) in its declared interests or intentions can face.

Some may object: does not the uncertainty created by a “flexible interpretation” of our own doctrines give us additional advantages and does it not give us more room for diplomatic maneuver? True, there

must be uncertainty in a publicly presented *military* doctrine or *security* strategy. A potential adversary must not know how we are planning to respond to its aggression or threats, and our reaction is meant to come as a surprise. But foreign policy is not defense; it is, above all, a sequence of actions to create favorable conditions for a country so that it can reap benefits through cooperation. But no cooperation can develop if the main intentions of its participants are unclear. Countries whose wellbeing and security depend on cooperation with other countries prefer not to scare their potential partners by the uncertainty of their intentions and openly state their interests. Moreover, similarity of values underlying national interests (commitment to liberal democracy or unlimited state sovereignty) sends an additional signal to countries that share these values. This provides a strong foundation for mutual trust without the need to commit large amounts of money to building a safety net against a surge of animosity from a partner.

NATIONAL INTERESTS AND SOCIETY

The role played by national interests in building a civic nation deserves special mention. A popularly supported declaration of national interests consolidates people, helping them overcome divisions between different ethnic groups, social and economic status, and level of education. A “common cause” usually brings people together. The legitimacy of a government that pursues a national interest policy increases along with popular support for foreign policy expenditures. If necessary, people can even agree to pay a certain price for the sake of important common goals.

The uniting power of declaring national interests should not be overestimated, though, because different socially active groups and political forces can assess them very differently. Clear public gains (preferably financial) from the consistent implementation of the declared foreign policy principles are a sufficient condition for such consolidation.

At the same time, officials who convey national interests should not rely entirely on public opinion. Professional skills are required that go beyond a layman’s concept of “common sense” and a deeper understanding of the international situation than one can get from the press or television news to determine threats to a country and its future possibilities. As

Larissa Pautova has noted in this journal before, “geopolitics lies beyond the average Russian’s everyday life.” Those who chart the country’s foreign policy course are forced to take into account public sentiment. But populist opinion surveys are not enough to define national interests.

Nor can this task be entrusted to a narrow circle of top state functionaries whose contacts with small influential groups are hard to trace. Any “elite” that ventures “to take upon itself” the task of working out a concept of national interests will most likely be unable to consolidate plentiful private interests into several common ones. At best, this “elite” will become hostage to several groups of interests such as the military-industrial complex, natural resources sector, or any other big business. Subsequently, foreign policy will be distorted, resulting in overspending and missed opportunities to improve a nation’s prosperity and strengthen security in general. In the worst-case scenario, the “elite” will manipulate public opinion in order to raise its electoral chances, thus taking a position in opposition to any national interests.

In foreign policy private interests rarely come together into one resultant vector that society will support. On the contrary, by competing for a say in foreign policy, private interests get in each other’s way. Therefore, doctrinal foreign policy documents listing “priority” partner countries and areas of international cooperation cannot reflect national interests in principle and are a result of a chaotic lobbying and bureaucratic process. It is important to say that we do not question *a priori* the legitimacy of any of these private interests (development of relations with country A, resolution of the conflict with country B, creation of favorable conditions for arms exports to region C, etc.). We only say that none of them can claim the role of national interests for failure to perform their basic functions described above.

It is not so easy to determine sufficient criteria for classifying certain interests as “national.” These can probably include interests generated by the institutional system that provides for communication between people and the policy-making community, and takes into account the results of independent evaluation obtained through broad public debate. In order for the national interests stated during such discussions to be accepted by the majority of people as fair, there must be a significant degree of public

trust in governmental and political institutions (but not necessarily in concrete leaders who hold specific positions in those institutions).

A high degree of trust in institutions that have proved their efficiency is a sign of a mature civic nation, a community of people with consensus-based identity, clearly defined borders, an active political role of citizens, and well protected individual rights, a limited number of which are delegated to the authorities and can be revoked at any moment. Therefore, the term “national interest” can be applied only to a mature civic nation. The absence of such a nation will most likely mean that there will be no relevant national interests, only a bunch of legitimate, but private and transient ones.

Such interests can hardly ensure the continuity of foreign policy even if the international environment remains stable. As Andrei Skriba has observed, each regime change in countries lacking efficient institutions that would establish broad dialogue between all actors involved in the political process, “only redistributed private interests within national interests, and irresponsibility among the elites sooner or later manifested itself again.” Authorities in any country try to reduce their accountability to society and avoid responsibility for achieving declared aims. Only a system of independent civic watchdogs can ensure such accountability and therefore put some sense into national interests, such as a declaration of a country’s long-term goals.

Does this mean a country that fails to meet mature civic nation requirements cannot come up with a productive definition of its national interests? It probably can, but such a definition should contain some restraints in order to avoid a situation where private interests are elevated to the status of national ones. Only society as a whole can be the subject of the national interest and that interest should have the form of the public good.

For example, support for domestic carmakers or weapons manufacturers can be part of a program proposed by a politician or party, but such private interests must not claim the status of national ones. By stating national interests publicly, we take precautions against attempts by small interest groups to “privatize” government institutions. Interestingly, the above-mentioned report from the Commission on America’s National

Interests puts export support for certain economic sectors at the bottom of the least important national interests of the country.

At the same time, such interests as supporting education reforms using the best foreign practices, attracting foreign investments into hi-tech industries, or developing good-neighborly relations with bordering countries are beneficial for all levels of society. Although not all of its members will benefit equally (uncompetitive teachers and backward “national” industries will presumably be the losers), these gains will be distributed fairly enough as regards the fundamental and indisputable goal of enhancing the security and economic prosperity of the country, and promoting the intellectual development of society.

The development of a national interests concept (at least in foreign policy) seems to have unquestionable benefits: unjustified budget expenditures are reduced, people acquire a sense of common cause, national bureaucracy becomes more disciplined, and foreign policy ambitions and limitations are communicated to other countries. However, states often fail to offer a convincing concept of national interests to its citizens, bureaucracy, and the rest of the world. The Soviet Union and present-day Russia can serve as an example.

Soviet and Russian foreign policy experts have said that attempts to clearly define national interests in the Soviet Union and Russia always proved abortive. This can be seen if one attempts to find an unambiguous declaration of interests (other than overused security and economic development) that could pass for national ones and perform their functions. Why did the Soviet Union, and then Russia, refuse to define national interests? A detailed answer to this question is beyond the scope of this essay. But we can propose several hypotheses for further investigation and discussion.

Firstly, as subjects of international relations, the Soviet Union and modern Russia never completely determined their borders, not formally or legally on the world map, but ideologically and ethnopolitically. It took several decades and a great deal of effort to form the new civic community of Soviet people. Today, a large number of Russians support “compatriots abroad” as a foreign policy goal, and many foreign affairs experts use the term “the Russian world.” But as

Igor Zevelev has pointed out, the boundaries of the “Russian world” can be interpreted in a number of ways. Yet a civic nation capable of productively specifying its national interest must have clearly defined borders beyond which the state should hardly “owe” anything to anyone.

Secondly, the Soviet Union’s foreign policy was a hostage to ideology, but national interests by definition cannot be stated in terms of ideas if the impact of those ideas on the material world cannot be measured precisely. The Soviet experience proved that attempts to realize ideological interests with material means quickly (by historical standards) overburden the system and undermine the legitimacy of the polity, eventually leading to the collapse of the state itself. The need to commit considerable resources to promoting liberal democracy worldwide (as opposed to leadership by example) has been questioned by many U.S. foreign policy specialists, including members of the Commission on America’s National Interests.

Finally, individuals who make foreign policy decisions never want to commit themselves to clearly defined interests in an unstable political situation that often requires foreign policy to be adjusted for internal political imperatives. This phenomenon exists in different forms practically in all countries, including the United States, where members of Congress have been trying lately (and on many previous occasions) to influence the country’s foreign policy in the most radical way, acting beyond their mandates and hoping to shift responsibility for a possible failure to the executive branch.

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As a manifestation of higher-order wisdom than just the election needs of concrete leaders or political parties, national interests should discipline politicians and significantly restrict the freedom of their action. The notion of national interests as a central element of the foreign policy doctrine becomes senseless if this doctrine is messed with or altered too often for the sake of some transitory purposes (especially retroactively). The self-restricting function of an official or even semi-official, yet influential, declaration of national interests is particularly important for Russia, whose policy often raises concerns (legitimate or not) among its neighbors and other countries, with which cooperation is vital for its own economic progress.

National Interest and International Law

What Is Behind the Polemics over Lawful Sovereignty

Alexander Filippov

References to international law are an important part of Russia's official rhetoric. While criticizing other countries for violating international law, Russia's leaders declare that Russia respects international law, protects it, and upholds its principles. The wording used to describe violations and ways to improve and safeguard international law is repeated every year, and may actually seem familiar. However, a closer look at statements by top leaders reveal some changes not so much in their content as in their tone.

For example, speaking at the international conference "Peace, Security and International Law: A Look into the Future" in 2003, Vladimir Putin said that the fundamental principles of international law had been "literally gathered piece by piece," but the existing legal system had recently manifested numerous flaws and inadequacies. A decade later, in 2013, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated Russia's position as follows: "We want to lead the way in upholding international law and the principles set forth in the UN Charter." A year after that, Putin spoke about a large-scale crisis in international law and of how weak its mechanisms were. Addressing the Valdai International Discussion Club audience, he said: "We have entered a period of differing interpretations and deliberate silences in world politics. International law has been forced to retreat over and over

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by the onslaught of legal nihilism. Objectivity and justice have been sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. Arbitrary interpretations and biased assessments have replaced legal norms.”

Finally, at a meeting with members of the Federal Assembly’s Council of Legislators in April 2015, the president said that “the world will never become monocentric, and international law will not be a servant of just one country which speaks and dreams with maniacal stubbornness of its alleged exclusiveness.”

Naturally, statements and assessments must not be lifted out of context. But it is all the more noteworthy that as far back as during his first presidential term, Putin voiced concerns about the adequacy of international law, while repeatedly referring to it ever since. In fact, international law was thrown into doubt on several occasions in 2014 not as a *principle*, but as reality. According to Russia’s leadership, the country’s commitment to the principles of law is in contrast with the legal nihilism of its opponents. Apparently, this is the key to interpreting the changes in the tone of statements: Russia is not pleased with the fact that its understanding of the law is not borne out by real life, and that the law is often violated and can even serve one country. It would be safe to assume with a certain degree of probability that “one country” means the United States, but Russia has so far not succeeded in taking the lead in defending international law.

This has been quite manifest in public discussions, where the panelists are less bound by formal obligations than government officials, and in parliamentary debates. Experts had repeatedly pointed out that international law was ineffective, was breached, and was in fact the law of the strong. In fact, those debates became particularly fierce in 2014 with the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine and the incorporation of Crimea.

This year, too, has seen growing disappointment with international law. Article 15.4 of the Russian Constitution, which is generally believed to give primacy to international law, has lately become a stumbling block. This article is in Section One (“The Fundamentals of the Constitutional System of the Russian Federation”) and, according

to Article 16, no other article in the Constitution may be at variance with it. Any amendments may be made (as stated in Article 135) only by a Constitutional Assembly convened by a decision supported by three-fifths of the total number of deputies in both houses of the Federal Assembly. Should it be convened and, if so, then for what?

DEBATE OVER PRIORITIES

Although there is no official dispute between high-ranking government officials and influential lawmakers, some of their remarks that sometimes get into the press can hardly be described as anything else than polemics. The head of the Russian Investigative Committee, Alexander Bastrykin, has repeatedly called for revising the Constitution to delete provisions that proclaim the supremacy of international law. In an interview with *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* on April 27, 2015, he said that “provisions according to which international law is an inalienable part of the legal system of the Russian Federation, and should give supremacy to national legislation” should be removed from the Constitution. Bastrykin said such radical constitutional changes would require the adoption of a federal law.

Several months ago, the chairman of the Federation Council’s Committee on Constitutional Legislation, Andrei Klishas, commented on both the Constitution and the amendments proposed by Bastrykin. In Klishas’ opinion, “there is no document giving international law supremacy over national law.” “For any international agreement to become effective for Russia, it has to go through the same procedure as all national laws,” and since “the Russian Federation is a sovereign state, only those rules of international law have priority in our national legislation that are its inalienable part, just as the Constitution has priority over federal laws,” he said.

Finally, in May 2015, the Russian Interior Ministry was quoted by *Vedomosti* as saying that “Russia has a right to denounce international agreements without amending the Constitution if it is displeased with these agreements.” At the same time, the newspaper went on to state that Justice Minister Alexander Konovalov said that his ministry was “not considering giving up the supremacy of international law.”

The differences are substantial, but they are not strategic. Amending the Constitution, especially its Section One, is a serious process, and the absence of a relevant federal law means that there has so far been no great need to convene the Constitutional Assembly as all issues could be solved without it. The Constitutional Assembly could actually adopt a new constitution, not just amend the existing one, but there is no need for that now. The issue in dispute – if we can call it a dispute – is not whether we should reject the supremacy of international law, but whether we should take so many difficult and decisive steps to do that. One point of view is that there is no need to do that because current issues can be solved using other instruments. The opposite position is that this cannot be delayed any longer because Section One of the Constitution does not allow Russia to assert its sovereignty.

Let us quote the Constitution: “The universally recognized norms of international law and international treaties and agreements of the Russian Federation shall be an integral part of its legal system. If an international treaty or agreement of the Russian Federation sets out other rules than those envisaged by law, the rules of the international agreement shall be applied.” The Constitution does not specify which principles and norms of international law are an integral part of the Russian legal system, but it expressly states the importance of the country’s international agreements. Since Russian laws must conform to the Constitution, the root cause of the collision presumed in the second sentence (when a law contains rules different from those set forth in an international agreement) is not quite clear. When a law is passed, it must be examined for compliance with international agreements, or otherwise withdrawn or corrected. If Russia signs an international agreement that runs counter to its national legislation effective at the time, this only means that it also assumes an obligation to amend its laws accordingly. The vague wording of Article 15.4 allows one to assume that international law may be directly applicable. But this is not the kind of law that has been created by someone else. These are agreements our country enters into of its own free will and voluntarily agrees to give supremacy to external obligations until its national legislation is brought in line with them.

This does not mean that there is no problem. There is a problem and there is a connection between certain disappointment with international law, expressed by top officials, and discussions about constitutional amendments and the importance of Russia's international agreements. But the issue being discussed is not exactly the same international law, though. There are regulations concerning interstate relations, and there are regulations concerning the internal affairs of a state whereby it agrees to strongly respect international standards and commitments. Naturally, there is a connection between the two. When the international community decides whether a state's actions are its internal affair or not, it explains *outside* interference by the fact that the internal life of a country in the modern world is not entirely internal, and if a country's rules or actions *within* its national borders violate the norms and standards of law, external coercion to ensure compliance with them can actually go too far. This is what the Russian Foreign Ministry means when it says that Russia can simply secede from international agreements and divest itself of obligations. If there are no obligations, the Justice Ministry says, they cannot be violated; therefore, there is no need to reject the supremacy of international law or revise the Constitution, and the restrictions imposed by international obligations will no longer be a problem.

Then what is the purpose of the position Bastrykin defends so stoically? Apparently, it is not in giving more clarity to the second sentence in Article 15.4, but in removing the first sentence, which concerns "universally recognized norms of international law." The question is what should be considered universally recognized and which principles and norms of international law are integrated into Russia's legal system as universally recognized and which are not. This can be the subject of public discussion both inside the country and internationally. However, the very recognition of the fact that only specific issues rather than any connection between national legislation and international principles and norms can be discussed is important by itself. This connection is stated in the Constitution as part of the basic decision that established the fundamentals of the constitutional system. Any change can only be made through

a decision of the same constitutive force and would be impossible without the Constitutional Assembly. So, it is not quite clear at this point whether emphasis will be placed on the second sentence of Article 15.4 and Russia will increase the share of sovereign decisions by revising agreements and denouncing treaties, or the focus will be shifted to the first sentence of the same article and the recognition of the norms and principles of international law will be abandoned as such (in the worst-case scenario) or placed under the control of the Russian Constitutional Court.

SHOULD DOMESTIC LAW REFER TO INTERNATIONAL LAW?

However, a closer look at the Constitution reveals yet another important aspect of the issue which, as far as we can judge from publications, has not been covered as broadly as Article 15.4. Apart from the Constitution's Chapter 1, two more chapters fall under the Constitutional Assembly's jurisdiction and cannot be amended by the Federal Assembly, including Chapter 2 ("The Rights and Freedoms of Man and the Citizen"). Article 17.1 reads, in particular: "In the Russian Federation recognition and guarantees shall be provided for the rights and freedoms of man and the citizen according to universally recognized principles and norms of international law and according to the present Constitution." Universally recognized principles and norms of international law are specified as the rights of man and the citizen, and the latter are defined as universally recognized principles and norms of international law. This does not mean that by so doing Russia falls into the trap of international agreements and treaties. The rights of man and the citizen legitimize sovereign decisions. This is, in fact, a vital issue and the answer to it will be critical to further development.

It requires complete clarity. It should not be a problem to state the same rights and freedoms in the Constitution without any reference to international rules and norms, as a free decision of the people endorsed by a resolution of the Constitutional Assembly. What is important in this case is not so much the presence of these norms or even their article-by-article declaration, as the very reference to international

standards. If there were no such reference, its introduction could be discussed. Likewise, its removal, if it ever comes to that, cannot but be subject to discussion, too.

It would also be interesting to see how the correlation between national and international law is interpreted in other contemporary constitutions. For example, Article 25 in Germany's Basic Law expressly states the primacy of international law: its rules are part of the "federal law" and apply to all citizens of Germany *directly*. Article 1 says that human dignity is inviolable. The German people acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights without any reference to international principles.

In France, commitment to international law was declared in the Preamble to the Constitution of 1946, but no mention of it can be found in the Constitution of 1958, which, however, proclaims attachment to the Rights of Man and of the Citizen as defined by the Declaration of 1789, confirmed and complemented by the Preamble to the Constitution of 1946. Article 55 says that international treaties duly ratified or approved take precedence over national laws. The notion of dignity and human rights is fundamental, but it is not in any way linked to treaties or internationally recognized rules and norms. This can easily be explained since such reference would hardly be needed by the people who regard man, his rights, and his dignity not as someone's invention, but as their own tradition that gave rise to the universal understanding of law. Basic rights are declared similarly in the U.S. Constitution, albeit in amendments rather than its main text.

Something needs to be clarified here. It has been widely speculated in public debates that unlike the constitutions of many other countries, the U.S. Constitution contains no reference to international law. Strictly speaking, that is true. It has no formulas similar to those found in the Russian or German constitutions. But there is something else there. Vyacheslav Gavrilov, Professor at the Far Eastern University, writes in the *Journal of Russian Law* No. 2, 2003: "In accordance with Article VI of the U.S. Constitution, international treaties are not only the 'supreme Law of the Land,' but they also make the authorities in

every state 'bound thereby.' If any discrepancy arises between a self-executing treaty and the law of any state, the former prevails.”

It would probably be redundant to repeat these well-known facts, but we are not talking about any modern country simply refusing to abide by the obligations it has assumed under international treaties. Recognition of the rights of man and the citizen all by itself is less important than the way it is declared in the constitution. There must be a very good reason for declaring treaties a hindrance and the norms and principles of international law as wrong and harmful for a country. This becomes clear if we look at U.S. official rhetoric pertaining to international law. It is generally known that this rhetoric was not only intensified, but was actually renewed during Barack Obama's first presidential term. Some serious changes have been made in U.S. governmental documents known as the National Security Strategy.

During George W. Bush's presidency, the notion of international law was completely absent from them. However, the 2010 Strategy mentions it several times with a view to strengthening international law and enhancing its effectiveness and legitimacy. There is much literary and other evidence indicating that the issue of international law was one of the key topics during Obama's first presidential term. The 2015 Strategy refers to international law much less, though, and generally reiterates respect and commitment to it. Americans say that these are not just declarations because they are followed up by closer cooperation with international institutions. At any rate, it is hard to say that the United States takes a completely nihilistic approach to international law. The country's Realpolitik can be assessed differently, but its rhetoric and legal and political formulas reflecting its declared goals cannot be ignored.

LAW AS THE LANGUAGE OF NATIONAL INTEREST

Let me say once again that we mean public statements, but this is perhaps the most complex and controversial matter. The prevailing tone in discussions in Russia, including those on the problematic status of international law, is not so much nihilistic as revelatory. By comparing rhetoric with the actual actions of states, we can come to a conclusion

that words are no more than just a way to hide real intentions, which, as a rule, are selfish. So, if we somewhat straighten out the arguments used every so often, we can say that the rhetoric of law “should be replaced with a clear declaration of interests.” In fact, international treaties and international law are losing relevance in our internal life due to mainly political rather than ideological reasons (at least, ideology is not the most significant factor). It is not that our ideology negates international norms, as this ideology is still in its formative period, but it is that these norms seem to get in the way of politics.

A greater role of sovereign decisions, rejection of treaties, and demonstrative – otherwise it would make no sense – disparagement of the role of internationally recognized norms and rules for national legislation should make the state’s activities more effective. This means that its interest cannot be expressed in the legal form available now. Clearly, the interest of the state, or “state reason,” to use the terminology of several centuries ago, is placed above any law in this construction. Therefore, law means legislation written in the interests of the state, and international law can benefit the state only if it has concluded advantageous treaties. There is no idea of law other than the treaties of self-seeking states, and the recognition of such an idea only means that the state allows someone else, not itself, to exercise its right to legitimate violence on its own territory, establish laws, guarantee their implementation, and thus be the source of essentials for its citizens, whether security or food.

This framework of state was used in history before, and there is no reason to think that it cannot be used again with a varying degree of success, of course, and adjustment for present-day realities. It means effective police order and a certain degree of people’s solidarity needed for rational and effective actions both inside and outside the country. The strong side of this construction is rationalized actions of the state. Calculation based on the correctly understood interest and leaving all other considerations aside for the sake of some greater strategy is what state reason actually is about.

However, there may be some hidden pitfalls that are not so difficult to notice. There is no need to say that international obligations are a

complex system. In fact, no one is going to challenge them in their entirety. It is up to experts to decide whether it is possible to remove encumbering obligations and leave those that are beneficial. At any rate, this is substantial and difficult work, the result of which is not yet quite clear. But what would it mean for a country to reposition itself by rejecting the rhetoric of law in general and of human rights in particular? A purely rhetorical change may produce a result that will not be rhetorical at all. Law is an important resource of international communication, a language for stating national interest. Interest spoken about just as interest and presented as the reason of egoism may never be realized.

All this is not about seeing and showing selfish interests hidden in the alien rhetoric of law. It is just that there is nothing left outside this rhetoric, except for a momentary balance of power that can be changed at any moment. Moreover, it is not binding and cannot be our only hope. There is no way to communicate with opponents and potential allies if there is no common language. The question is: can the language of interest be a reliable means of interstate communication? The answer would be affirmative in a momentary situation that can bring immediate benefits. Otherwise, there must be language representing rights and law as universal rather than as *ad hoc* notions defined by each party individually. Lately Russia's interest has not been represented in the language of law as universal or has been represented poorly. And a possible rejection of the language of law will reduce, not increase, the chance for success in the future.

No Need to Look Far Afield?

Russia's Military Capabilities
for Protecting National Interests

Andrei Frolov

Several factors that determine the current position of Russia cause it to protect its specific interests (national or subnational) at the global level. These factors include Russia's geography (the largest country in the world and common borders with the two largest economic and military powers – the United States and China); its nuclear weapons potential, which is comparable to that of the U.S.; the permanent member status in the UN Security Council; and the size of its economy, which ranks among the world's top ten economies in terms of purchasing power parity.

In view of this, it would be reasonable to analyze the means and capabilities the Russian leadership has at its disposal for protecting its national interests. These means and capabilities can be divided into strategic and operational.

NUCLEAR POWER

Russia's strategic nuclear forces have the greatest military potential. This is the only sphere where Russia has parity with the United States, and the only tool that enables Russia to project its power (and, therefore, interests) to any point in the world. This can be done within a very short period of time, about half an hour or so at the most. These means can be used only in a hypothetical World War III; nevertheless, the

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strategic triad (strategic aviation, intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear missile submarines) allows Russia to preserve its sovereignty and conduct an independent policy.

As of January 1, 2015, the Russian strategic arsenal was estimated at 305 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with 1,166 warheads, eight strategic nuclear cruiser submarines with 128 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) (512 warheads), and 66 strategic bombers which can carry 200 warheads. Unlike the United States which in the mid-2000s announced plans to equip its SLBMs with conventional warheads (clusters) for use against critical targets, Russia's Strategic Missile Forces (SMF) and Navy apparently do not have this alternative. Therefore, Russian ICBMs and SLBMs remain an element of a retaliatory nuclear strike and cannot be used in any other capacity.

The SMF are armed with 46 R-36M2 (SS-18 mod.5-6) ICBMs, 60 UR-100UTTH (SS-19) missiles, and 72 Topol (SS-25) missiles, developed and made back in Soviet times. Despite their service life extension, the missiles will not remain in service after 2022. Other weapons in service with the SMF were developed in the post-Soviet period. These include 60 silo-based and 18 road-mobile Topol-M (SS-27) missiles, and 45 mobile and four silo-based RS-24 Yars (SS-27 mod.2) missiles. Recent years have seen a surge in the batch production of ICBMs and SLBMs: in 2014, the Armed Forces of Russia received 38 ICBMs, including 16 land-based and 22 submarine-launched missiles. This year, the number of ICBMs to be purchased by the Armed Forces is expected to reach 50.

In the last few years, Russia has initiated several programs to create new and modernize existing missiles. Now it is fast-tracking the development of the RS-28 Sarmat heavy ICBM which is intended to replace the R-36 missile. Some of the components for the missile's prototype have already been made, and the missile is planned to be assembled in 2015. The new system will go into serial production in 2018 after flight tests. The number of missiles to be made will at least match the number of R-36M2 missiles now in service, that is, several dozen.

Simultaneously, Russia is developing the Rubezh ICBM (also known as Avangard), which will have higher accuracy, an improved missile defense penetration capability, and a relatively small size. It is

expected to replace Topol-M and Yars ICBMs. Judging by some facts, its prototypes are now being tested. In addition, Russia is developing the Barguzin rail-mobile missile system which will carry six Yars ICBMs and which is expected to be built by 2018-2019.

The naval component of Russia's nuclear deterrence forces is not as diverse. Nevertheless, the Navy has three types of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN): project 955 (Borei) (three submarines), 667BDRM (Delta-IV) (six) and 667BDR (Delta III) (two), armed with three kinds of SLBMs (R-30 Bulava (SS-NX-30), R-29RMU2.1 Limer (SS-N-23), and R-29R (SS-N-18), respectively. After project 667BDR is taken out of operation in the coming years, the triad will be based on eight project 955/955A SSBNs and six 667BDRM submarines. SLBMs for both projects have been tested and put into batch production. According to available information, no new developments are being planned.

The aviation component of the triad will remain stable in the next few years – a maximum of 15 Tu-160M (Blackjack) strategic bombers, now undergoing modernization, and no more than 55 Tu-95MSM (Bear-H) bombers, to be upgraded too, will remain in service. Of the three components of the Strategic Nuclear Forces (SNF), only aviation can use non-nuclear weapons and project power in a conventional conflict actually at any distance from Russia.

Upon modernization, the aircraft will be able to use free-fall bombs and new cruise missiles, Kh-555 (AS-15 Kent-C), Kh-101 and Kh-102, which may also be armed with conventional weapons (Soviet-made Kh-55 missiles, now in service en masse with the Russian Air Force, can carry only nuclear warheads). Beginning in the 2020s, these aircraft will be replaced with a new strategic bomber developed under the PAK DA (prospective aviation complex for long-range aviation) program. According to the most recent statements, the first prototype is to be created by 2019.

The above prompts the conclusion that Russia preserves (and will preserve in the foreseeable future) the ability to demonstrate and support its sovereignty, and defend itself in a global conflict that may involve strategic nuclear weapons. This ability is due to the development and batch production of new and modernized delivery systems. Except

for strategic aviation, the application of these systems is very limited and they can only be used under scenarios that seem unlikely.

The situation is not as obvious if we analyze another level of capabilities – non-nuclear strategic (operational) projection of power.

LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Russia's air striking power is based on about a hundred Tu-22M3 (Backfire) long-range bombers which can operate over Europe and a large part of China and the Middle East. These aircraft cannot use precision-guided weapons, which can result in their heavy losses (as was demonstrated by the downing of one Tu-22M3 by a weak Georgian air defense system during the August 2008 war). There are plans to convert 30 aircraft into Tu-22M3Ms before 2020. The new planes will use new Kh-32 missiles and will have an improved sighting system for using free-fall and, possibly, guided bombs. The Tu-22M3M will be an analogue of the U.S. B-1B Lancer as a long-range and long-endurance close air support aircraft.

The Tu-22M3 can be partly replaced by the Su-34 tactical bomber, many of which have been purchased by Russia's Air Force in the post-Soviet period. As of early 2015, there were 50 batch-produced Su-34 (Fullback) aircraft in service in Russia, and another 78 bombers are planned to be purchased. This will bring the number of aircraft of this type in service with the Russian Air Force to 130-140 by the year 2020. They will be capable of using precision-guided weapons (smart bombs), while suppressing enemy air defenses, at a distance of up to 2,000 kilometers from the Russian border without refueling. Although the aircraft was initially intended to replace the Su-24M (Fencer) tactical bomber, the reduction of the number of the Tu-22M3s, as well as the more advanced avionics and an increased bomb-carrying capacity of the Su-34, allows viewing the latter as a substitute for the long-range bomber, although, considering the reduction of the Su-24M fleet, it will not be able to fully replace the Tu-22M3 planes.

As we can see, Russia has the ability to project power by way of destroying individual targets at long distances from its borders. Its present and prospective forces allow doing this notwithstanding countermeasures by limited enemy forces. However, the aviation

component has two weak points, namely, the lack of airfields abroad that Russian aircraft could use, and the small number of tanker aircraft even for the present aircraft fleet.

In the former case, Russia can use several airfields in the Commonwealth of Independent States. For example, the Kant air base in Kyrgyzstan could be used by a small group of aircraft for operation in Central Asia. At the end of 2014, Russia was allowed to deploy one Su-27SM3 (Flanker) regiment at a Belarusian air base in Baranovichi. Russian aircraft are also stationed in Armenia. Outside the CIS, or more precisely, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Russia has no bases, although in recent years it held negotiations with Vietnam and Djibouti for the use of their airfields, but they did not succeed.

The situation with tanker aircraft is as difficult. At present, the Russian Air Force has only 19 Il-78 (Midas) and Il-78M tankers. In addition, Su-24M bombers are theoretically capable of buddy refueling using external refueling pods. Potential “consumers” include not only strategic and tactical bombers (the Tu-22M3 does not have the required equipment under the SALT II Treaty, and it is not clear whether this equipment will be installed in the Tu-22M3M version) but also MiG-31 (Foxbat), Su-27SM3, Su-33 (Flanker-D), Su-30Sm/M (Flanker-C), Su-35 (Flanker-E+), MiG-29SMT (Fulcrum), and MiG-29K/KUB (Fulcrum-D) fighters, and A-50 (Mainstay) airborne early warning aircraft. Therefore, Russia has a limited ability to keep a large number of aircraft in air for delivering massive strikes at long distances from its borders.

The situation should improve somewhat after the Air Force is supplied 31 new Il-78M-90A tanker aircraft in 2020 or more likely later, and at least two Il-96-400TZ planes in 2016. If the IL-78/78M aircraft, now in service, undergo service life extension and modernization, the number of tankers will exceed 50 by 2020-2025, which will allow planning large-scale operations in remote regions. Yet, even in this case, the absence of airfields outside the former Soviet Union will limit the use of Russian aviation and, consequently, its ability to project power and protect national interests.

The above also applies to military transport aviation (excluding civil operators of such aircraft), although the number of military transport aircraft is still great – 26 An-124 (Condor) super-heavy

airlifters (of them, 17 are in storage), which are undergoing overhaul and modernization, and about 130 Il-76MD (Candid) medium-class military transport aircraft (including 42 in storage), 30 of which are to be overhauled and upgraded to the IL-76MDM before 2020. All these aircraft have turbojet engines, which limits their use to paved runways.

In 2012, the Ministry of Defense ordered 39 new Il-76MD-90A aircraft, which are to enter into service with the Air Force before 2020. The weak point of Russian military transport aircraft is their relatively small range and inability to be refueled in air. Given the absence of airfields abroad, this factor limits the possibility of strategic airlifts of troops and cargo outside the CIS. Inside Russia, exercises are regularly held to practice strategic maneuvers, and the transport potential of the Air Force was demonstrated during the war with Georgia and the Crimean events in 2014. Yet, the possibility of airlifting troops and supplying them in remote parts of the world for a long period of time (similarly to the participation of NATO troops in the Afghan campaign) raises questions.

The existing aircraft fleet cannot land troops or equipment on unpaved airfields, which also reduces the possibility of Russia's global presence and prompt responses to crises. This shortcoming manifested itself during the war with Georgia. It turned out then that the Russian Air Force was unable to deliver heavy weapons directly to the theater of operations. The nearest airfield where the Il-76MD could land was located in Vladikavkaz, 100 kilometers from the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, but separated by the Caucasus Mountains. The An-70 military transport aircraft powered by propfan engines, which has been developed since Soviet times and which is capable of taking off and landing on unpaved runways, was included in the State Armament Program for the Period Until 2020. It was planned that the Russian Air Force would purchase 60 An-70 aircraft. However, given the present state of Ukrainian-Russian relations, this aircraft is no longer viewed as an option. Russia has no plants for its large-scale production and there are no purely Russian analogs of the aircraft even at the design stage.

At the same time, Russian IL-76 aircraft can drop troops and equipment by parachute. At present, the Airborne Troops comprise two airborne divisions, two air assault divisions, four separate air

assault brigades, and one special purpose brigade. Since 2014, the strength of the Airborne Troops has been growing and is planned to be doubled by 2020 from 36,000 to 72,000 troops, mainly by increasing the strength of brigades and divisions.

However, the increased strength of the Airborne Troops will exceed the capabilities of military transport aviation to airdrop or land troops and to supply them, which will remain unchanged. Given the absence of air bases abroad, Russia will depend on other countries' permission to use their airspace, which will not be easy to get. Russia may face a situation similar to that in 1999 when, in response to the surprise advance of Russian paratroopers to Pristina, NATO effectively blocked their reinforcement by pressing neighboring countries into refusing Russia's requests to use their airspace.

Oddly, similar constraints also apply to the Special Operations Forces (SSN), which were established as "Super Spetsnaz" to accomplish a wide range of tasks. Their strength was planned to be increased to nine brigades. In point of fact, as far as one can judge, the SSN are insignificant in strength and can successfully perform only local operations. Problems with logistics and reduced transport capabilities significantly weaken their potential on a global scale.

So, despite the presence of well-armed and numerous airborne troops and the SSN, their ability to effectively perform their roles is limited by the CIS boundaries. Measures to build and modernize military transport aircraft increase the percentage of serviceable planes, which improves the speed, response and strength of airlifted troops, but there are doubts about the potential for effective protection of Russian interests on a global scale through emergency airlifts of large contingents of troops.

Now let us take a look at Russia's capability to project power on the seas. The modern Russian Navy is a conglomerate of Soviet-designed ships, built back in the 1980s and 1990s, and new ones which have begun to enter service en masse in the past five years. However, many of newly built ships have some faults and require field development. Today the Navy is unable to deliver precision-guided strikes with conventional weapons, except for a few ships and submarines armed with the Kalibr missile system (of these, one escort ship and three fast attack craft operate

within the Caspian Flotilla). Kalibr can be considered an analog of the U.S. BGM-109 Tomahawk cruise missile which is actively used by the U.S. and British navies against surface targets. The presence of the only aircraft carrier in the Russian Navy, Admiral Kuznetsov (Project 11435), is rather symbolic. It carried about ten Su-33 fighters with a low strike capability, which will increase after 24 new MiG-29K/KUB multirole fighters come aboard. However, this reinforcement will have little long-term effect because the aircraft carrier is to undergo a major refit and modernization, which was initially scheduled for 2012.

At the same time, there are ships in the Russian Navy which can transport troops and cargo over long distances. Despite major cuts from Soviet times, the Navy now has four large landing ships (Project 1171) and 15 Project 775 ships, although they are largely outdated and are in service with four different fleets. The capabilities of this universal instrument were demonstrated when Russia supplied its armaments to Syria when commercial tonnage and aircraft could not be used, and in the spring of 2014 when Russia was building up its military force in Crimea. On the other hand, the large landing ship concept, which provides for landing troops on the shore using ramps, limits the capabilities of these ships (similarly to military transport aircraft and paved runways) and is obviously out of date compared with amphibious assault ships operating not only in leading naval powers but also in such countries as South Korea and Algeria.

At the same time, most of the large landing ships are physically deteriorated, and there are no prospects for their replacement in the foreseeable future (in 2016, the Navy will receive one Project 11711 large landing ship, at best, and another ship of the same type has been ordered). From this point of view, the purchase of two Mistral-class amphibious assault ships (helicopter carriers) from France and the subsequent purchase of two more ships of this class would considerably broaden Russia's capability to project power and carry out "overseas operations." These ships would carry combat and transport helicopters, as well as landing craft for use from well decks, which would multiply the potential of the Russian combat team on board. In other words, the acquisition of these ships will objectively strengthen the Russian Navy and has no alternative.

* * *

To sum up, Russia's present military capabilities enable it to preserve its sovereignty and prevent unpunished use of nuclear weapons against it, thereby effectively playing the role of strategic deterrence. However, this tool is highly specialized and cannot be used in a non-nuclear conflict.

Under this scenario, Russia's potential for defending its interests (the destruction of individual targets at a considerable distance, independent operations far from Russian borders, landing operations and the seizure of territories, protection of citizens and their property, humanitarian operations, etc.) is much more limited. Present-day programs for modernizing and purchasing weapons slightly improve the situation but do not solve the problem completely. In the absence of a large number of allies, bases and airfields in various parts of the world, Russia's capability for global presence is limited by the range of its military transport aircraft and the number of serviceable Soviet-built large landing ships.

This prompts the following conclusion: either Russia does not have real national interests going beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union, which is within reach of its present military equipment, or the country is unable to effectively and independently defend them on its own. This situation is in fact reflected in Russia's strategic guidance documents which announce the political leadership's plans. It is highly unlikely that the Russian Armed Forces will be able to project power in the next ten years since arms purchases necessary for that are not provided for either in the present State Armament Program-2020 or in the State Armament Program for 2016-2025, which is being drafted now.

In addition, the expected defense budget cuts will delay for a long time such rarely implemented projects as the development and construction of aircraft carriers, destroyers, new bombers (PAK DA), and some other systems. The emphasis will be put on efforts to maintain and, possibly, build up strategic nuclear forces and tactical armaments for the Army and frontline aviation. As a result, Russia's ability to project power and defend its national interests will be limited to the post-Soviet region for many years to come.

A View from the Outside



“When we encounter policies that fit our understanding, this does not mean Russian leaders have reasoned like us; when we identify policies that contradict our understanding, this does not mean other levels of analysis must be at play.”

Policy Choices: Motifs and Unintended Consequences

Normative assessments and foreign policy analysis

Samuel Charap and Cory Welt

Russian foreign policy in the Putin era has drawn particular attention, and even praise, from the realist school of international relations scholars. John J. Mearsheimer, for example, has written that “Putin and his compatriots have been thinking and acting according to realist dictates” in their policy towards Ukraine.

Indeed, senior Russian officials often make statements that suggest precisely that. President Vladimir Putin has lamented anarchy in the international system: “If you cannot count on international law, then you must find other ways to ensure your security.” He has also spoken, like Hans Morgenthau’s archetypical statesman, “in terms of interest defined as power:” “Some of the recent events in Ukraine directly threaten our interests, first of all with regard to security... And we responded to this force. Why? I told you why. Because the interests of the Russian nation and the Russian state were at stake.”

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Realism, then, seems like an appropriate frame of analysis for understanding Russian foreign policy. The problem, however, is that despite Mearsheimer's praise, realism is not concerned with explaining concrete policy outputs and decisions; its focus is on the structural incentives decision-makers face. It establishes a range of possible outcomes, and the pressures on states from the international system. On its own, it cannot tell us much about particular decisions or actions. As the doyen of the realist school, Kenneth Waltz, acknowledged, realism "does not tell us why state X made a certain move last Tuesday. To expect it to do so would be like expecting the theory of universal gravitation to explain the wayward path of a falling leaf."

Realism can explain states' broad long-term foreign policy goals, but it does not clarify why or how states choose different means or mid-term objectives to achieve those goals. Thus, although realism could (correctly) foretell Russia's efforts to rebuild the considerable power it lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union, it tells us little about the policies Moscow has adopted to realize this goal. To take a concrete example: realism explains Russia's policy of seeking influence in Ukraine; it cannot tell us why Putin decided to annex Crimea in March 2014.

Many Western analysts have attributed this decision to Russian domestic politics. However, all available evidence suggests that domestic factors do not have a decisive impact on Russian foreign policy. They are important on the margins, either by reinforcing existing policies or determining outcomes on matters of secondary import. But none are the central driver of Russian foreign policy. What then could be that driver?

In other comparable contexts – that is, globally significant countries with large policy bureaucracies, such as the United States, China, or Germany – analysts tend to assume that when decision-makers conduct foreign policy, they are generally driven by their understanding of national interest – not, for example, narrow clan, ideological, or political interest. Russian policymakers are generally no more (and plausibly less) beholden to such considerations than their counterparts in those other contexts. Analysis of their policies ought to begin with a baseline assumption that they, too, make choices based on their perception of Russia's national interest.

This shouldn't be a contentious assumption. But it has become just that, particularly in the wake of Russia's actions in Ukraine in 2014. Observers have put forth multiple hypotheses about Russian motivations, including many that do not assume the centrality of the Russian leadership's calculus of national interest. One of the most prominent hypotheses is that Putin's actions were driven by a need to shore up domestic support. Michael McFaul, for example, has written that "Russian foreign policy did not grow more aggressive in response to U.S. policies; it changed as a result of Russian internal political dynamics."

But particularly in the case of such a momentous decision, it makes sense to start with the assumption that Putin – or whoever occupies the Kremlin at the time – makes decisions on the basis of his understanding of Russia's national interest.

This does not mean that Putin's understanding of the national interest is, as Mearsheimer argues, a function of "realist dictates." In his article on the Ukraine crisis, Mearsheimer lauded Putin as a "first-class strategist," writing that, "Washington may not like Moscow's position, but it should understand the logic behind it. This is Geopolitics 101: great powers are always sensitive to potential threats near their home territory." While this maxim may be true, it is hardly self-evident that the events of February 2014 were as grave a threat to Russia as Mearsheimer makes them out to be. In itself, "Geopolitics 101" also does not explain why the Russian leadership decided to respond to the February 2014 change of power in Kiev with the invasion of Crimea, rather than any of the other options at its disposal.

It is plausible, however, that decision-makers in Moscow *believed* what had happened in Kiev posed such a threat and concluded that invading Crimea was the best way of addressing it under the circumstances. Individual leaders' understandings of national interest are inherently idiosyncratic and cannot be derived from universal formulas. Instead of praise or condemnation, foreign policy analysts need to offer more fine-tuned explanations for how leaders (like Putin) reach their understandings of the national interest. Normative assessments of their policies are a different enterprise than foreign policy analysis.

There is a particular need for understanding leaders' perceptions and misperceptions, in the vein of Robert Jervis's pathbreaking

scholarship. Cognitive theories emphasizing how individuals process, update, and interpret information, including how they learn from history and their own immediate contexts, project biases, and estimate risks and outcomes, may help account for how Putin and other Russian decision-makers perceive international threats and opportunities and select policy options from a range of potential choices.

Among other things, Jervis's work underscores the impact of recent international history on leaders' worldviews: "Previous international events provide the statesman with a range of imaginable situations and allow him to detect patterns and causal links that can help him understand his world." This is particularly true in the case of Russia vis-a-vis the United States' past behavior. Russian policymakers not only spend a lot of time focusing on what they see as potentially threatening U.S. actions, but Moscow also looks to Washington as the standard-setter for international politics. Following the annexation of Crimea, for example, Russian leaders consistently pointed to the recognition of Kosovo as an alleged "precedent" for its actions. There are significant differences between the two cases, but this is beside the point. If Russia annexed Crimea (and, before that, recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) due to a normative commitment to self-determination, it would have recognized Kosovo too. Instead, Moscow cites Kosovo as proof that it's normal and acceptable for great powers to violate international rules: if the Americans can do it, so can we.

Jervis also reminds us that outcomes in international politics do not necessarily correspond to leaders' original intentions. Outcomes often result from a chain of action and reaction, and are rarely a function solely of a single state's behavior. Furthermore, a state's steps to achieve a particular goal might actually move it further from that goal. Jervis gives the example of a student putting a lock on his bedroom door to protect his valuables – which leads to thieves targeting his room instead of those left unlocked.

In the case of Russia's Ukraine policy, there is a case to be made that precisely such a dynamic involving unintended consequences was in play. In the final days of February 2014, when Putin took the decision to insert special forces, paratroopers, and other servicemen into Crimea, he was

seeking to prevent a strategic setback in Kiev from becoming a strategic catastrophe – his nightmare scenario of Russia’s complete rollback out of Ukraine at the hands of the West. That decision – meant to secure Russia’s most important physical assets there, but more importantly to coerce the new Ukrainian authorities into accommodating Moscow’s broader interests in Ukraine – had almost immediate knock-on effects. It released latent separatist sentiment among the majority of the Crimean population, enabled local separatist-minded elites, and hardened the position of the new government in Kiev. It compelled Western governments to double down on their support for that government, demand immediate Russian withdrawal, and threaten consequences.

So even though Putin’s public statements reaffirmed Ukraine’s territorial integrity as late as March 4, the forces unleashed by his own invasion left him with a choice of capitulation or annexation; in his mind, not really a choice. The decision he took (invasion) led to an outcome he did not initially intend (annexation). Further, this outcome actually produced the opposite of the intended effect of the invasion – increasing leverage vis-à-vis Kiev – since Moscow had swallowed its bargaining chip. Subsequent intervention in Donetsk and Lugansk aimed to acquire a new one.

While this, too, is a hypothesis that requires further investigation, the Ukraine crisis offers a stark reminder that Russia’s foreign policy is a product of the *interaction* of international, domestic, and individual factors. Analysts should assess Russian foreign policy with the same methods they employ for the study of other countries’ foreign policies. They should be clear about the theoretical arguments they employ and defend them with sound empirical evidence.

At the same time, we should not assume that Russian leaders share our understanding of Russia’s national interests. When we encounter policies that fit our understanding, this does not mean Russian leaders have reasoned like us; when we identify policies that contradict our understanding, this does not mean other levels of analysis must be at play. Instead, it may be more fruitful to attempt more nuanced analyses of Russian leaders’ views and how unfolding dynamics influence their understandings and the policy choices they make.

Worlds Apart?

Are Russia's and the U.S.' National Interests
So Different?

Simon Saradzhyan

In underscoring the difficulty of predicting the Kremlin's next steps, many Westerners would often cite Winston Churchill's famous reference to Russia as a "riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Few, however, recall the remainder of that 1939 adage: "But perhaps there is a key. That key is Russian national interests."

When explaining what guides their policies, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his advisors routinely make general references about the need to protect or advance Russia's national interests. Occasionally they also reveal what interests they think Russia shares with other countries. In an April 2015 interview, Vladimir Putin said Russia shares key interests with the United States and that the countries need to work jointly on them. Among these common interests mentioned by Putin are: countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; fighting international organized crime and terrorism; eradicating poverty in the world; making the global economy "more democratic and balanced;" and "making global order more democratic." But while weighing up common interests with specific countries neither Putin nor his advisors have offered a comprehensive list of what constitutes Russia's national interests or what their order of importance is. A search for the combination "national" + "interests" on the Kremlin's website provides hundreds

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of results, but no strategic document that would spell out what these interests are. Nor could I find a comprehensive and clear-cut hierarchy of such interests in reports by Russia's leading think tanks. One possible exception is a 2009 report by Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy which surveyed the interests of Russia vis-à-vis the U.S., but it did not produce an overall hierarchy either.

Of course, no matter what a government agency or think tank produces as a list of their nation's interests, it should not be viewed as a dogma this government would follow by all means. Still, I believe crafting a hierarchy of national interests is a very useful exercise, as it gives the implementers of state policies an idea of what overarching priorities are guiding their governments and how their own work matches these priorities. Such a hierarchy also helps both domestic and foreign audiences to better understand what drives a nation's policies, and dispel simplistic claims that a leader's personal qualities or interests are the sole decisive factor in shaping these policies. Perhaps, the demonization of Putin as "evil enough" and a "land-hungry" ruler "bent on re-establishing a Russian empire" in the Western mass media would have gained less attraction with the Western public if there had been a Russian strategic document or a report that would spell out that Russia's vital interest is not to acquire more territories, but to prevent the emergence of hostile major powers or regional hegemonies on its borders and ensure that Russia is surrounded by friendly states. Taking territory from a neighboring state is bound to be condemned by other countries and cannot be done without tangible material and reputational costs. However, I would argue that the reason why Russia acted this way was not because it needed more land, but primarily because it wanted to signal that it considers Ukraine's political and military integration into the West a violation of its vital interests and, therefore, unacceptable, and that Russia no longer considers its own integration into the West an option.

Hopefully, the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy or some other authoritative Russian institution will produce a report on a par with or better than the Report on American National Interests put out by the

Commission on America’s National Interests and subsequent papers. In the meantime, let me offer my view of the hierarchy of Russia’s national interests, which I drafted several years ago, distilling points from Russian leaders’ statements. I have recently updated this hierarchy. I first showed it to the leading Russian policy experts for a reality check, and then I squared it against the list of U.S. vital national interests – as formulated in the aforementioned U.S. reports – to identify areas of convergence and divergence. Here are the results of my comparative analysis.

Russia’s vital national interests (in order of importance)	U.S. vital national interests	Converge (C)/ Diverge(D)/ No equivalent (NE):
Prevent, deter and reduce threats of secession from Russia; insurgency within Russia or in areas adjacent to Russia; and armed conflicts waged against Russia, its allies or in vicinity of Russian borders	Not available	No equivalent
Prevent emergence of hostile powers or regional hegemonies or failed states on Russian borders, and ensure that Russia is surrounded by friendly states, among which Russia can play a leading role and in cooperation with which it can thrive	Maintain a balance of power in Europe and Asia that promotes peace and stability with a continued U.S. leadership role	Russian and U.S. Interests more diverge than converge
Establish and maintain productive relations, upon which Russian national interests hinge to a significant extent, with core European Union members, the United States and China	Establish and maintain productive relations, consistent with American national interests, with nations that could become strategic adversaries, China and Russia	Converge (partially)
Ensure the viability and stability of major markets for major flows of Russian exports and imports	Ensure the viability and stability of major global systems (trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and the environment)	Converge
Ensure steady development and diversification of the Russian economy and its integration into global markets	Not available	No equivalent

Russia's vital national interests (in order of importance)	U.S. vital national interests	Converge (C)/ Diverge(D)/ No equivalent (NE):
Prevent neighboring nations from acquiring nuclear arms and long-range delivery systems for them on Russian borders, secure nuclear weapons and materials	Prevent the use and reduce the spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, secure nuclear weapons and materials, and prevent proliferation of intermediate and long-range delivery systems for nuclear weapons	Converge, but differ in methods of advancing this interest
Prevent large-scale or sustained terrorist attacks on Russia	Prevent large-scale or sustained terrorist attacks on America	Converge
Ensure Russian allies' survival and their active cooperation with Russia	Ensure U.S. allies' survival and their active cooperation with the U.S. in shaping an international system in which U.S. can thrive	No equivalent
	Prevent emergence of hostile major powers or failed states on U.S. borders	Converge with Russia's interest placed second

As is clearly seen from the chart above, Russia's vital interests partially diverge with those of the U.S. only in two domains; in other areas they either converge or have no equivalents. Theoretically, such a convergence of vital interests may pave the way to mending fences between the two countries, with joint counteraction to the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda being the most evident opportunity to start such a rapprochement. In reality, however, the West's concern about Russia's actions in Ukraine and their repercussions for collective security in Europe, on the one hand, and Russia's concern about NATO's expansion, U.S. advanced weaponry programs, and America's pressure on the policies of its strategic allies and partners, on the other hand, as well as Russia's and the United States' domestic policy priorities can all considerably delay such rapprochement and even prevent it altogether. And so can some "black swans" and more benign but no less distracting "bright shiny new objects" that have become so common in the age of global political disorder.

“The Hegemonic Way” and “the Kingly Way”

How Russia and China
Define Their National Interests

Yaroslav Zaitsev

Comparing the national interests of China and Russia is especially important today when the two countries are going through a period of rapid political rapprochement, where it is vital to have a clear understanding of the partner’s logic. This article will try to analyze the foreign-policy strategies of the two countries and the attitudes of their elites to the contemporary international system through the prism of their national interests.

RUSSIA AND ITS PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia’s foreign policy has gone through several stages of development, which can be divided into four periods.

The *first* period (1992 – 1999) – an openly pro-Western policy aimed at joining if not the European Union and NATO, then, at least, the Western world on equal terms.

The *second* period (1999 – 2008) – a gradual growth of anti-American sentiment among the political elite following the bombing of Yugoslavia and the invasion of Iraq; yet, the general policy of improving relations with the West continued until the Russian-Georgian war.

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The **third** period (2008 – 2012) – the “reset” of relations with the United States during the presidency of Dmitry Medvedev after the Five Day War, and a new advance in relations with the EU.

The **fourth** period (2012 – present) – a sharp growth of anti-American and, generally, anti-Western sentiment in Russia; a turn towards the East (above all, China); and aggravation of relations with the West in all areas after the Ukrainian crisis.

If we analyze Russia's foreign policy over the last 20 years, we will see that it has always been Western-centric and that Russia's relations with the East directly depend on its relations with the West. This state of things is due to how Russia sees its national interests and what content it puts into them.

Firstly, it is the maintenance of stability inside the country and the preservation of its territorial integrity. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the loss of vast territories, as well as the two Chechen wars have left a scar in the minds of not only people but also the political elite. The historical factor and peculiarities of the national mentality play a role too. For centuries, Russia's rulers viewed its vast territories as the main guarantor of national security and protection from enemies. Unlike other countries, Russia could withstand enemy attacks and retain sovereignty due to its large size. The Patriotic War of 1812 and the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 are the most graphic examples of that. The preservation of the territory and the creation of buffer zones have always been among the main national priorities, while the loss of territories has been regarded as the weakening of the country and its decline.

Secondly, it is the maintenance of an adequate army and military power. This issue stems directly from the first one: to retain sovereignty and the capability to rebuff attacks from any enemy, Russia needs not only a vast territory but also a powerful army to defend it. Because of the constant invasions Russia experienced for centuries, its people and political elite developed a cult of the army. The country used all its resources to keep and strengthen the army, which caused big imbalances in the Russian economy in favor of the military-industrial complex and had a negative impact on people's well-being.

Thirdly, it is the maintenance of a buffer zone, dependent on Russia, along its borders. This national interest also directly relates to the first two, but it has a dimension of its own. Since the neighboring regions (primarily Central Asia and Eastern Europe) were under Russia’s influence for a long time, they formed stable interpersonal, cultural and ideological ties with it. These regions were always considered close and kindred to Russia, and its elite found it difficult to perceive them as “foreign.” As a result, Russia’s top leadership has developed the view that Moscow had the right to a “special” status and influence in these regions, and regarded attempts by other countries to compete with Russia there as an encroachment on its national interests.

Based on the above, it is easy to analyze Russia’s logic in its relations with the West. NATO’s policy is one of the most important factors in these relations. NATO’s eastward enlargement contrary if not to the letter, then to the spirit of the accords with Russia concluded in the final years of the Cold War; its aggressive actions against countries friendly to Russia, bypassing the UN Security Council (Yugoslavia and Libya); and the creation of a missile defense system in Europe – all these factors, coupled with Russia’s age-old mistrust towards the West, were taken by the Russian elite as gross violations of national interests and provoked its strong negative reaction. In the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis, Russia-West relations have hit an all-time low in Russia’s post-Soviet history and are unlikely to improve in the near future.

CHINA AND ITS PERCEPTION OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

China’s present national interests, although somewhat amended and supplemented, were formulated under Deng Xiaoping who launched a policy of reform and openness. Unlike Russian leaders, Deng captured the essence of the contemporary era as development, primarily economic development, and believed that a big war between great powers was unlikely. His perception allowed him to formulate Chinese national interests, which, by analogy with Russia, can also be divided into three categories: economic development, the maintenance of internal stability and territorial integrity, and the

maintenance of friendly relations with as many countries as possible, particularly with neighbors.

Economic development is the core of China's foreign policy. The policy of reform and openness, which continues to this day, has brought big benefits to China. According to official Chinese statistics, over the last thirty years, 250 million people have ceased to be poor and the country's GDP has increased 62 times from \$148 billion in 1978 to \$9 trillion in 2013. The average annual growth rate over the thirty years has been 9.8 percent. Due to these factors, in 2014 China became the world's largest economy, based on purchasing power parity, and is increasingly often viewed as the world's second major power, after the U.S., in terms of significance and influence. Committed to the priority of economic development, China has come out with new projects – the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road – aimed at supporting and boosting its decelerating economy.

Maintaining internal stability and territorial integrity is as important to China as it is to Russia. However, whereas Russia perceives its territory as a kind of “safety cushion” against enemy aggression, China's attitude to its territory rather stems from its national identity and national dignity, which are rooted in the “Century of Humiliation.” For China, the preservation of its territorial integrity directly depends on economic growth rates as one of the most important factors. Economic growth leads to rising incomes for people, improves their standards of living, and brings revenues that can be used to develop and pacify problem regions.

Another important aspect of China's foreign policy, included in the national interest, is maintaining friendly relations with countries along its borders, as well as with great powers. Good relations with neighbors are primarily needed for creating a favorable environment for economic development. China has territorial disputes with almost all its neighbors; yet, Beijing seeks to keep the peace on its borders. The most dangerous scenario for China would be a territorial conflict going out of control, as it would require spending what could otherwise be used to keep up stable economic growth. In addition, it may provoke unrest inside China and threaten the ruling party's power.

Someone may argue that China itself provokes the aggravation of territorial disputes with its neighbors. However, this is often done for domestic political considerations (support of the party), as was, for example, in 2012, when power was handed over from the fourth generation of leaders to the fifth generation and when tensions arose with Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Secondly, these developments are under full control of the authorities who keep a tight rein on them. There is every reason to believe that China will hardly make any serious moves in its territorial disputes in the short term. In general, the Chinese policy in this field has yielded the desired result – according to a recent survey studying the attitudes of Asian countries towards each other, six of the ten listed countries think positively rather than negatively about China.

Another peculiarity of China’s foreign policy, which is consonant with its national interests, is the creation of the image of a “giving state.” In Chinese political thought there are the notions of *badao* (“hegemonic way”) and *wangdao* (“kingly way”), which are rooted in the international system of East Asia that existed from the 3rd century BC to the end of the 19th century. The “hegemonic way” is a very negative state policy aimed at establishing control over neighboring countries and influencing their home and foreign policies. In this sense, all European great powers were hegemons. In addition, the current U.S. behavior in the world and Russia’s efforts to create a sphere of its influence in the post-Soviet space are nothing else but “hegemonic ways.”

In contrast, a state following the “kingly way” does not seek to impose its control over other countries but seeks to create conditions whereby countries cooperating with it get privileges and benefits. As a result, these countries *themselves* give the state every opportunity to establish control over them or at least get the status of “first among equals.” Some Chinese researchers believe that China’s Silk Road Economic Belt project and the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank reflect the Chinese policy of the “kingly way.” At the same time, it does not matter whether this is really so or not. What does matter is that Beijing is creating the image of a

country, cooperation with which brings only advantages and mutual benefit. This policy looks much more attractive than U.S. efforts to promote democracy around the world.

Like any other country, China may make mistakes in its foreign policy, but on the whole it strictly adheres to its strategy of pursuing national interests. In simple terms, it can be described as the following sequence of moves: **creating a favorable foreign-policy environment for economic development** → **maintaining economic growth** → **preserving domestic political stability and territorial integrity**. In more general terms, these moves combined have two objectives: preserving the Communist Party's rule and prolonging it for as long as possible, and transforming China into a global superpower.

* * *

If we compare the international positions of Russia and China now and at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, we will see that the countries have kind of swapped places.

In 1991-1992, many countries looked at Russia with great hope and expectations. The country had just got rid of communist ideology; there had emerged positive tendencies in its relations with the world; and much progress had been made in relations with the West and China. Russia had moved away from its image of "evil empire" and was viewed as a country that had embarked on a path of civilized development. International financial institutions gave it generous loans for economic development. At the same time, China was still under sanctions following the events of 1989. Against the backdrop of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the world socialist system, China was seen as a close-minded, backward and totalitarian pariah state.

At the turn of 2014-2015, we see the opposite picture. Considering that initially Russia was in a more favorable situation compared to China, how come it has ended up like that?

I think the answer lies in the two countries' definition of their national interests and priorities. The content put by Russia and China into their national interests can be compared in terms of success/

failure, using their GDP figures (material aspect) and their image in the world (non-material aspect).

From 1991 to 2013, China’s GDP increased 24.3 times from \$380 billion to \$9 trillion. The Chinese economy grew at an average rate of 9.7 percent over the same period. In addition, the average life expectancy increased by five years from 70 to 75. Russia’s GDP over the same years grew only 4.1 times from \$510 billion to \$2 trillion. On average, the Russian economy grew by a mere 0.8 percent (it must be noted, however, that the 1990s were characterized by a sharp decline in production). The average life expectancy increased by only three years from 68 in 1991 to 71 in 2013.

It is hard to assess the policy of a country in terms of success/failure using its international image, as there are no clear indicators to use for that. In this case, we can look at statistics showing the attitude of various countries to Russia and China. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in February 2014, only an average of 36 percent of people in the world think positively of Russia, compared to 50 percent in China’s case.

China’s success is rooted in the narrative that it uses to define its national interests. Firstly, Beijing has changed it to meet the realities of the 21st century, when the main indicator of a country’s might is its economy rather than military power. It was due to this factor that China, even under sanctions, changed the course of events in its favor. This was a good example for Russia – instead of placing the responsibility and the blame for one’s failures on someone else, it is better to take control of one’s own destiny. Secondly, the wise Deng Xiaoping gave China good advice: “Hide our capacities and bide our time.” This policy helped Beijing create a foreign-policy environment needed for its economic development. Edward Luttwak in his book “Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace” wrote that any action by a country in the international arena causes a reaction from other countries. If a country constantly increases its defense budget or if it interferes in the affairs of other countries, this will naturally evoke fears among its neighbors and their desire to unite against a potential threat. Meanwhile, China, following Deng’s advice (at least, to date), has created a situation

where other countries view its growth not as a threat but as a benefit. The emphasis constantly made by the Chinese leaders on “peaceful development” and mutually advantageous cooperation has created the image of China as a “giving state.”

What conclusions could Russia draw?

First of all, it should urgently bring its national interests into harmony with the realities of the 21st century. Naturally, the theory of realism which assigns primary importance to the pursuit of national interests is inevitable in foreign policy, but the content of these interests may change from era to era. Whereas in the 19th or early 20th century a strong army was the main indicator of a country’s power and a country could seize territories of other countries or fix its sphere of influence without regard for the opinion of the international community, such actions in the 21st century can bring only harm.

The main content of Russia’s national interest in the first half of the 21st century must be self-development, which includes general economic development, the new rise of Siberia and the Russian Far East, and the improvement of the quality of human capital. These indicators will be the main criteria by which to judge Russia as a great power.

Secondly, Russia should adopt the policy of “hiding its capacities and biding its time” for a while, meaning that it should create an image of itself as a responsible and peace-loving country, whose development can benefit the whole world. This is the so-called soft power, which any great power needs in the 21st century.

And there is one more important point. China has achieved what it has achieved, including the lifting of Western sanctions, without changing the ruling class. This factor may be one more argument in favor of Russia’s development personally for Vladimir Putin and his inner circle.

The Ukrainian Cauldron



Courtesy of Vadim Misyuk

“The most probable way the Ukraine conflict may develop is its transition into a pseudo-frozen phase, with constant local clashes on the verge of open fighting. This will be an exhausting option, slow and difficult. But it is here that Moscow has a chance to take the lead from the West, rather than limit itself to reactions to the other party’s actions.”

Forgetting about Ukraine?

Progressive-Conservative Scenario

Vladimir Bruter

The Russian media have lately been replete with articles about the future of Ukraine. They can be divided into two main categories, analyzing: 1) how events will unfold in Ukraine; and 2) how we should build a better Ukraine. For all the differences in opinions expressed in those articles, they have one thing in common: all of them hold that the position of the West (primarily that of the United States) is static, fully deterministic and cannot offer a long-term mixed strategy. But this is not so. Just as Russia has to build a peaceful life in Donetsk and Lugansk, Washington is ready to do the same in Kiev. Currently, for example, the West is using the respite in hostilities to build a “better government” in Kiev.

This situation has resulted in several seemingly unrelated events:

- the return of Ukrtransnafta and Ukrnafta under state control;
- the resignation of Igor Kolomoysky and his team, including the heads of several local government administrations in regions, and the exit of Dnepropetrovsk Region politicians from the Pyotr Poroshenko Bloc;
- the change in the role and position of Arseny Yatsenyuk as prime minister and of his party, People’s Front, as the second largest force in the ruling coalition towards his desubjectivization and subsequent replacement;

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- the beginning of proceedings to prosecute some of the All-Ukrainian Union “Svoboda” leaders who held executive positions in Ukraine in 2014;
- the withdrawal of the Donbass Battalion from Shirokino, and the proposal to disband the Right Sector’s Volunteer Ukrainian Corps. As a result of a compromise, the Corps will remain, but only as part of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. This means that after one or two rotations there will be no trace of “nationalist volunteers” left, except for the Corps’ name.

These developments indicate that the Western patrons of Kiev (above all, Washington and the Department of State as the key conductor of its foreign policy) are also prepared for long-term “games” and have no plans to see the Ukrainian army’s surrendered. U.S. policymakers and the military are also learning lessons from the Debaltsevo debacle. Debaltsevo itself was necessary, too, for Kiev to realize at what point of free fall Ukraine is and how much it is dependent on U.S. support.

In a way, this explains Kolomoysky’s peaceful resignation as well. The Dnepropetrovsk businessman’s team realized that the U.S. position was not only about choosing Poroshenko as the best of the two oligarchs but it was also a kind of imperative intended to level off the Ukrainian political landscape. The very fact that there were two candidates for one post made the situation uncontrollable and unstable. So, the current changes in Kiev, initiated and implemented with the decisive support of Washington, have some rather concrete applications.

THE MAIN TASK

The main task is to homogenize the political space in Ukraine. For the time being, President Poroshenko is winning the State Department’s casting, which means that all others must admit this, cherish no illusions about their own prospects, not stand in the way of their senior partners, and take what they are offered.

The State Department understands perfectly well that the Ukrainian democracy (which is purely nominal as it is) will have to be shut down for some time. Now there is no and can be no alternative to the coalition between the Pyotr Poroshenko Bloc (the party of the whole of “new” Ukraine) and Self-Reliance (a non-radical and inclusive party of Western Ukraine). There should be no “regionalization” or strong and charismatic local leaders. Hence the constant change of governors and even heads of small district administrations lest they stay too long in their posts or amass connections at the local level.

There is one more important point to consider, namely, the financial and economic issue. In the near future, Ukraine won't have much money. Firstly, giving money to Ukraine means having it embezzled. Secondly, there are no sources to give money. Therefore there must also be unity of command – this time without Poroshenko but directly between the IMF and Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko to prevent money from falling into the wrong hands.

According to some reports, this was the reason for the arrest of Sergei Bochkovsky, the head of Ukraine's State Emergency Service. Washington believes that Bochkovsky had for a long time sponsored the People's Front using state funds. The authors of the scheme say that making Interior Minister Arsen Avakov, who is close to the Front, “ditch” Bochkovsky was the acme of skill in using political technologies. There is no doubt that Avakov himself is on the list, he knows about it and is very nervous. It is unlikely that the sword of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies, guided so subtly by foreign specialists, will touch the prime minister now – there is no need for that. Yet he will have to worry, too.

Again, it is not accidental that Minister of Economy Aivaras Abromavičius has suddenly begun to say that all state-owned property in Ukraine should be sold immediately solely to Western companies. Nothing can be sold dearly in Ukraine now. The situation in the country is such that the buyer sets the price, which means that property is not sold but transferred for free into someone else's hands, bypassing Ukrainian tycoons, potential oligarchs, and high-ranking government officials. As soon as this is done (which will take a couple of years),

the Ukrainian political and economic space will have been completely mopped up. While now oligarchs are deliberately degraded, no one will be able to rise at all later without the permission from senior partners.

THE SECOND TASK

The second task is to restore the combat efficiency of Ukraine's Armed Forces but not for the purpose of making a fast thrust and defeating the self-proclaimed Lugansk and Donetsk People's Republics after the winter campaign. There are no illusions left about the Ukrainian army's capability. Continuous reports about U.S. plans to supply weapons to Ukraine suggest long-term strategies. They cannot give a quick effect, and even John McCain understands this. But this is changing the perspective, which can be important if we assume that the task has altered.

The State Department is already well aware that "taking Donetsk by Victory Day" would be impossible. At the same time, any unilateral escalation of hostilities by the Ukrainian army can further erode Europe's united support for the U.S. policy. Partly, the tactic has already changed. This does not mean that the Ukrainian army and the Volunteer Ukrainian Corps will stop testing the vigilance of the "people's republics," conducting reconnaissance-in-force operations or trying to break through the enemy defenses. Yet these tasks are no longer viewed as a top priority.

If Kiev succeeds in provoking Lugansk and Donetsk into escalating hostilities, Russia will take all the blame for violating the agreements and face even stronger and broader sanctions. If the provocation fails, the war of nerves will continue, but the U.S. does not rely on a short-term scenario and an immediate effect.

The above is largely evident and inevitable. But this does not mean of course that Washington will succeed. The State Department does not understand the situation well enough (although better than a year ago), and Ukraine is not all peaches and cream. Now and then some local specificity crops up, but American strategists do not like specificities and very often stumble over them. The deterioration of relations between Kolomoisky and Poroshenko is a typical surprise

of this kind. Although the issue had always been seen as explosive, no one had foreseen that the conflict might escalate within a day into an armed confrontation.

This kind of events can happen again. There are now too many discontented people. However, the algorithm has already been found, and a third (fourth, fifth, sixth, etc.) *Maidan* will only remain someone's pipe dream. So far, the situation is under control.

The problem is of a different kind. Just like Russian scenarios erroneously assume that the U.S. actions are static, the State Department's scenarios cannot accurately identify Russia's priorities in the current conflict. And yet, things must be easier for the State Department as Washington understands Moscow better than vice versa, and the instruments at its disposal are incomparable with those of Moscow. However, the Kremlin has a choice, too, and the efficiency and timeliness of its response can neutralize any of the opponent's strategy, even if it is stronger and better prepared.

For Moscow, there are three main scenarios of counteraction, with different degrees of probability. Russia has limited freedom in choosing a scenario, as the choice largely depends on the West. Washington can even mix the scenarios. Both parties are playing poker, but the West can see one or two (although not all) Russian cards, whereas Russia cannot see the game being played by the U.S. and its allies at the moment. Moscow should be ready to play all possible options, while trying to execute its own game plan. The task is very difficult, but there is no alternative to it.

OPTION ONE – COLLAPSE

Many economists in Russia, Ukraine and the West now speak about the collapse of the Ukrainian economy. For example, the agreement with the IMF requires that Ukraine restructure its foreign debt by late May. However, if Russia, as one of the creditors, says no to the restructuring, the IMF will stop the funding, and by autumn Ukraine will have to default.

This scenario is possible but unlikely, and it does not in any way depend on Moscow. Russia may refuse to restructure Ukraine's debt

and thus complicate the situation in Ukraine. But the West, realizing that the debt issue (\$3 billion plus another three to four billion dollars owed for gas supplies) may pose a serious problem, will urgently settle it, even by paying its own money. Six to seven billion dollars will hardly make the West retreat from Ukraine, especially if it has long-term plans there. Suffice it to recall German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's words that finding a political solution to the issue of eastern Ukraine may take decades.

There is another "apocalyptic" scenario. Industrial enterprises stop working; the standard of living declines rapidly; masses of ordinary Ukrainians cannot stand it any longer and take to the streets to protest; the government falls; and the state collapses.

Commenting on this scenario is even easier. The collapse of the Ukrainian economy, as we have known it over the past 15 years, has already come. Things are bad for everyone, but not so bad as to lead to mass protests.

First, there are no leaders. Some of them are on the run; many others have been neutralized; some are fighting on the side of Donetsk and Lugansk; and the others have gone deep underground and do not know what may happen in the next few months.

Second, Ukrainian people have been living very modestly all this time anyway. Actually, they have been trying hard to survive. They do not like what is happening now (see the popularity ratings of Yatsenyuk and the government), but this is an issue of election rather than protest. If a new (necessarily new) and moderate political force is given two to three months of conflict-free and well-funded promotion, it will easily top all the ratings. But this is fantasy rather than political reality.

Third, people still cherish hope – for payments or cancellation of visas, which will enable them to go abroad in search of better-paid jobs. The illusion of hope will be constantly maintained through the media, which is a good remedy against crystallization of protests. As a matter of fact, the feeling of no hope left was one of the main reasons for the fall of Victor Yanukovich. This was already evident during the 2012 elections to the Verkhovna Rada.

Any mention of “charismatic governors” can be omitted. They are changed all the time, and “charisma” is the last thing on their mind. The decentralization mechanism can start working not earlier than in a year or even later. So many things may happen over this time that there is no point in discussing it now.

The next scenario is more serious. This is a social and psychological effect of a military defeat, such as the military disaster at Debaltsevo. However, contrary to expectations and numerous assumptions, Debaltsevo did not produce the boomerang effect. Volunteer battalions did not march to Kiev to overthrow the criminal and treacherous authorities but peacefully expressed their opinion of them in social networks. The authorities, aided by advisers from Washington, behaved very professionally to forestall possible negative consequences of the military defeat. None of the national television channels gave much airtime to opponents of the authorities so as to prevent crystallization of opposition sentiment. Troops that broke out from Debaltsevo were immediately proclaimed heroes, and their surrender was described as a planned operation. And, most importantly, there were no alternative opinions in the media.

After Debaltsevo, volunteer battalions came under strong pressure, and some of them have already been recalled from the front. There is no reason to expect them to rebel against the authorities after the local military defeat. Neither Shirokino, nor Bakhmutka, nor even something bigger will have serious consequences for Kiev.

So, the collapse of Ukraine is possible but relatively unlikely. Washington believes that it controls almost everything in Ukraine. But collapses may occur all of a sudden simply because of snowballing adverse events, or because someone has failed to foresee something. Currently, the probability of loss of control can be estimated at 20 to 25 percent. Russia must be prepared for that. For example, it should have an alternative government-in-exile in this case. However, this scenario does not depend on Russia, and the latter is unable, or almost unable, to induce it.

OPTION TWO – ESCALATION

The keys to escalation are also in Washington, but it will use them very carefully. It is easy to exacerbate the situation, but the consequences

of that will be unpredictable for all. This is why the United States will keep fueling the situation in eastern Ukraine, but it will do it carefully, step by step and calculating all the consequences (if this is possible at all). It is important to understand three points here: 1) What are Washington's objectives? 2) What tools of escalation does it have? and 3) What consequences can these actions have?

The first question is the most difficult one and it is crucial for getting answers to the other two questions and a general understanding of the situation. To answer it, we need to make a short digression. What is the U.S. policy in Europe in general and how does it differ from U.S. policies in the rest of the world? What is Barack Obama afraid of when he refuses to supply weapons to Ukraine?

Actually, the United States is not afraid of the emergence of new states. Over the last 15 years alone, there have emerged Kosovo (so far only *de facto*), East Timor, and South Sudan. All of them came into being not only with the U.S.'s assistance but also under its very strong pressure, including the use of force or willingness to use it. Disintegration processes are under way in Iraq, Libya, and Somalia, and in all of these countries the United States played significant roles. The United States supports the independence of Taiwan and constantly warns China about the inadmissibility of using force for its reintegration. According to the U.S. logic, Ukraine can use force against pro-Russian separatists for reintegration, but China cannot do the same against pro-American separatists.

Since World War I and President Woodrow Wilson, who liked to divide European countries into small pieces, the United States has been the most active player in European political processes. This is officially reflected in such organizations as NATO and the OSCE where America is very active even though it is located very far from Europe. The European Union, as we know it today, is also largely a result of the American vision of Europe. It is not accidental that people in many Eastern European countries like to say that their road to the EU passed via NATO. Now this phrase is often repeated in Ukraine.

The United States is interested in the European Union that exists today, which is large enough to keep many countries under control

but loose enough to prevent Angela Merkel, Jean-Claude Juncker and other EU leaders from creating supranational bodies, including a joint army. In this situation, any “unplanned” fluctuations would be harmful to U.S. policy in Europe. This is why Kosovo can be independent, while Scotland and Catalonia cannot. Any change in the balance of power that is beyond U.S. control poses a threat to U.S. security. Even the strengthening of Russia per se is a clear and present danger, not to mention Crimea and Donbass.

Meanwhile, there are differences between Europe and “others.” No one in the U.S. cares about the number of victims among the local population in Africa or Asia. But a full-fledged war in the heart of Europe raises concerns. Obama did nothing to prevent armed hostilities in Ukraine, but he principally opposes bloodshed on the Russian-Ukrainian border. His opponents in the party are more pragmatic: “If there is a problem, it must be solved.”

The ruling group in Washington definitely does not intend to provoke Moscow into a nuclear war and is 90 percent unwilling to organize a massive military campaign in Ukraine. But the militaristic décor is needed to resolve solely political and geopolitical tasks.

Firstly and most importantly, Russia must pay dearly for going out of control and for its geopolitical ambitions: it must be demoralized, discredited and, possibly, desubjectivized. And then Ukraine’s Finlandization can be discussed. As Russia persists, the price must be constantly raised. One of the main points behind the idea to supply weapons to Ukraine (as seen by the Democrats) is that Russia must realize that it will gain nothing in Ukraine under any circumstances.

Secondly, this is a clear signal to Berlin and Paris: your security is in our hands; we will find a way to make you do what we want you to do. Hence the famous statement by Biden that the U.S. forced EU states to impose sanctions against Russia.

The third point is U.S. home politics. Obama has never succeeded in anything – this is a typical view of the American political community (regardless of how much this corresponds to reality). Hillary Clinton does not want to be linked in any way with a “loser” in her election campaign. Therefore her future team must demonstrate firmness and

victorious pressure. At the same time, Ukraine for these people is not something that goes beyond usual political planning. They do not even need an obvious victory and, especially, a successful Ukraine. It would be enough to declare Russia a loser and give it exemplary punishment, preferably for long.

So, official arms supplies to Ukraine are not the main point. In fact, supplies have been made for quite a long time by various parties and with U.S. active participation. Without them, there would be no efficient Armed Forces in Ukraine now. The main point is the ongoing discussion in Washington on how to arm Kiev, what role the U.S. is to play in the conflict, and the degree of its possible and desirable involvement in it. In other words, the talk of arms supplies to Ukraine (and unofficial supplies per se) with direct or indirect U.S. involvement is not so much an attempt to resolve the conflict militarily as a means of escalation, which has two different goals:

- to provoke Russia, draw it into a highly limited direct conflict and give it demonstrative punishment for that;
- to keep Russia in the conflict as long as possible in order to multiply its possible losses.

Weapons are needed in both cases – but only as an element of the plan, rather than as a means to change the situation on the front. Washington's plan may be as follows:

- Russia (Lugansk/Donetsk) will be provoked constantly;
- there will no backlash for as long as it is possible from the military point of view;
- the discussion of arms supplies, the supplies as such, the reformatting of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, and the work of American instructors will proceed in parallel;
- the Armed Forces of Lugansk/Donetsk are not capable of launching a serious offensive in their present condition, as Debaltsevo proved. Without a major reinforcement, their Armed Forces can hold only the current frontline. Even under the best case scenario, the most they can do is seize Lisichansk or cities like that. This would not be critical for Kiev;

- if the conflict escalates, the Minsk II agreements will be declared invalid; Berlin and Paris will be put in their places again; and Obama will sign a Congress resolution on direct arms supplies. He simply cannot avoid doing that as he will have to give in under the pressure of superior circumstances;
- as a result, Russia will remain where it is now; Europe will cease to stand in the way; and Washington will have new tools to escalate the conflict further and raise its price;
- the cycle will be over: Russia has lost and the U.S. has increased its capabilities, which means that everything is going well. The price for Russia will have increased significantly, and there will be only one way for it to go – to negotiate from a position of weakness.

But this plan – simple and effective, as everything drafted in Washington – has three weak points.

Mariupol. In September, Russia stopped the offensive towards Mariupol in hope for a durable and mutually acceptable peace accord in exchange. No way. While Berlin and Paris agree to a draw, Washington, which has the keys, does not. Trying to seize Mariupol again will be much more difficult. Yet, this is possible in practice, and the U.S. fears this. Why? Mariupol is now the main trading gate of Ukraine. Metal, currently the main export commodity of the country, is exported via Mariupol. So, the loss of Mariupol would significantly increase the value of the matter for Ukraine (and the whole of the West). Potential losses can be estimated at three to four billion dollars a month, which is a very serious amount. Money will have to be found somewhere and immediately wasted on supporting the Ukrainian authorities and the country's survival.

Also, Mariupol is not Debaltsevo. Kiev will not be able to soft-pedal its loss. It will be very dangerous for the incumbent authorities. If Poroshenko's rating starts to fall, the situation may go out of control. Kiev will have to impose martial law and tighten the reins to the maximum. From the point of view of the image used, such developments will be disadvantageous (for the United States).

Finally, some American experts describe Mariupol as a land bridge to Crimea, which will fundamentally change the geography of the conflict. The ongoing clashes at Shirokino are an indicator of danger for Mariupol. It is believed in Kiev and Washington that if the Azov Battalion, which now controls part of the town, is thrown back, this will be followed by an offensive – not by Donetsk forces but by Russia itself. Donetsk simply does not have enough resources for that.

The second weak point is the state of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Of course, they are unable to fight Russian troops, but this is not a discrete question requiring a yes or no answer. The most important thing here is the factor of time. If (in case of escalation and direct conflict) the Russian army is stopped on the border of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, that would be the best option. If not, then on the Dnieper. Washington officials openly say that if Russia decides to directly intervene in the conflict, then it may go as far as the Zbruch River. Everything else does not change the situation fundamentally.

The Russian army is on the territory of another country; its advance is obstructed; global sanctions have been imposed; and no one prevents the U.S. from sending NATO troops to Ukraine and maintaining the frontline for as long as possible. In fact, the West has an absolutely free hand. However:

- Washington has no reliable information about Moscow's plans. The Ukrainian Armed Forces have to constantly violate the ceasefire agreement to figure out enemy plans and to check if the enemy has new equipment and personnel;
- it was surprising for the United States that during the January campaign there was no “northern wind” and that proof of its presence is only verbal. When enemy plans are not evident, risks always grow, together with nervousness. It is no use trying to guess what the enemy himself has no idea of yet. It is not an accepted practice in Washington to go with the flow, and this will not reduce the risk;
- the factor of time is becoming decisive. It is a big question how much time the Ukrainian Armed Forces have. Three days is not

enough. A week may be enough or may be not. This is one of the reasons behind the attempt to integrate volunteer battalions into Ukraine's regular forces. In the conditions of uncertainty, unity of command can become an essential element and give a time advantage.

Conclusion. The direct escalation scenario is dangerous for all parties. Even though the Americans have the initiative here, Moscow has the ability for tough asymmetric responses which will greatly increase the risk of an open military conflict. This is the last thing Washington would like to have. It will use this option only as a last resort. Also, just like in the event of collapse, Russia has taken a disadvantageous reactive position, that is, it is seriously preparing for what will very likely never happen. In practice, this comes to forced and unstable balancing between Minsk II and expectations of an escalation.

Washington's tactics in the conflict in the coming months may include increasing the price for Russia, while maintaining the threat of escalation. For that, it may use not direct provocations of a new conflict but local confrontations and reconnaissance in force.

The most probable way the conflict may develop is its transition into a pseudo-frozen phase, with constant local clashes on the verge of open fighting. This will be a kind of exhausting option. It will be slow and difficult in terms of variability, unobviousness and temporary remoteness of various components. But it is here that Moscow has a chance to take the lead from the West, rather than limit itself to reactions to the other party's actions.

OPTION THREE – RUSSIA'S WITHDRAWAL

In order to "survive" in the long game, Russia should follow its own strategy, while being ready for anything. There are several important points here:

- the basic algorithm of a long game is a sequence of relatively short escalations and longer "preparatory" truces (binary algorithm);

- within this algorithm, going beyond a long game will pose a very great risk. In other words, if Russia withdraws from the “Minsk format,” it will have to take all the risks and face all the consequences;
- the choice is only between the solution of limited tasks and a transition to a maximum win strategy, with an incredibly high risk;
- under this scenario, Russia’s influence on the situation will keep decreasing. The remaining non-economic (informational, cultural and personal) levers of influence will be destroyed with the help of the West;
- under this scenario, there will be no chances for creating a “unified pro-Russian Ukraine” or “Greater and Medium Novorossiia.” These are nothing more than artifacts;
- Ukraine does not even have to join NATO because NATO is already in Ukraine, and it is present there in the most unacceptable way for Moscow when no rules of the game exist.

Economic cooperation between Russia and Ukraine has also been sacrificed. Since 2012, their mutual trade has been steadily decreasing: from about \$46 billion in 2012 to \$38 billion in 2013 and to \$22 billion in 2014 – that is, it has decreased by more than half over the last two years. In 2014, Ukraine’s foreign trade fell by \$30 billion (down 22 percent from the previous year). Trade with Russia accounted for more than half of this amount – \$16 billion. Last year, Russian exports to Ukraine were decreasing much faster than Russian imports from Ukraine. By the end of 2015, Russia will most likely cease to be the main trading partner of Ukraine.

However, it is this decline in mutual trade that offers Russia an alternative formula for influencing the developments in Ukraine. According to IMF officials who prepared the agreement with Kiev, it was the break of trade and economic relations with Moscow, rather than military actions, that was the main problem of the Ukrainian economy in 2014. They say that the price of the war is two or even 2.5 times less than the price of the rupture of ties with

Russia. Military actions may be stopped, but trade will not recover by itself after that.

Estimates made by Ukraine's Ministry of Economy show that after all trade restrictions were lifted by the European Union, Ukraine could significantly increase the export of only two commodities to Europe: vegetable oil and wood. Most likely, Ukraine has reached the limit in vegetable oil production, as it will be unable to essentially increase sunflower plantations. Nothing of what the country lost in 2014 and will lose in 2015 can be compensated for since there are no other markets for its products but Russia. The lifting of trade restrictions by the EU does not help much, because in this case market rather than administrative mechanisms are used.

Russia can avail of this chance and use this major instrument of pressure not so much on Ukraine as on Europe which has to play the role of Kiev's main sponsor. For the time being, the situation is maintained by remittances from Russia, which have even grown due to a sharp increase in the number of Ukrainian refugees going to Russia. More than half of the refugees in 2014 were not people from war-ravaged Donbass but young people evading mobilization.

Russia's main goal in the long game is to shift the entire economic and financial responsibility for the situation in Ukraine onto the West as soon as possible. Not that Moscow has been sitting idle, but it is firmness and the speed of decision-making, not just intentions, that matters. The sooner Moscow introduces the entire set of administrative measures to restrict trade with Ukraine, the harder it will be for the West in the long game. In terms of money, it may be even more serious than Mariupol – up to \$5 billion a month, taking into account the multiplier effect. This will amount not to \$6 billion a year but to about \$60 billion. The West does not have this amount of readily available funds.

As a result, Europe (above all Europe, not the U.S.) has only two options:

- to reach agreement with Russia, responsibly and on a parity basis, on all issues concerning the future of Ukraine; or
- pay and create insoluble economic problems for itself in the short and medium term.

Sentimentality and idle speculations about fraternal countries no longer matter. And one should not take close to heart the “loss of Ukraine” for Russia. First of all, no one in Ukraine now wants to have Russia back – regardless of the course of the military campaign and its outcome. Secondly, Russia has already lost Ukraine – not now but years ago, first in 1991 and then in 2004, for good or at least for long. However, it is very likely that very soon the loss of Ukraine will no longer seem very important. Indeed, an ability to find and use one’s chance is much more important than emotions over phantom losses.

World politics is quickly moving out of Europe, along with the mutual interest of Europe and Russia. So very soon the Ukrainian crisis will no longer set the political agenda for Moscow and will be remembered as just an unpleasant episode.

To Bring Ukraine Back

Ressentiment and the Future Russian “Reconquista” of Public Opinion in Ukraine

Eduard Ponarin and Boris Sokolov

There is a widely-spread opinion among experts, both Russian and foreign, that Russia has forever discredited itself in the eyes of Ukrainians by acting the way it did during their “revolution of dignity” and the subsequent secession of Crimea and the war in Donbass, and is now generally viewed as an aggressor. Some claim there is no use for Russia to look for a compromise solution and it should instead adhere to an aggressive policy.

Some hotheads insist that Russia should declare a war on Ukraine and simply seize its pro-Russian eastern regions and even Kiev itself. They reason that the current Russophobic government will reign in Ukraine for many years to come, pursuing a blatantly anti-Russian policy and seeking ever closer integration into the Euro-Atlantic security system. They further hold that the prospect of seeing the neighboring country possibly turning into a large hostile state ready to host NATO military bases is a much bigger threat to Russia’s national security than the risks associated with economic, political or even military countermeasures to be taken by the international community if Russia invades Ukraine.

In fact, having a big and aggressive neighbor that is cooperating with competitors for influence in the world and harboring territorial claims is a serious threat. But the potential of “soft power” for achieving

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Russia's main goals in Ukraine should not be underestimated either. At present, the general public in Ukraine is largely unfriendly towards Russia, while showing much loyalty towards the United States and major Western European countries, which undoubtedly facilitates their foreign policy pursuits in the region. However, the theory of international relations and public opinion suggests that as the political landscape in Ukraine becomes more complex, Moscow will get a chance to change the situation in its own favor and restore the positive image of Russia among Ukrainians.

RESSENTIMENT: HISTORICAL ANALOGIES

In order to understand how this can be achieved, we should digress for a while from assessing the current situation in terms of geopolitics or rational choice and turn instead to the history of ideas. There is such a term in philosophy as '*ressentiment*' (from the French word *ressentiment*, meaning resentment, frustration, and hostility). It was first used by Nietzsche in his "On the Genealogy of Morality" to describe a specific phenomenon of revaluation of all values. According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* occurs when an individual feels inferior to someone more powerful and suffers from the inability to achieve the same status. As a result, an individual feeling *ressentiment* develops a world view that denies that of the more powerful individual and even holds the latter responsible for his own failures.

Liah Greenfeld, an American historian of Soviet descent, says that *ressentiment* can occur not only individually but also nationally. In her *opus magnum* "Nationalism: Five Ways to Modernity," she illustrates this thesis with examples from European history of the 18th-19th centuries. At the beginning of that period, England was the political trendsetter, and its political and economic institutions were publicly admired by many Enlightenment leaders who urged the French government to follow Britain's suit. At that time, England and France were constantly at war with each other, competing for global leadership, and the latter often got beaten. This generated strong demand for modernization in France, prompting reforms at some point. However, the French could not catch up with England

economically and militarily, eventually losing Canada after the Seven Years' War and many of their positions in India.

One of the side-effects of that failed pursuit was a radical change of intellectual attitudes. While initially Anglophilia was welcome in the French salons, it gave way to various forms of Anglophobia in the second half of the 18th century. Similar changes occurred in the Russian Empire, which had been following European trends since Peter the Great, albeit not always successfully, and eventually saw the emergence of a strong anti-Western tradition in the Russian social thought, and in Germany during the Napoleonic Wars when the newly-born French Republic was celebrated at first and then severely criticized.

A vivid example of *ressentiment* can also be found in Russia's contemporary history. During *perestroika* the majority of people in the Soviet Union in general and in Russia in particular thought well of the United States, democracy and market economy. Today, however, public opinion polls reveal a completely different attitude, especially towards America. The reason is that many people in Russia, particularly among democracy-minded intellectuals, viewed reforms of the early 1990s as a springboard for overcoming technological and economic backwardness and turning Russia from an isolated "evil empire" into a leading power in the rapidly integrating world. It was believed that the former geopolitical adversary, the United States, would exert active efforts to help Russia become a developed democracy faster.

However, the United States did not provide economic and political assistance to modernizing Russia in the amounts hoped for by its elites. Moreover, the Americans used the temporary weakness of their former competitor to expand their presence in regions that had previously been under Soviet influence. Their refusal to respect Russia's national interests caused a negative reaction among its elites in the mid-1990s, and not only among foreign policy "hawks" or steadfast advocates of Soviet power. Even such prominent liberals as Grigory Yavlinsky and Boris Nemtsov sometimes accused the United States of acting unfriendly towards Russia.

The disappointment of the elites was accompanied by public discontent after the shock therapy and ensuing upheavals. All this has generated strong anti-American, anti-market and anti-democratic sentiment in Russian society and led its considerable part to consolidate around anti-Western ideology. As a result, liberal and democratic views and their advocates have been discredited in the Russian political space.

IS A U-TURN POSSIBLE?

Prior to last winter's revolutionary events, the situation in Ukraine was largely reminiscent of that in Russia in the early 1990s. Just like many Russian reformers of that time, *Maidan* activists proclaimed an ideology that was intended to turn Ukraine into a prosperous democratic country and was not based on bloody Russophobic ideas advocated by radical nationalists. The latter were in fact the most organized and resolute part of Ukrainian civil society and for that reason played a disproportionately big role in the events that followed. Crimea's secession and pro-Russian demonstrations in Donbass played into their hands by waking up nationalistic feelings even among those Ukrainians who had been neutral towards Russia until then. Moreover, at some point enmity towards Russia became a key element of national solidarity in post-Yanukovich Ukraine and as such it has been kept boiling since then by various groups within the ruling elite in order to retain power. And yet, initially, the *Maidan* was not inspired by anti-Russian slogans and had a rather positive agenda: the people in the streets simply wanted to make their country a better place.

The war with Russia until the bitter end is not their political ideal. They are not prepared to pay for the senseless armed hostilities with a socio-economic catastrophe unfolding not just somewhere in a faraway and abstract land but in the streets of Kiev. Since their country is actually in a state of war, it would be wrong to accuse them of regarding Russia as an enemy and being ready to pay a certain price for the sake of victory. However, for the majority of people in Ukraine, just like in any other country, their own economic interests will always be a more significant factor in their political behavior than ideological

slogans. It takes a repressive and propaganda system of the sort used by Stalin or Nazi Germany to make a starving country fight to the last bullet. But the present Ukrainian government is not able to carry out an effective mobilization campaign even in the western regions of the country where nationalistic sentiment is the strongest. This suggests that for Ukrainian politicians to win over the electorate they will have to prove their ability to ensure minimum socio-economic stability in the country rather than to irresponsibly call for waging a war with Russia until the bitter end.

Ukraine can continue its “counter-terrorism operation” in the east of the country only if it receives economic and military assistance from the West. The government in Kiev is well aware of this, and this is what its supporters expect from the West, which they still view as an embodiment of “the good” standing up to “the evil.” European leaders generally are not interested in continuing the confrontation with Russia because of the high economic costs that can cause them to lose power amid fierce electoral competition. But one must not delude himself about their true reasons, though. Europeans are much more concerned about the big neighbor’s attempts to redraw state borders by force than about the limited gains from economic or military cooperation with Ukraine. If Ukraine’s territorial integrity is guaranteed, the European Union’s diplomatic pressure on Russia will lessen considerably, but economic aid to Ukraine will remain minimal, barely enough to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe that can create a flow of refugees (which, however, will go mainly to Russia rather than to EU countries. Therefore, the West can easily shift the burden of accommodating them to Russia).

As for the United States, the situation is not that simple. The positions of the “American hawks,” who continue to display Cold War thinking and seek to spread U.S. presence wherever possible, are still strong. In their opinion, Russia’s independent policy is a challenge to the U.S.’s status as a world hegemon and for that reason must be nipped in the bud. However, one must face the truth: if there is anything that makes Russia’s actions different from those of Israel against its neighbors, it is its size. The rise of China and the growth of Islamic

extremism, which is gradually abandoning guerrilla warfare to fight for a place on the political map of the world, are a much bigger threat for the United States than the snarling of the disturbed bear.

There are enough people across the ocean who are much more versed in foreign affairs than representatives of the last Cold War-era generation lost in time. Confrontation with Russia, good or bad, democratic or authoritarian, cannot be a top priority in U.S. foreign policy, especially if the U.S.'s ally is an incapable political entity. So the incumbent Ukrainian government can hardly count on anything bigger than arms supplies which will undoubtedly benefit American armament manufacturers who are excellent lobbyists. But Ukraine's problem is not a lack of weapons.

The most probable scenario suggests that we will see absence of substantial Western aid and disregard for Ukraine's interests in the big geopolitical game. Coupled with its own government's inability to cope with the situation in the country, this will sooner or later change public opinion in Ukraine, including in what concerns cooperation with the West. Today, many politically active Ukrainians assess the international situation using a simple "East-West" formula: evil is coming from the east, help must come from the west. However, if help does not come from the west – and it certainly will not – this black-and-white picture will be broken. Europe will no longer be regarded by the majority of people as a political and economic partner or an ideal social model. On the contrary, Ukrainians, especially educated and most pro-European-minded ones, will become more and more disappointed with their ideals and harbor hard feelings about European countries, thus experiencing *ressentiment*. This will be accompanied by growing fatigue from senseless nationalistic slogans which are essentially nothing more than a background for the elite infighting.

If Moscow takes an effort to move away from the abovementioned opposition's hardliners and fill in the ideological vacuum that is forming in Ukrainian society as it comes to realize that the nationalistic and European projects have failed, a U-turn can be possible. Many Ukrainians will begin to view Russia as a partner that is much more

trustworthy than European politicians who made declarations but essentially did nothing to help Ukraine.

Naturally, such a U-turn will require a bit more than just a massive propaganda campaign, especially since access to Ukraine's information space for Russian agents is restricted. But convincing arguments in favor of a union with Russia could vary from humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian population, including that from NGOs or the Church, and humane treatment of pro-Russian combatants in Donbass, to government programs to support Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Russia and people living in the adjacent regions of Ukraine, as well as to creating favorable conditions for Ukrainian companies trading with Russia, specifically small and medium-sized businesses. These measures should target ordinary Ukrainians, not high-ranking functionaries in the present government. Moreover, Russian propaganda, both internal and external, must draw a clear watershed between the incumbent authorities in Ukraine and its people.

Moscow must not sweepingly stigmatize everyone who lives to the west of the frontline in Donbass, for this will only consolidate Ukrainians around nationalistic policy. Instead, Russia should create an ideological vacuum around radicals and cut them off from public support. Ukraine is an independent state, and its people's national feelings must be spared as much as possible. What is truly important now is to stop the practice traditionally used by the ideologists of Ukrainian nationalism to position Ukraine as "non-Russia." There can hardly be a better way to do this than by showing the obvious political failure of anti-Russian nationalists and pro-European liberals in Ukraine.

Some elements of this policy are already in place and working. But observers interpret them as an attempt to send an indirect signal to the West about Russia's peaceful intentions, although this message should be directed not only to Western diplomats and experts but also, and predominantly, to ordinary Ukrainians. If this cannot be done through mass media because of the information blockade imposed by the Ukrainian authorities, Moscow can always use informal people-to-people contacts. Promoting the image of Russia and Russians as

opponents of the oligarchic government and radical nationalists rather than Ukraine and its people via friends and relatives, entrepreneurs, and soldiers participating in the counter-terrorism operation will have an even stronger effect than showing a positive image on television.

If successful, this strategy of indirect impact will have several side-effects, very important for Russia's national interests. First of all, a peaceful conquest of the public opinion in Ukraine will allow Russia (presumably amid the continuing political competition inside the country) to secure an acceptable level of loyalty of the Ukrainian government in the medium and even long term and block Ukraine's cooperation with the West in areas where it can be harmful to Russia. But it would be wrong to obstruct Ukraine's European integration completely, for this would push away both Europe and the pro-European part of Ukrainian society: Ukraine's *ressentiment* will not obliterate its commitment to cooperation with Europe. However, a soft re-orientation of Ukrainians towards cooperation with Russia will help reduce tension in Donbass and thus find an acceptable solution to the conflict that would not endanger Ukraine's territorial integrity. This will change the image of "revanchist" Russia, which Western "hawks" use as a bugaboo for their more or less neutrally-minded partners and voters, and strengthen the electoral positions of those Western political blocs and economic groups behind them that are interested in cooperation with Russia.

It would be absurd, of course, to stop supporting the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, for this would be regarded as a sign of weakness and damage Russia's reputation. Giving the two republics a special status in post-war Ukraine will be inevitable for humanitarian reasons and will not require any sophisticated moves affecting the interests of Russia or perpetuating its image as an aggressor. People who killed each other cannot mend their rifts overnight, and the presence of UN peacekeeping missions in the region would be a good compromise.

Sanctions over Crimea will not be lifted quickly and this issue will remain a stumbling block in relations between Russia and the West for many years to come. But mounting *ressentiment* in Ukraine

and the warming of relations between Moscow and Kiev can create a paradoxical situation where people in the country formally affected by their neighbor's territorial expansion will be less concerned about the status of Crimea as a disputable ground than international political structures. People in any country can temporarily be blinded by hatred towards an enemy. But in the long run ordinary people happen to be more reasonable than politicians and choose to be with those who give him a helping hand, not with those who push them into the abyss of war.

* * *

Many may find these reflections improbable. But just several years ago most experts would have said the same about a possible big war between Russia and Ukraine. One must not underestimate the potential of “soft power” and the role of ideological factors in political processes.

Summarizing the aforementioned, we should say plainly: neither the United States nor Europe cares about the Ukrainian people as such. They are no more than a bargaining chip in a big geopolitical game which is being played by just one group within U.S. political elites and which is drawing in the European Union – very much against its will. The Ukrainian government, which is riding on a nationalistic and anti-Russian ideology, seems to be bankrupt. Mounting economic problems will only exacerbate Ukrainians' *ressentiment* towards the West as well as mistrust and even hatred towards their own political elites. Russia should make use of Ukrainian society's disappointment with Ukrainian nationalism and pro-European liberalism. Close economic, social and historical ties between the two countries will undoubtedly facilitate the success of efforts to build a positive image of Russia among Ukrainians.

Spontaneous Decentralization

Outlines of a Compromise on Ukraine

Alexei Slavich-Pristupa

Several fundamental factors are propelling Ukraine into disintegration. In the medium term, however, a more likely scenario is the existence of several autonomous regions, nominally united in a single state but actually independent of the central government.

RUSSIA'S INTERESTS

Ironically, Ukraine is only indirectly related to that aspect of the Ukrainian conflict that Moscow considers most fundamental: Was it permissible for it to “swallow” the demonstrative encouragement and approval by the West of a coup d'état in the area of Russia's basic interests?

By incorporating Crimea and supporting Donbass separatists, Moscow has not only shown its readiness for tough confrontation but also forced the West to assume responsibility for the outcome of the conflict and for keeping Ukraine afloat. Under this strategy, support for separatist territories in Donbass, as an almost independent autonomous area, has become significant for Moscow all by itself – not only because a “surrender of Novorossiya” would be viewed as Russia's defeat but also because it is an important tool for influencing the situation.

And as concerns the prospects of Ukraine's integration, it is actually its maximum decentralization that would be more preferable

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for Moscow in the long term. The formal status of the Ukrainian central authorities is not really so important; what is important is a real possibility of direct interaction with Ukrainian regions in trade, investment and information spheres. Decentralization is also an additional means of blocking Ukraine's possible accession to NATO (although the probability of this happening in the foreseeable future is already quite speculative, primarily due to the lack of interest on the part of the allied countries).

If Moscow successfully passes through the Ukraine crisis, it will gain substantial strategic dividends:

- Russia's elites and the whole of society will consolidate (in addition, the presidential campaign in 2018 may be much simpler and cheaper to conduct).
- Russia's international role in changing the world order will grow significantly, above all, among its potential allies. Russia's opponents may start to behave more carefully in the area of its interests.
- Russia will pass stress tests and eliminate key system vulnerabilities (in the credit/financial sector, IT infrastructure, communication networks, access to critical technologies, etc.).
- Russia will test the combat capability of its Armed Forces and security services.

Many analysts dramatize restricted access to western funding. True, this is a very sensitive issue for businesses. But the "all-good globalization" paradigm aside, the fall in foreign investment can clearly make a positive impact. First of all, political risks inherent in external financing are decreasing. In addition, Russia is getting a chance to increase its technological independence (cheap special-purpose funding for investment often comes without basic know-how) and financial stability (foreign portfolio investments are very volatile and timid). In general, Russia's current economic losses from the war of sanctions will hardly exceed 1-2 percent of GDP a year, which is quite unpleasant but largely not critical.

At the same time, an escalation of the conflict will apparently lead to excessive losses and risks. In particular, several long-term strategic problems will arise:

- Loss of access to many important technologies.
- Negative impact on Eurasian integration, primarily with Kazakhstan and Belarus.
- Slowdown in the development of some basic industries (machine-tool industry, heavy engineering, etc.).
- Deceleration of the defense industry and rearmament programs (including the mobile component of the nuclear triad).

Considering the tangle of factors, Moscow should better think not of a “victory at all costs” but of a reasonable compromise with acceptable basic terms. Judging from the “Minsk process” and other signals, Russia is already moving in this direction.

INTERESTS OF THE WEST

It is widely believed, especially in Ukraine, that the West has some substantial interest in Ukraine as an economic and/or military-strategic partner. Yet today Ukraine accounts for about 1 percent of the EU’s foreign trade and about 0.1 percent of the Americas’ trade operations, which speaks quite clearly about the country’s economic significance. In addition, about 90 percent of Ukrainian exports to the West are raw materials and semi-finished products that do not belong to strategic resources.

One can hardly expect – both for tactical and political reasons – NATO’s potential in Ukraine to be higher than that in Eastern Europe, where it is close to zero from the geostrategic point of view. In fact, at least half of the Russian nuclear triad is either stationed out of operational contact with the European theater or is mobile. Therefore, Ukraine is of little military importance to the West.

Despite courtesies towards Ukraine, like “Our doors are open,” NATO is very reserved and cautious about Ukraine’s possible admittance, and keeps emphasizing the need to “observe the alliance’s standards and principles.” Many analysts rightfully note that, in

fact, the West is seeking the opposite by trying to minimize Kiev's integration with Russia. And it has actually succeeded to some extent as a large part of Ukraine's elites and population is already prejudiced against Russia.

According to the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, the number of Ukrainians feeling negative about Russia almost quadrupled in 2014, rising from 13 to 48 percent. Although this effect is unlikely to last long (former opponents often resume "business as usual" after a few years of estrangement), it will certainly embitter their relations for some time.

The bureaucracy and part of the political elite in the EU savored the results of their work: "one more country has chosen the European path." They even predicted a certain economic effect but so insignificant that no one mentions it any more amid the dramatic developments. However, as we noted above, the reformatting of the conflict by Russia has brought to the fore a completely different question: Is the West ready to assume responsibility for keeping Ukraine afloat? For Washington, which ambitions to be a global leader but has suffered a series of foreign-policy setbacks in similar situations before, this is a fundamental question, a question of precedent.

Obviously, an explicit "legal" separation of Donbass would definitely be viewed as another failure of the United States (and the West in general) and Moscow's success. However, with the stakes raised, the West has come to face totally unexpected and serious expenditures:

- Officially considered loans (which will hardly ever be repaid) and gratuitous financial aid to Kiev have already reached \$40 billion to \$50 billion, compared to a mere \$5 billion requested by Victor Yanukovich in December 2013. However, the EU snapped back by saying that the Association Agreement was an agreement on integration, prosperity and investment and did not require any compensation.
- The war of sanctions (decrease in exports) costs Europe about \$30 billion to \$50 billion a year in direct losses alone.
- Military expenditures make up an essential (and now largely probabilistic) part of the expenses. For all the absurdity of

statements about a military threat from Russia, which holds its foreign exchange reserves in the West and which is 70-80 percent dependent on the West in terms of critical imports (pharmaceuticals, technologies, equipment, seeds, etc.), if a military threat has been declared, military spending must be increased from Europe's current 1-1.5 percent to the long-promised 2 percent of GDP, as a minimum. This is about \$50 billion a year.

Actually, for Europe, which bears 80 to 90 percent of the losses, this is not a critically large amount – about 1 percent of its GDP. Yet these costs can be acceptable only if they are found reasonable. No one wants to spend/lose this money for the sake of “Ukraine” or U.S. ambitions which no one really cares much about, especially at a time when Greeks, Italians, Spaniards, Bulgarians, Hungarians, and others keep asking: “And what about us?”

In addition, growing unemployment and mounting business problems in some economic sectors have made the social and political aspects of the war of sanctions very sensitive.

On the whole, due to the less centralized and more open structure of Western society, negative effects of the conflict appear to be much more painful for the Western establishment than for Russia, whose economy is objectively experiencing much more serious difficulties.

All things considered, a compromise would also be more preferable for the West than “the ultimate victory,” although for the United States the conflict is a matter of principle.

UKRAINE'S DOMESTIC DRIVERS

Societal divisions over values in Ukraine are graphically illustrated by the twofold difference in the number of people in different Ukrainian regions who feel negative about Russia. According to the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, the figures are as follows:

- 33-36 percent of Ukrainians in eastern and southern macro-regions – Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk (including territories controlled by separatists), Zaporozhye, Lugansk (excluding

territories controlled by separatists), Nikolayev, Odessa, Kharkov, and Kherson regions;

- 70 percent in western macro-region – Volyn, Trans-Carpathian, Ivano-Frankovsk, Lvov, Rovno, Ternopol, Khmelnytsky, and Chernovtsy regions.

According to various estimates, “the choice of the European path” is now supported by 70 to 80 percent of Ukrainians outside separatist-controlled Donbass. However, as is always the case with people in general (especially in post-communist countries), this “choice” means, in fact, nothing more than their desire to have the same level of well-being as in Europe, but with no clear understanding that one has to pay a dear price for the high standard of living achieved by Europe’s mature capitalism – years of belt-tightening, high structural unemployment, loss of many kinds of habitual freebies, and drastic changes in lifestyle. Shock therapy by IMF prescriptions will inevitably lead to mass protests which, considering Soviet mentality, will be much more violent than those in Greece. Such unrest and disorders always dramatically intensify disintegration tendencies (as was the case in Russia in the 1990s).

Ukrainian elites seem unable to unite for building a united nation-state. There is, of course, a significant part of politicians, state functionaries and security officials who want to see a strong central government and a “vertical of power” in Ukraine. But this group is disunited, loose and torn apart by rivalry and conflicting personal interests.

Outside Donbass, there have already emerged distinct regional “quasi-autonomies” (Dnepropetrovsk, Kharkov, Lvov, and others). The process of decentralization is already underway *de facto*, but it is covert, which is quite possible amid rampant corruption. Ironic as they are, popular metaphors like “Duke Kolomoysky” adequately reflect the “pseudo-feudal” structure of society in present-day Ukraine.

In addition, the autonomization of Donbass (it has become finally clear in the last few months that Kiev is unable to solve the problem of separatism militarily) has naturally provoked the emergence of a psychological matrix in other Ukrainian regions: “If they can, why

can't we?" One should not underestimate the role of the individual in history, of course, as a single person can literally work miracles in politics. But there are no signs in sight yet of a strong leader comparable with Louis XI, Ivan III, Bismarck, or Putin, who would be able to "put Ukraine together."

PROBABLE SCENARIO

In the next three to five years, Ukraine's political system will most likely be a mosaic of virtually independent autonomous territories nominally united in a single state. Such a compromise would be acceptable to all the main actors:

- Moscow, which has demonstrated its ability for tough confrontation with the West and reasonable flexibility, would build up its political capital. Integration of Ukrainian regions could be resumed, using "soft power." Strategic apprehensions of Kazakhstan and Belarus would be allayed. Most of the European sanctions (and probably part of the U.S. sanctions) would be lifted.
- The West would proudly report that the world order has been preserved and the Ukrainian conflict (excluding Crimea) has been successfully resolved, and thus save its face. Europe would save money due to the lifting of sanctions and the cessation of armed hostilities as well as Russia's possible participation in the financing of Ukraine's reconstruction (at least, in Donbass).
- The central Ukrainian government would trumpet its victory in fighting off the aggressor, thus saving its face and formal status of the main authority in the country, as well as sparing money due to the end of the war.

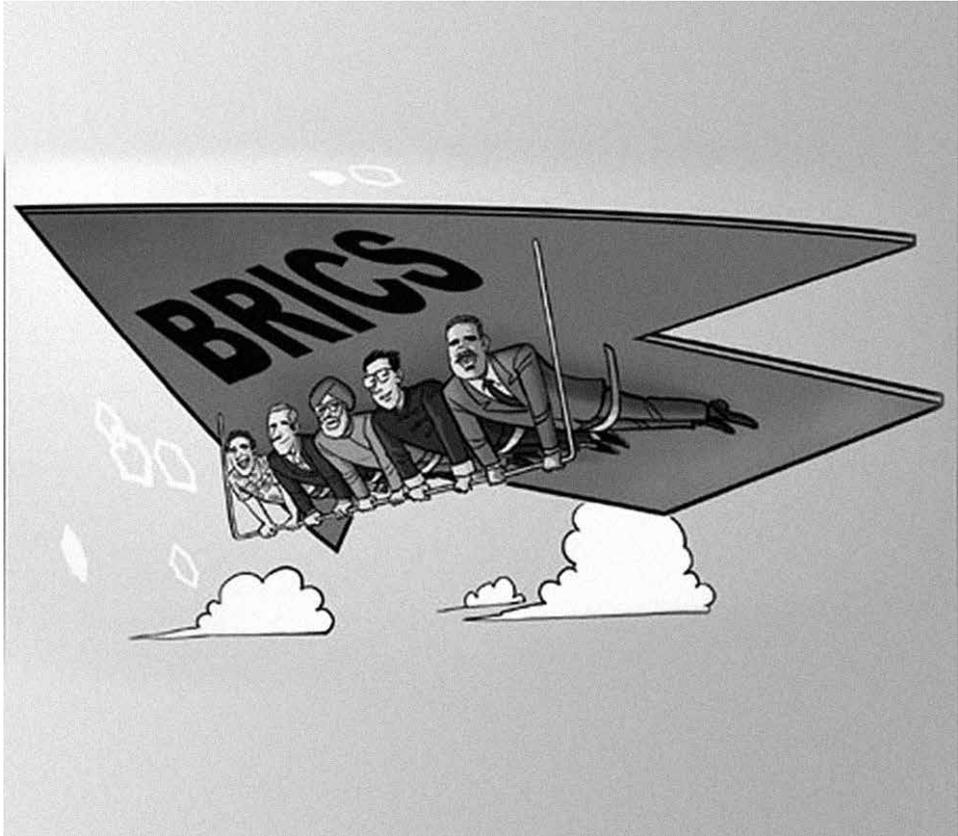
If the present balance of power and interests among major geopolitical players is generally maintained, Ukraine may stay in this intermediary/ compromise state for a long time. However, history shows that autonomies with a high degree of real independence tend to separate completely, especially with external support for centrifugal tendencies, at least from Russia. After all, close integration with Ukrainian regions

is Russia's natural and fundamental geostrategic task. Its social and ideological aspect is probably the most important factor: reversing the signs of decline and boosting Russian society's potential and passionarity.

Russia will hardly seek to seize Ukrainian territories (at least for as long as the incumbent regime abides by its basic political principles), with the Crimean model likely to remain a contingency plan in case of emergency. Moscow will rather use the Transnistrian-Abkhazian scenario. As the last few decades have shown, Moscow has fully appreciated and adopted the concept and experience of the EU's association agreements.

Quite possibly, Ukraine's other neighbors (above all, Poland) may act similarly towards some of its regions – after all, the “European path” is a dialectical notion as the Yugoslav experience has vividly proved.

A Different World



Luo Jie/China Daily

“BRICS’ stance on recent events in Ukraine is part of a hedging strategy by rising powers that are keen to preserve ties to the U.S., but are also acutely aware that the global order is moving towards a more complex type of multipolarity.”

Renewing Russia and the World

BRICS Membership Poses an Intellectual Challenge to Russia

Mikhail Korostikov

The association of Russia, Brazil, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) has completed the full cycle of presidencies, and this year it is Russia's turn to host the summit. Why do we need this organization? Have we got from it what we wanted? In Russia, analysts are largely unanimous on the tasks faced by the five-member alliance. Executive Director of Russia's National Committee for BRICS Studies Georgy Toloraya, in his article "Why Does Russia Need BRICS?," indicated that the first objective of the association was to reform international financial institutions; the second one, to create mechanisms for maintaining security; and the third one, to facilitate inter-civilizational interaction.

For Russia, BRICS now serves as the key support amid the sharply deteriorated relations with the West. This point is specially emphasized by other prominent pro-BRICS politicians, such as State Duma Deputy Vyacheslav Nikonov and Foreign Ministry Coordinator for BRICS and G20 Vadim Lukov.

However, BRICS has not yet come up with an official coordinated vision of the future. This five-nation club expresses concern over various problems, discusses certain practical aspects of cooperation and holds private talks behind closed doors. Is it a proper format of relations for the five countries aspiring to leadership on their respective

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continents? Are they fully using the potential of the organization, and has BRICS lived up to its expectations? Many believe that it has not. BRICS should foremost get busy with the political aspect of its interaction, designing a program to build a fairer world system less prone to conflicts.

In this case Russia would have an excellent opportunity to bolster its international prestige and solve domestic self-identity problems. The resentment at a lack of respect and isolationist calls for substitution of imports, some “special way” for Russia, the mantra of “spiritual bonds” and “the Russian world” conceal the fear to admit the obvious fact that the country needs a radical ideological overhaul, as it is unable to produce any attractive models based on previous experience. The European countries, the primary source providing means of modernization to Russia during its entire history, have stopped cooperation and introduced sanctions.

Even Kazakhstan and Belarus, Russia’s closest partners at the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union, occasionally stage demarches, trying to exploit Moscow’s contradictions with the European Union and China and frequently using anti-Russian rhetoric in their domestic politics. Lastly, the irrevocable loss of Ukraine in 2014 as a friendly state dealt the most powerful blow to Russia’s prestige, causing a radical change in its foreign and home policies. Regrettably, this didn’t help things take a turn for the better: it is no longer about Russia’s development or economic growth, but about its stabilization and economic survival.

BRICS offers a chance to steer clear of the whirlpool of economic and political problems with self-respect intact and international weight increased thanks to the solution of global challenges. BRICS’ field of activity is enormous. In fact, the five states were brought together by a negative agenda rather than a positive one: they are facing the threats which can only be overcome through cooperation, such as the obsolete world governance system, the global financial and economic system that no longer meets the demands of individual states, structural problems of global economic development, environmental degradation, and the media space favoring a group of Western nations.

These issues will top the 21st century agenda, and a state or a group of states suggesting an optimal solution can by right expect the support of most of the countries. A future international system must be highly inclusive, meeting the needs of the new majority of active players in global politics. In designing the system, it is necessary to avoid confrontation with the United States and the European Union, offering them a worthy niche as befits their potential without providing any extraordinary advantages which they enjoy today. Let us elaborate on why the above aspects of the modern world order need reform.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The present-day world governance system emerged after World War II and has long ceased to meet modern realities. As the UN was established, its priority was to prevent a conflict between the key players in international relations. In 1945, the population of the UN Security Council member-states (including their dependent territories) made up approximately 66 percent of the planet's population. The aggregate Gross Domestic Product of these states and territories reached 59 percent of the world GDP. They were the World War II winners and later became the sole possessors of nuclear weapons.

In 2014, the aggregate GDP of the UN Security Council members made up 44 percent of the world GDP, while the share in the world's population dropped to 26 percent. As of now, India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea have nuclear weapons, too, while some 20 countries are on the threshold of going nuclear, that is, they can develop nukes within three to six months from the time of making such a decision. This is not to say that these countries should be included in the world governing bodies, it rather implies that this technology is not too difficult to emulate, and possessing it is a sovereign choice of a state, which however does not grant it membership in an elite club.

Humanity has two ways out of this situation. The first is to start another world war to determine the relative weight of each center of power. The other way is to try to reform the UN with due account for the new global landscape. This objective should become a priority for the BRICS countries in the coming decade. The credibility of this unique

international institution whose array of functions has no alternative is compromised by its non-representation in the UN Security Council. The associated risks of ushering BRICS into the UN Security Council are understandable: the top UN body should be compact enough to remain effective, yet it should also reflect the existing global landscape. The permanent UN Security Council member-states, which include two BRICS countries, are not keen to share power. The BRICS nations need a group consensus on these issues in order to become an agent and advocate of changes beyond the association.

As one of the measures, Russia could offer a mechanism of joint open discussion of certain UN issues on the BRICS platform regardless of which country holds the rotating UN Security Council presidency. If some UN decision is crucial for India, Brazil or South Africa and does not impact Russian and Chinese national interests, why can't Russia or China use their vetoing rights or active support for the cause of their BRICS colleagues? The BRICS countries are unanimous on a majority of issues, so the promotion of the principle of joint discussion of international development issues would help Russia gain political weight without restructuring the UN Security Council. In this case the United States, Britain, and France would officially bear responsibility for keeping the obsolete configuration of the UN Security Council.

The global financial and economic system is the key topic for discussions at BRICS summits and in the cooperative format of the five-member group also on the G20 platform. In 2001, a commission led by Allan Meltzer thoroughly analysed the operation of Bretton Woods institutions, and a detailed report was later presented to the U.S. Congress, explaining the reasons behind the IMF's ineffectiveness during the Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s, the Asian financial crisis of 1997, and Russia's default in 1998.

The Commission's report indicated that the leading industrialized countries used the IMF for their own purposes, while the degree and forms of the IMF's control over the debtor countries' economies undermined their democratic development. The IMF and the World Bank would often act as agents of the United States' and Western Europe's interests, specifically in vote-buying votes at the UN Security

Council and the UN General Assembly (a study by Ilyana Kuziemko and Eric Werker), and would allow the developed countries to “encourage” or “punish” the developing ones by changing the number of loan terms.

The failure of the U.S. Congress to support the IMF reform, approved by other G20 members, shows how far Washington can go to agree to change the existing landscape. The WTO has been unable to make headway at the Doha negotiations since 2001, as the parties cannot agree on subsidies for agricultural products. Finally, top rating agencies in early 2015 lowered Russia’s rating below investment grade, despite its stable macro-economic situation and considerable gold and foreign exchange reserves.

Appeals to conscience and demands for fairer distribution of governing roles at these institutions are likely to avail nothing. The developed countries will always regard the loss of jobs and markets and contracting economies as a more serious threat than the accusations of double standards or injustice. The situation is actually ridiculous: non-Western states are trying to secure larger representation at the institutions meant to structure the world according to Western patterns. BRICS’ objective would be the establishment of parallel bodies reflecting the interests of the member-states’ long-term development.

The signing of the agreements on the BRICS Bank and currency swaps in 2014 were the right moves in this direction, as were the tentative plans to set up a BRICS rating agency announced in early 2015. It is very important, however, to make sure that these initiatives do not turn into a cargo cult imitating the existing institutions with the sole purpose of expressing one’s disagreement with the West. BRICS really needs a new Development Bank and a Forex Fund to address the challenges that did not exist during the establishment of the Bretton Woods system. Launching a sweeping program of infrastructural, “green” and high-tech investments (especially in Global South countries) is a prerequisite for expanding the markets and securing a peaceful and balanced development of the planet.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) can serve as a good example of a new type of institutions. Created by China in 2014,

it already has the support of a majority of Asian and large European states, despite the hidden resistance on the part of the United States. After some deliberation, Russia decided to join, although it had rejected the decision a year earlier. Its doubts can be understood: the AIIB is a purely Chinese project (as is the Silk Road Economic Belt), in which Russia can only play second or even third fiddle. In the long run, the Kremlin seemed to reconcile itself to the fact that China, having the world's largest economy (or the second largest, according to different estimates) will naturally lead the new financial institutions.

Instead, Russia can and should aspire to the role of BRICS' political center, but this requires that it adopt a more global course, stop leaning on the local values which only find understanding inside the country, and show its readiness to work towards the common good. The domestic public discussion should become less conflicting and more oriented towards the search for cooperation opportunities with all the participants in global processes, especially with the BRICS states.

STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

The structural problems of global economic development in general and the BRICS countries' in particular are another unifying factor that requires our time and efforts towards studying and changing it. The countries have absolutely different economies, but their common feature is that the BRICS "economic growth formulae" are socially and environmentally unstable even in the medium term. In effect, all the five economic models are arranged around intensive exploitation of their primary advantage and unspoken public consensus that one can sacrifice certain things such as ecology, social justice, and political freedoms for the sake of quick profits.

Natural resources in Brazil, Russia, and South Africa, as well as the labor force of India and China made it possible for them to retrace, in 20 to 40 years, the path along which the Western countries walked for two or three centuries. But the old capitalist states forming the core of the world system had BRICS and other developing states bear their social, environmental and other costs in the 1970s through the 2000s. Can the new centers of power do the same? Obviously they cannot,

because they have nowhere to divert their costs; apparently, the continental Southeast Asia will become the last region industrialized in this manner.

Paraphrasing Leo Tolstoy, the economic model of each BRICS state is unstable in its own way. The 2012 BRICS Report indicated that Brazil's key problem was a weak financial sector and a lack of competitive goods; Russia suffered from a slow reform of raw material monopolies and a poor investment climate; India was plagued by the failure to meet basic social needs of the population and undeveloped infrastructure; China, by inequality and insufficient domestic consumption; and South Africa had a high unemployment rate with large groups of population excluded from the modernization process. Meanwhile, regardless of the kind of problems facing individual BRICS countries, the outcome for all of them is basically the same – growing inequality and environmental degradation.

According to the CIA World Factbook, the Gini index, which measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country, reaches 36.8 percent in India and 63.1 percent in South Africa, making the latter the planet's second unequal society. Despite the unprecedented development rates in the past two decades and the sacrifices laid on the altar of welfare, the BRICS countries, in particular India and China, can hardly attain the consumption standards characteristic of the developed nations simply because they do not have enough resources.

At present, conflicts within each BRICS country are contained by the consensus on creating a common economic “pie” with the public understanding that it pays more to create a surplus product than re-distribute it. The slowdown of development rates, which has been happening in Brazil and Russia for some time and is beginning in India and China, will inevitably shift the public demand from building capital to its redistribution, because the level of individual consumption comparable with the West's will not have been attained by the moment of economic slowdown.

BRICS should focus on intellectual search for a new economic model hedging from conflicts and ensuring an even and less extensive

economic growth. To this end, they have to launch close cooperation at the existing BRICS Think Tank Council and expand research ties between other research institutions. The work at this task could breathe new life into the Russian humanitarian school which was one of the most influential in the world in the 20th century. This will require Russia to abandon the prevailing course towards conservatism and autarchy as it can hardly find supporters in the countries where a majority of the population under 40 years of age increasingly associate the past with backwardness, dictatorship and colonialism.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND LOST GROUND IN MEDIA SPACE

The environmental degradation of the BRICS countries is aptly described in various studies. The four original BRICS members continue to top the list of the six countries in terms of the volume of methane and carbon dioxide emissions. According to some estimates, environmental problems already cost China up to 15 percent of its GDP and cause significant damage to other BRICS members because of ongoing massive extraction of natural resources in Russia, Brazil, and South Africa and their exponential consumption in China and India. Being aware of the importance of the problem and related risks, *Chatham House* described it in detail in a report released in December 2012 and suggested the establishment of the so-called Resource 30 (R30) dialogue format that would bring together 30 principal suppliers and consumers of resources to jointly resolve the emerging challenges.

The idea is worth consideration, and BRICS could begin to discuss it. The five BRICS states put together account for more than 40 percent of the world's population and accommodate areas that sustained the worst ecological damage, such as Lake Karachai and the towns of Norilsk and Dzerzhinsk in Russia, the river Yamuna and the town of Vapi in India, Tianjin and Linfen in China, Rondonia in Brazil, and Witbank in South Africa. Aside from concerted efforts within the climate change conference and interaction in the BASIC format, BRICS should ponder the funding of the reclamation projects in environmentally-abused areas through the BRICS Development Bank.

A lack of such initiatives at the national level is explained by the fear to lose competitiveness due to increasing production costs and the fact that these costs had long been regarded as acceptable in the period of modernization. At present, the problem is getting more attention, especially in China which adopted a new environmental protection law on April 24, 2014, which, as a Chinese minister put it, effectively “declared a war on pollution.” In a broad sense, the BRICS countries are facing a new task, namely the establishment of large branches of the economy engaged in recycling, land reclamation, and water and air purification. Undoubtedly, the solution of this problem without negative impact on economic growth will find the support of other developing countries.

The garble in the media space is explained by the fact that the information sources of developed countries dominate in the world in general and BRICS countries in particular, and a significant portion of the information is delivered to BRICS residents through West-controlled channels. Consequently, the information they receive is insufficient and often biased. BBC and CNN only broadcast the material they regard as interesting to the Western viewer in accordance with his established stereotypes. It is not so much the distortion of information which is the problem as its insufficiency.

The BRICS countries are largely to blame for this situation. For example, RT, Russia’s leading multilingual television channel, broadcasts in English, Spanish, and Arabic, whereas *RTVi*, an international Russian-language privately owned television network, only broadcasts in Russian. The *Russia Beyond The Headlines (RBTH)* Internet project is faring better, with the available versions in all BRICS languages. Regrettably, television remains more popular than the Internet in all the BRICS countries, according to a *TNS Global* study, watched by 66 percent of Chinese viewers, 73 percent of Russians, 78 percent of Indians, 82 percent of Brazilians, and 85 percent of South Africans. This means that information via the Internet is not available to the bulk of the BRICS population. Similarly, India, Brazil, and South Africa have no channels to broadcast in BRICS languages. China’s CCTV broadcasting network has Russian and English channels and is

planning to launch broadcasting in Portuguese. However, due to the worldwide popularity of the English language, the globalized BRICS population inevitably turns to sources in English.

The number of students in the BRICS countries learning each other's languages is incomparably smaller compared with that of the students of English. Strong inter-civilizational ties in the 21st centuries are forged not by top-level meetings, but millions of contacts between business people, scientists, students, and tourists. So far, representatives of all BRICS countries have preferred to study in the EU, Japan, and the United States, contribute scientific articles to local journals and invest in foreign countries. The West's domination shows not so much as overpowering military and economic might as the intellectual hegemony it has become, as Antonio Gramsci put it.

As one of the measures to step up humanitarian cooperation, BRICS came up with the initiative to create a university to facilitate student exchange in master degree programs. However, the university alone is clearly unable to make a breakthrough in this sphere of cooperation. BRICS colleges need to sharply increase the quotas for foreigners from member-states, arrange large cultural events related to BRICS, boost the publication of BRICS literature in their territories, and provide theme programs on the key television channels. South Africa has set a good example with its decision to issue 10-year visas to BRICS company executives. Meanwhile, it is crucial to understand that for Russia, which aspires to be a world leader in the future, BRICS is a deliberate and long-term choice, not a bargaining chip in the period of worsening relations with the West.

Of course, BRICS is facing more than these five designated problems. It can launch extensive cooperation in maintaining security, combating poverty, space exploration and many other areas, but the five designated fields should become the basis for all others. The BRICS states have similar positions on these issues, which makes it easier for them to reach a consensus and advocate changes in the international arena. It is the boldness in fulfilling these tasks that can consolidate the international public opinion around BRICS. Russia should take up the helmsman's role leading the ship of the five states into the future,

making BRICS and the relationship with its members the focus of its foreign policy agenda.

The overbearing emphasis on Ukrainian-Russian relations in the past year involving permanent stand-off with Washington and Brussels is not what Russia deserves in the era of fundamental shifts in world politics and economics. The intellectual construction of a new world can have a beneficial impact on the home policy: it will at last have a new format of evolution without endless attempts to secure recognition from Western states. This course does not imply the rejection of Western values or the European civilization: it will enable the country to become a self-sufficient and influential state which undoubtedly will be able to claim a worthier place, including a seat at the European table. Alexander Gorchakov's phrase "Russia is concentrating" should get a follow-up: Russia is focusing on BRICS in order to come back renewed.

The G7 and BRICS in the Post-Crimea World Order

A Confrontation to Be Expected?

Oliver Stuenkel

Political events in 2014 brought to the fore a more fundamental disagreement between Russia and the West about the European security architecture and the distribution of power in Russia's neighborhood in general. Yet political implications are far broader, and likely to be felt for years, moving Russia closer to emerging powers such as China and India, but also to Brazil.

FROM ECONOMICS TO POLITICS

When Russia hosted the first BRIC Leaders' Summit in June 2009, Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev hailed Yekaterinburg as "the epicenter of world politics." The need for major developing world nations to meet in new formats was "obvious," he said.

The Western media reacted with a mix of neglect and rejection. As *The Economist* wrote at the time: "This disparate quartet signally failed to rival the Group of Eight industrial countries as a forum for economic discussion. ... Instead, the really striking thing is that four countries first lumped together as a group by the chief economist of Goldman Sachs chose to convene at all, and in such a high-profile way."

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Those who took notice adopted a more critical stance and developed a narrative of the BRICs as potential “troublemakers.” A month prior to the BRICs Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Russia, Princeton professor Harold James predicted that “the BRICs will look for compensating power, and military and strategic influence and prestige, as a way to solve internal problems. Gone are the 1990s, when for a brief moment in the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War, the world looked as if it would be permanently peaceful and unconcerned with power. That hope soon proved illusory. Many commentators, indeed, were stunned by the rapidity with which tensions returned to the international system. While many blame U.S. behavior, these tensions have in fact been fueled by the unfolding of a new logic in international politics.”

Yet when looking at the BRICs’ behavior, it became clear that they were far more status-quo oriented than their rhetoric suggested. Calls for modifications of voting rights in the IMF, for example, were not meant to undermine Bretton Woods institutions – quite to the contrary, BRICS have been instrumental in the process of keeping them alive. Brazil’s former President Lula routinely demonized the IMF, but also decided to strengthen the institution by lending money to it. Much rather than soft balancing, emerging powers at the time seemed to be “soft-bandwagoning:” they did not want to rock the boat, just make it a bit wider and more democratic.

As Medvedev pointed out at the 2009 summit, there was a “need to put in place a fairer decision-making process regarding the economic, foreign-policy and security issues on the international agenda” and that “the BRIC summit aims to create the conditions for this new order.” Particular emphasis was laid on ending the informal agreement that the United States and Europe could appoint the World Bank President and IMF Director, respectively. Rather, those leadership positions should be appointed through “an open, transparent, and merit-based selection process.” This affirmation became somewhat of a rallying cry for the BRIC nations in the following years, thus creating a clear and simple narrative that all emerging powers could agree on.

President Lula argued on the day of the summit: “We stand out because in recent years our four economies have shown robust growth.

Trade between us has risen 500 percent since 2003. This helps explain why we now generate 65 percent of world growth, which makes us the main hope for a swift recovery from global recession. BRIC countries are playing an increasingly prominent role in international affairs, and are showing their readiness to assume responsibilities in proportion to their standing in the modern world.”

A show of confidence and the projection of stability were particularly important at a time of global economic chaos, when the BRIC countries perceived a leadership vacuum. BRIC nations enjoyed an average annual economic growth of 10.7 percent from 2006 to 2008, strongly exceeding growth figures in the developed world. As a consequence, one of the main themes of the summit was how to create a new world order less dependent on the West.

Back then, even more benign observers would hardly have predicted that the BRIC grouping would turn into the most prominent political platform outside of the West. In late 2010, South Africa was invited to join the group, a move that strengthened the group’s global visibility and legitimacy to speak for the emerging world, while not reducing its capacity to develop joint positions. Quite to the contrary, the first BRICS summit with South Africa’s participation in 2011 seemed to go further than the previous two summit declarations in 2009 and 2010. In 2014, the grouping set up a Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) and a set up a development bank, scheduled to begin operating in 2016.

Equally surprising to many, the grouping reached unprecedented political visibility when, in a joint communiqué, BRICS representatives rejected calls to exclude Russia from the G20 in the aftermath of the Crimea crisis, thus decisively undermining Western attempts to isolate Russia. In the Hague in late March 2014, the BRICS foreign ministers opposed restrictions on the participation of Russian president Vladimir Putin in the G20 Summit in Australia in November 2014. In their joint declaration, the BRICS countries expressed “concern” over Australian foreign minister Julie Bishop’s comment that Putin could be barred from attending the summit. “The custodianship of the G20 belongs to all member-states equally and no one member-state can unilaterally determine its nature and character,” the BRICS countries

said in a statement.” Similarly, Brazil, India and China abstained from a UN General Assembly resolution that directly condemned Russia’s Ukraine policy, thus markedly reducing the effectiveness of Western attempts to isolate President Putin. Finally, no BRICS policymaker has criticized Russia in the aftermath of the intervention in Crimea – their official responses merely called for a peaceful resolution of the situation. The final document of the BRICS meeting stated that “the escalation of hostile language, sanctions and counter-sanctions, and force does not contribute to a sustainable and peaceful solution, according to international law, including the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.” Furthermore, China, Brazil, India and South Africa (along with 54 other nations) abstained from the UN General Assembly resolution criticizing the Crimea referendum.

As Zachary Keck noted, the BRICS countries’ support for Russia was “entirely predictable,” even though the group has always been constrained by the differences that exist between its members, as well as the “general lack of shared purpose” among such different and geographically dispersed nations. “BRICS has often tried to overcome these internal challenges by unifying behind an anti-Western or at least post-Western position. In that sense, it’s no surprise that the group opposed Western attempts to isolate one of its own members.”

Perhaps in the most pro-Russia statement of any BRICS member, India’s National Security Adviser Shivshankar spoke of Russia’s “legitimate interests” in Crimea, in what became the most pro-Russian comments made by a leading policy maker of a major power. India made clear that it will not support any “unilateral measures” against Russia, its major arms supplier, pointing out that it believes in Russia’s important role when dealing with challenges in Afghanistan, Iran and Syria. India’s unwillingness to criticize Russia may also stem from a deep skepticism of the West’s tacit support for several attempted coups against democratically elected governments over the past years – for example in Venezuela in 2002, in Egypt in 2013, and now in Ukraine.

This behavior has surprised many Western observers, leading some to expect the emergence of a world order marked by a profound division between the G7 and BRICS. Indeed, while Russia’s ties to

BRICS are likely to grow stronger, attempts to improve ties between Russia and the West will be hampered by the fact that the current state of affairs is not the product of short-term animosities or problem about a particular policy issue, but a more fundamental disagreement about the European security architecture and the distribution of power in Russia's neighborhood in general. Unless Russia's leader fears that his country could implode economically, chances for a meaningful reset are slim, and even in case of a Russian collapse a rapprochement would be far from guaranteed. Even if a peace deal is reached soon between Ukraine and the rebels, deep-seated distrust will remain for years to come. That will turn the BRICS countries into key allies for Moscow, indispensable for keeping Russia economically and diplomatically connected to the rest of the world.

DIALECTICS OF THE RELATIONS WITH THE WEST

Yet reality is likely to be far more complex, largely because the two groupings are less cohesive than many would suggest. While the G7 has been relatively united in its response to Russia so far, European powers may not follow the United States in applying long-term sanctions, largely because their economies are far more interconnected with Russia. The G7 also differs on many other broad questions, such as how to deal with the conflict between Israel and Palestine, how to reform the UN Security Council, or, in 2011, how to deal with the situation in Libya. In today's more multipolar scenario, the G7 is far weaker than it used to be two decades ago, when its agenda-setting capacity was truly impressive: There was no non-Western pole capable of determining the global discourse. Today, by contrast, no major global challenge can effectively be dealt with by the West alone.

In the same way, merely pointing out that BRICS refused to criticize Russia during the Crimean crisis does not take into consideration that they, too, differ on many broad issues that limits their capacity to take a joint position on many problems. For example, despite yearly meetings by each BRICS country's National Security Advisors, BRICS have not deepened their military cooperation or organized any joint military exercises, such as IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa).

Neither Russia nor China have explicitly supported India's or Brazil's ambition to join the UN Security Council, and in the possibility of a more direct confrontation between Russia and West, none of the BRICS countries will explicitly support Moscow.

In order to properly understand the BRICS' refusal to criticize Moscow – thus protecting Vladimir Putin from international isolation – one must take the overall geopolitical context into consideration. The BRICS' unwillingness to denounce and isolate Russia may have less to do with its opinion on Russia's intervention in Crimea per se and more to do with its skepticism of the West's belief that sanctions are an adequate way to punish whom it sees as international misfits. All BRICS countries have traditionally been opposed to sanctions and have often spoken out against the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba. In the same way, they have all been wary of implementing the most drastic economic sanctions against Iran. What is often forgotten is that the U.S. Congress imposed sanctions on Brazil as recently as the 1980s, when the latter pursued nuclear enrichment and reprocessing technology. India also suffered from international isolation after its nuclear tests, and China feels often threatened by U.S. rhetoric. From BRICS' perspective, pushing countries against the wall is rarely the most constructive approach.

Furthermore, even though it is unclear whether Western influence contributed to the anti-Yanukovich riots in Kiev prior to Russia's annexation of Crimea, the episode did evoke memories of the West's highly selective support of demonstrations and coup d'états in other countries. Western leaders often criticize the BRICS for being soft on dictators, calling the country an irresponsible stakeholder that is unwilling to step up to the plate when democracy or human rights are under threat. Yet despite its principled rhetoric, the West, observers in Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa remember, was quick to embrace illegitimate post-coup leaders in Venezuela (2002), Honduras (2009) and Egypt (2013), and actively support repressive governments when they used force against protest movements, e.g. in Bahrain. Criticizing Russia in this context would have implied support for the West and its possible engagement with Kiev.

When seeking to understand BRICS' position, one must also consider their more general critique of the apparent contradictions of the global order. Why, they ask, did nobody propose excluding the U.S. from the G8 in 2003 when it knowingly violated international law by invading Iraq, even attempting to deceive its allies with false evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in the country? Why is Iran an international pariah, while Israel's nuclear weapons are quietly tolerated? Why did the U.S. recognize India's nuclear program, even though Delhi has never signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty? Why are systematic human rights abuses and a lack of democratic legitimacy in countries supportive of the U.S. acceptable, but not in others? Commentators in the BRICS countries have argued that these inconsistencies and double standards are in their totality far more damaging to international order than any Russian policy. Especially for voices more critical of the U.S., the West's alarm over Crimea is merely proof that established powers still consider themselves to be the ultimate arbiters of international norms, unaware of their own hypocrisy. If asked which country was the greatest threat to international stability, most BRICS foreign policymakers and observers would not name Russia, Iran and North Korea, but the United States.

This matters because Russia's annexation of Crimea took place at a time when anti-Americanism around the world still runs high as a consequence of the NSA spying scandals, making aligning with U.S. positions politically costly at home. This was particularly the case in Brazil, where the U.S. decision to spy on President Rousseff, but even more so on Petrobras, seemed to confirm suspicions that U.S. policymakers would support international rules and norms, yet were unwilling to fully adhere to them.

More indirectly, BRICS' stance on recent events in Ukraine is part of a hedging strategy by rising powers that are keen to preserve ties to the U.S., but are also acutely aware that the global order is moving towards a more complex type of multipolarity, making it necessary to maintain constructive ties with all poles of power. While BRICS are willing to protect Russia to some degree, their capacity to go along

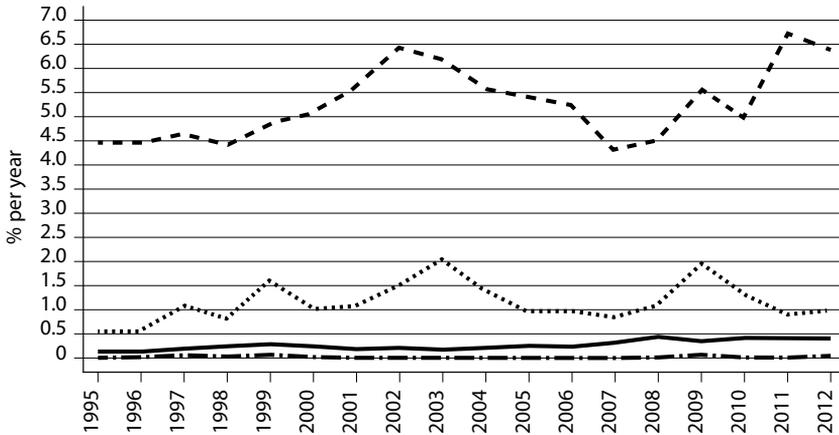
with Moscow is conditioned by their conviction that doing so does not hurt their ties to the West. The BRICS countries will therefore shy away from any moves that may change that calculation.

THE G7 EVER UNIFIED?

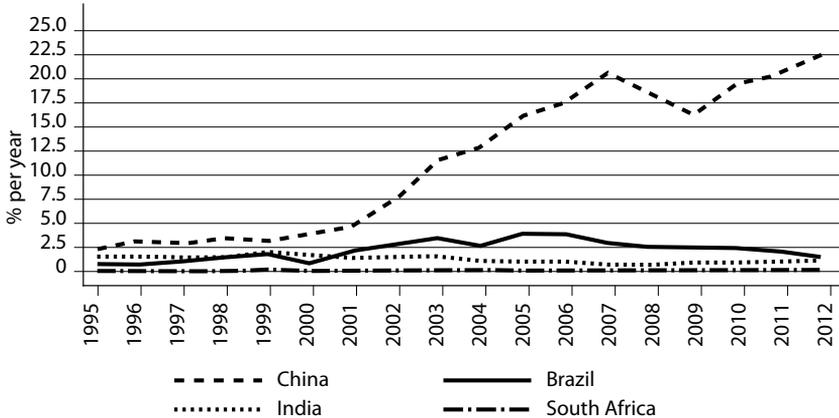
The G7 may emerge stronger and more unified from last year's political developments. The situation is also likely to strengthen intra-Western coherence and resilience in general, symbolized by the G7 summit that will take place for the second time without Russian participation in 2015, in Elmau, Germany. There, Angela Merkel, a key actor in the West's response to Russian foreign policy, will seek to strengthen macroeconomic policy coordination between its members, aside from proposing common responses on issues like global pandemics and energy security. Despite its incapacity to fix global challenges on its own, the forum's continued existence and importance underlines that Western like-mindedness on some issues can still go a long way. Despite the clear limitations mentioned above, the G7 is still influential when acting together, and it remains a grouping to be reckoned with for years to come, even if its share of global GDP is bound to decline over the coming years.

Growth figures in the BRICS countries in 2015 will be far lower than they were in 2009, and the United States is already growing faster than Brazil, Russia and South Africa. In that sense, seen from Brasília, Pretoria and Moscow, the global environment offers fewer opportunities than a few years back, when established actors and institutions faced a severe legitimacy crisis and when emerging powers saved the global economy from a complete meltdown. Yet it would be wrong to expect the BRICS grouping to weaken in the coming years. The reelection of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil has been hailed in the Russian and Indian media as crucial in maintaining momentum in the slow process of BRICS institutionalization. Indeed, it is unclear to what extent a President Aécio Neves – Rousseff's major rival – would have continued Brazil's support for initiatives such as the BRICS Development Bank, which some see as a rival to existing Western-led institutions.

Figure 1. Russia's exports to BRICS



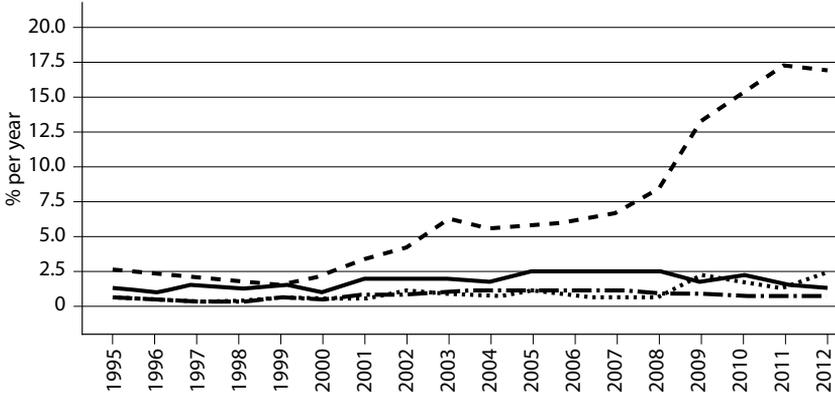
Russia's imports from BRICS



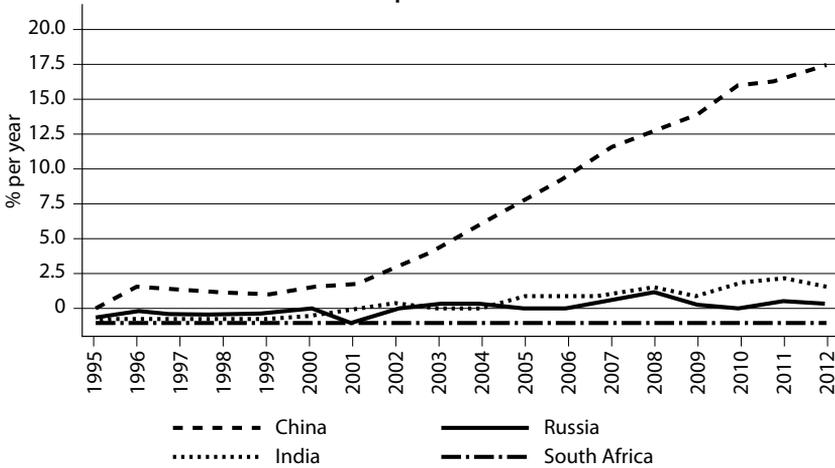
Source: UNCTAD STAT

The underlying principle still holds: Being part of the BRICS grouping generates tangible benefits but virtually no cost. And yet, the 7th BRICS Summit may put that logic to its greatest test so far. Increasingly anti-Western, Russia will propose a series of measures during the summit discussions that are likely to generate strong criticism in the West, such as arguing for the UN's International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to replace the U.S. government as the ICANN overseer. While China is supportive of the idea, Brazil is unlikely to go along, considering its leadership on the matter at the 2014 NetMundial in São Paulo.

Figure 2. Brazil's exports to BRICS



Brazil's imports from BRICS



Source: UNCTAD STAT

In several other areas, Russia may seek to politicize the BRICS meeting further and use it as an anti-Western platform, particularly if current sanctions are still in place next year. That strategy will cause resistance among the other members that have no interest in unnecessarily antagonizing Washington, DC. In fact, Brazilian foreign policy makers will be careful not to admit any overly strongly-worded language in the final summit declaration that may imperil a key goal for Brasilia in 2015: repairing frayed ties with the United States.

That is why, even in the case of long-term estrangement between Russia and the West, we are unlikely to see a Cold War-scenario in which all key actors are taking clear sides. A brief look at intra-BRICS trade makes clear that even for Russia, wholly depending on the BRICS countries is hardly possible.

The same is true when analyzing, for example, Brazil's trade data:

Indeed, while China is Brazil's most important trading partner since 2009, the importance of the other BRICS countries for the Brazilian economy is extremely small. Both the United States and Europe remain of great economic importance to Brazil – as they do for all BRICS countries, Russia included, so no BRICS member will go along with any proposals that may inflict on them the same economic sanctions the West has imposed on Russia. It is equally telling that while the G7 has achieved a moderate degree of cohesiveness regarding sanctions against Russia, policy makers in Moscow were well aware of the fact that they would not be able to convince their fellow BRICS countries to join Russia in applying counter sanctions.

Despite all that, the BRICS Summit will remain a key element of the global governance landscape, contrary to the common practice in the United States and Europe to dismiss the grouping as odd or unimportant. Even without imposing his internet-related views on the other BRICS countries, the summit will be a success for Vladimir Putin. Within a few days, the Russian president will host not only the BRICS leaders, but also heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). One year after the Winter Olympics, Russia will continue to successfully resist Western attempts to turn it into a pariah. At the same time, during the 7th BRICS Summit policy makers will release some news about the creation of the BRICS Development Bank, which is expected to start operating in 2016.

The Return of Realpolitik:

Stability vs. Change in the U.S.-Led World Order

William C. Wohlforth

A narrative has taken hold around the world that might be titled “the return of Realpolitik.” From the happy days of globalization in the 1990s to the frenzied war on terror and associated counterinsurgency struggles of the first decade of the 2000s, the argument goes, great powers and geopolitics are back. Walter Russell Mead put this conventional wisdom well: “Whether it is Russian forces seizing Crimea, China making aggressive claims in its coastal waters, Japan responding with an increasingly assertive strategy of its own, or Iran trying to use its alliances with Syria and Hezbollah to dominate the Middle East, old-fashioned power plays are back in international relations.”

Many analysts portray current contestation as the leading edge of a full-blown conflict over the U.S.-led global order. That is the meaning of the oft-heard claim that “unipolarity” has ended and new conflict-prone multipolar order has emerged. That is what underlies the increasingly popular 1914 analogy likening China’s rise today to Germany’s pre-World War I ascent. Others reject this as alarming, claiming that the liberal global order is robust and able to continue absorbing new states into its ranks. As rising states like China grow, John Ikenberry contends, they “will have more ‘equities’ to protect, and this will lead them more deeply into the existing order.”

A careful look at power realities leads to a more nuanced position. Realpolitik is about the relationship between material capabilities –

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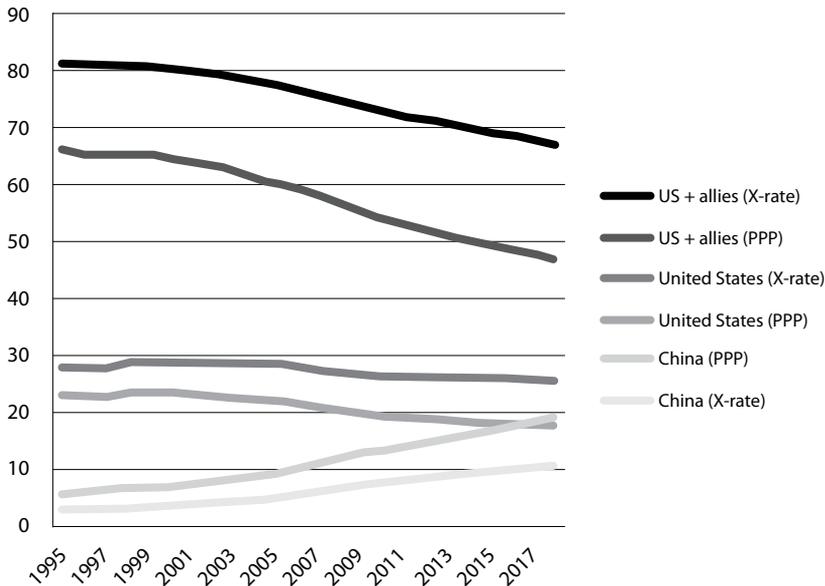
“hard power” in today’s parlance – and legitimacy, influence, the ability to achieve desired outcomes. From that perspective, power politics is not “back” after having been away on some vacation. It has always been here. It was here when the Cold War ended, when the Soviet Union collapsed, when the U.S.-led alliance of the “Broader West” expanded its aims and influence in the 1990s. Indeed, missing from Mead’s list of “power plays” is the country that remained highly active all along: the United States. What is different today is that power plays are more visible because other countries are pushing back harder. There is nothing new about China’s maritime claim or its views about the U.S. presence in Asia. Nor is there anything new about Russia’s dissatisfaction with the expansion of Western security institutions near its borders. What is new is the willingness of these governments to press their case more forcefully.

If the “return of Realpolitik” school is right, that contestation is likely to increase, especially if the dominant states go on declining while refusing to scale back the degree of global authority. For forceful efforts to upset the global order will be constrained and shaped in ways that make analogies to the past deeply misleading. Three limiting factors stand out: first, what we are witnessing is a power shift, not a power transition; second, major power war is for all practical purposes ruled out as system-changing option; and, third, the thick web of international institutions constrain challengers in novel ways. Together, these limits constrain the options of today’s dissatisfied powers and render the current order harder to dislodge than many suppose.

POWER SHIFT, NOT POWER TRANSITION

It has become commonplace to claim that the unipolar era is over or fast winding down. As Christopher Layne puts it, “the international system is in the midst of a transition away from unipolarity. As U.S. dominance wanes, the post-1945 international order – the Pax Americana – will give way to new but as yet undefined international order.” This implies momentous, system-altering change. The reality is subtler. Since the mid-1990s the United States’ share of global GDP has declined gradually. The far more significant shifts, however, have been the economic rise of China and the decline of U.S. allies.

Fig. 1. The share of the U.S., the U.S.+allies, and China of global GDP (%), 1995-2018



Notes: 2013-18 USDA and IMF estimates. Allies = NATO, non-NATO EU and West Europe; Japan, RoK, Australia, NZ; Israel, Saudi Arabia.

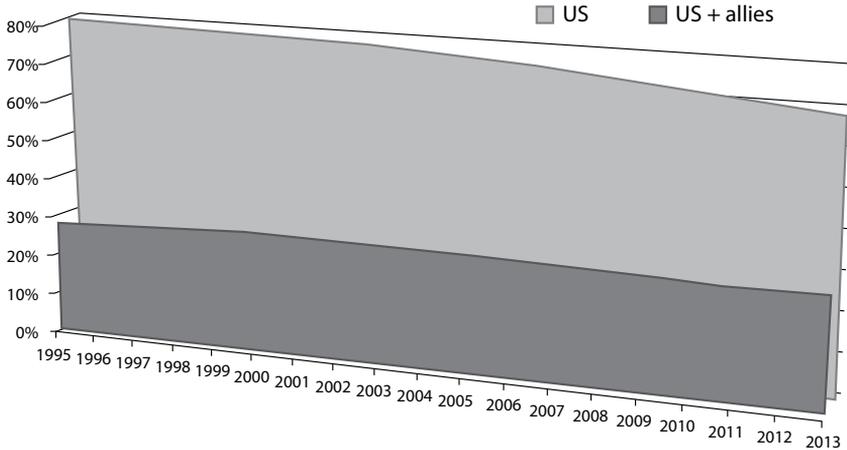
Sources: USDA ERS IMF World Economic Outlook

In other words, the power shift that has captured the imaginations of politicians and pundits alike boils down to China’s rapid economic growth. As Fig. 2 indicates, if China did not exist, or if China’s economic growth rates had mimicked Japan’s since 1990, there would be no talk of U.S. decline. The issue is not rising powers or BRICS or the rise of the east or the rise of the rest. It is China’s rapid GDP growth. China is in a class by itself – it stands above all other so-called rising or great powers as the only one with a plausible chance of achieving superpower status in the decades to come. For the moment, however, the only transition on the horizon is in gross GDP. Only on this one dimension of state capability is China about to become a peer.

Suppose we dispense with the term “unipolarity” and instead just call the system that emerged after 1991 a “one-superpower world,” and define a superpower as a country with the capability to credibly sustain security guarantees in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. That is, a superpower has the needed expeditionary capacity and alliance

relationships, and is sufficiently secure in its home region, to organize major politico-military operations in multiple key world regions. The U.S. surely qualifies. And the fact that it has continued to sustain security alliances in the world's key regions of Europe, East Asia and the Middle East undergirds the current inter-state order.

Fig. 2. The share of the U.S. and the U.S.+allies of global GDP minus China (%)



Notes: X-rate measure. 2013-18 USDA estimates. Allies = NATO, non-NATO EU and West Europe; Japan, RoK, Australia, NZ; Israel, Saudi Arabia.

Source: USDA ERS

A true power transition or polarity shift would entail the end of a one-superpower world, either through the rise of a second superpower (the return of bipolarity) or through the rise of other great powers sufficient to make it impossible for the United States to sustain credible security guarantees to its allies (a no-superpower world, or multipolarity).

China's economic rise warrants talk of polarity shifts and power transitions only if gross economic output is readily convertible into other key elements of state power. Based on the experience of past challengers, many scholars and commentators appear to think that the GDP/power conversion rate has remained constant over time, so that China, like Wilhelmine or Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union in the 20th century, might choose to ramp up to superpower status and succeed in relatively short order.

But as Steve Brooks and I detail elsewhere, this is misleading on two counts. First, past challengers were roughly comparable in population to the dominant power. When their gross economic output came within the range of the dominant state, their relative wealth and technological prowess followed suit, either surpassing, matching or at least approaching the hegemon's. When it came to be seen as a challenger to Britain's world position, Wilhelmine Germany, for example, was richer, more technologically advanced in key areas, and had a larger economy than Britain. By comparison, China's huge population dictates that its economy can match U.S. output while still being dramatically poorer and less advanced. Even the Soviet Union, which used totalitarianism to compensate for relative backwardness, was much richer vis á vis the United States during the Cold War peak than China is today. And for the initial phases of the Cold War, Moscow matched or even surpassed the United States in key, strategically significant technological areas. China still has a long way to go before presenting a challenge of that nature.

Second, for a variety of reasons Brooks and I detail, it is much harder today to translate raw GDP into other elements of state capability – especially military capacity – than it was in the mid-20th century. Modern weapons systems are orders of magnitude harder to develop and learn to use effectively than their mid-20th century predecessors. China thus confronts a higher bar for peer competitor status than did earlier challengers from position of less wealth and lower indigenous technological capacity. As a result, the best estimate is that China will long remain in its current status as a potential superpower.

And add to that the demographic factor: China is not only a relatively poor challenger (though big) compared to past risers, this is the only transition in history in which the challenger gets old before the dominant state. In all previous power transitions, both rising and declining states were demographically young. But China will face the fiscal and other challenges of an aging population sooner and more severely than the United States will. The system is changing; China has risen, the EU and Japan have declined. But the United States has not declined, and will not decline soon, to the point that it ceases to be the world's sole superpower.

NO HEGEMONIC WAR

How do you overthrow a settled international system? Rising, dissatisfied powers want to change the system, dominant states resist, clinging to their perquisites. Each thinks it has the strength to defend its position. The main way this contradiction was resolved historically – at least, if theorists like Robert Gilpin are right – was an all-out war involving all or most great powers. Not only did hegemonic war resolve the contradiction between the underlying distribution of capabilities in the system and the hierarchy of prestige or status, it also served as “a uniquely powerful agent of change in world politics because it tends to destroy and discredit old institutions and force the emergence of a new leading or hegemonic state.”

Thankfully, such a war is exceedingly unlikely to emerge among states armed with secure second-strike nuclear forces, whose core security, future power, and economic prosperity do not hinge on the physical control of others’ territory. Can something else take its place? Not according to a new book by Randall Schweller. Other destructive events one can imagine, such as a global economic crash, pandemic, or environmental catastrophe, may wreak widespread destruction but they are not driven by political logic and so cannot perform some political functions. As Schweller argues, “it is precisely the political ends of hegemonic wars that distinguish them and the crucial international-political functions they perform – most important, crowning a new hegemonic king and wiping the global institutional slate clean – from mere cataclysmic global events.” On his view, only hegemonic war can force the emergence of a new hegemon, clarify power relations, and wipe the inter-state institutional structure clean, leaving a tabula rasa for the newly anointed hegemon to write new rules. “The distasteful truth of history,” Schweller writes, “is that violent conflict not only cures the ill effects of political inertia and economic stagnation but is often the key that unlocks all the doors to radical and progressive historical change.”

We can look at the conditions under which the current system took shape for clues. World War II is widely seen as the most destructive of modern history. But while it knocked several great powers down, it yielded ambiguous lessons concerning the relative

importance of American sea, air and economic capabilities versus the Soviet Union's proven conventional military superiority in Eurasia. Even though it failed to clarify the U.S.-Soviet power balance, the war radically increased the economic gap in the United States' favor not only by giving it history's greatest Keynesian boost but also by physically destroying or gravely wounding all other world's major economies. It created the preconditions for the Cold War, without which America's order building project could never have been as elaborate and extensive. It left the Soviet Union's armies in the center of Europe, creating the conditions without which NATO would never have been created. This enabled history's most deeply institutionalized and long lasting set of alliances by giving Washington the incentive to overcome domestic resistance to the costs of building hegemony while conferring unprecedented U.S. leverage over its allies to bend them to its will. Not only that, it left in its wake unprecedented humanitarian and economic crises that only the United States had the wherewithal to address in a timely fashion.

It is exceedingly difficult to imagine any set of conditions emerging that is remotely as conducive to systemic change. If Gilpin was right that "hegemonic war historically has been the basic mechanism of systemic change in world politics," and if most scholars are right that such a war is exceedingly unlikely in the nuclear age, then systemic change is much harder now than in the past. With world war-scale violence off the table, any order presumably becomes harder to overthrow.

It follows that scholarly and popular discussions radically underestimate the difficulty of hegemonic emergence and therefore overestimate the fragility of the American-centered order. Standard treatments of systemic change do not capture crucial effects that conspired to facilitate the current order that emerged under U.S. auspices. Uniquely in modern history, World War II destroyed the old order, clarified power relations between the U.S. and its allies, and yielded a bipolar structure that was uniquely conducive to the U.S. order building effort in the ports of the international system over which it held sway. In this light, expectations of a coming "Chinese century" or "Pax Sinica" seem fanciful.

INSTITUTIONS AND STRATEGIC INCENTIVES

Today's international system is far more thickly institutionalized than those in which previous power shifts occurred, and institutions play a far more salient role in U.S. grand strategy than was the case for its predecessors at the top of the inter-state heap. There are good reasons to worry that this may induce rigidity to the system. And if that is so, then today's order may well be far less amenable to accommodation than its defenders argue. Key here is the close interaction between institutions and grand strategy.

Woven through the speeches of President Obama and other top U.S. officials is a robust restatement of the traditional U.S. commitment to multilateral institutions as a key plank in a grand strategy of global leadership. According to U.S. foreign policy elites – and reams of political science research on institutions – the focus on leadership and institutions brings benefits to the United States from institutionalized cooperation to address a wide range of problems. There is wide agreement that a stable, open, and loosely rule-based international order serves the interests of the United States.

Most scholars and policymakers agree that such an inter-state order better serves American interests than a world that is closed – i.e., built around blocs and spheres of influence – and devoid of basic agreed-upon rules and institutions. As scholars have long argued, under conditions of interdependence – and especially rising complex interdependence – states often can benefit from institutionalized cooperation.

Arguably, the biggest benefit is that a complex web of settled rules and institutions is a major bulwark of the status quo. Over a century of social science scholarship stands behind Ikenberry's signature claim about the "lock-in" effects of institutions. Path dependence, routinization, internalization and many other causal mechanisms underlie institutions' famed "stickiness," that is, their resistance to change. These stand as important allies of status-quo oriented actors – and major adversaries of revisionists. Needless to say, this same stickiness can vex those who like the status quo in general but might want to revise rules – as in the case of Europe's and to a lesser extent

the United States' efforts to alter norms of lawful military intervention in sovereign states. And the BRICS countries can use existing rules to push back against changes they dislike, and can exploit ambiguities in the normative order to defend their prerogatives. But given that the U.S. remains essentially a status quo power and that the existing institutional order reflects its core preferences, overall the stickiness of institutions works to its advantage and is a major argument for defending the order.

The incentives for the United States to foster and lead the institutional order are strong. But that does not mean that there are no downsides. Embedding its grand strategy in institutions may curtail U.S. options and reduce flexibility in other ways. First is the problem of exclusion. Foundational elements of the U.S. grand strategy of leadership are exclusionary by nature. U.S. officials believe that the maintenance of security commitments to partners and allies in Europe and Asia is a necessary condition of U.S. leadership. And those commitments are exclusionary by definition. As long as those commitments remain the bedrock of the U.S. global position, states against which those commitments are directed – especially China and Russia – can never be wholly integrated into the order. The result is to foreclose an alternative grand strategy of great power concert.

Securing the gains of institutionalized cooperation today may come at the price of having alienated potential partners tomorrow. This problem grows with the power and dissatisfaction of excluded states.

Second and more speculatively, U.S. policymakers may confront another set of constraints in the longer term. Key here is the article of faith among U.S. policymakers that all the parts of the U.S. grand strategy are interdependent: U.S. security commitments are necessary for leadership that is necessary for cooperation that is necessary for security and for U.S. leadership in other important realms. The result is to create apparently potent disincentives to disengaging from any single commitment. Pulling back from U.S. security guarantees to South Korea or Taiwan or NATO may make sense when each of these cases is considered individually. But if scaling back anywhere saps U.S. leadership capacity everywhere, any individual step toward retrenchment will be extremely hard to take. When U.S. officials

are confronted with arguments for retrenchment, these concerns frequently come to the fore.

In sum, the institutional order makes it hard for states that are unhappy with U.S. leadership to push back. At the same time, it makes it harder for the U.S. to scale back its claim to leadership. These effects were strongly in evidence in the crisis over Ukraine. NATO's exclusionary essence was an important driver of Russian policy. Political and organizational incentives within the institution, moreover, made it very hard to agree formally to close the door to further expansion to Ukraine even when many NATO allies supported such a move. The result appeared to be a case in which the incentives intrinsic to the institution pushed towards conflict with a major power. The ability to accommodate rising powers appears to be constrained by the central role institutions play in the leading state's grand strategy.

* * *

The bottom line is to expect a tougher, harder-to-manage world in which the shifting scales of world power make cooperation harder and periodically generate incentives for militarized contestation. But talk of a polarity shift or power transition overstates the case. Historically, major, hegemonic wars played this role. Schweller makes a strong case that other major events lack the political mechanisms required to reorder the international political system. The net implication is that displacing the current U.S. dominated inter-state order is much, much harder than the current commentary allows. If that were not enough, the power shift currently underway is far more modest than the hyperbolic rhetoric used to describe it. It amounts to China reaching peer status in terms of gross economic size. Yet for a number of reasons Beijing faces a higher bar for translating that economic output into the other requisites of superpowerdom, not least because it is comparably poor relative to the system leader and barriers to entry in the top end military competition are higher than ever. And if all that weren't enough, China confronts a settled, ramified institutional order that stacks the deck against revisionism.

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