

RUSSIA IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL POLITICS

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Under Mars and Venus. Robert Kagan, an American political guru, in his recent bestseller¹ compared the USA and Europe with Mars and Venus respectively. In Kagan's view, as far as protection of the Western world is concerned, US policy since the end of the Second World War has been based on military superiority. At the same time Europe (that is, Western Europe and then the European Union) has been more inclined to use diplomatic and economic tools to exercise its influence in world politics. European outlook coincides with Kant's idea of eternal peace; it is such a world where countries co-exist on the basis of unshakeable universal ethical standards. The USA – continues Kagan – see the world as Hobbesian one, where each country is surrounded by potential enemies, which would do anything in the pursuit of their selfish goals. Kagan claims that nowadays, in relation to major strategic issues Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.

About the new world order. Nevertheless, one should not overemphasize US-European contradictions, Europe and the USA will remain strategic partners. They still retain a strategic initiative in rebuilding the world on the basis of liberal-democratic values.

What can one say about the new architecture of the world? There are several approaches to assessing the existing world order. Ye. Primakov, one of the last apologists of multi-polarity, is certain that the world order develops towards multi-polarity². A. Bogaturov introduced conception of "pluralistic unipolarity"³. According to this conception bi-polar world did not become unipolar after the demise of the Soviet Union, did not turn into Pax Americana, as the USA are not a lonely superpower, but are surrounded by a close-knit group of staunch allies, the so-called G-7⁴.

A Russian version of "global democratic peace" appeared in 2000. This concept of a global Pax Democratica highlighted common democratic values which cemented the "group pole" together. A *regime-institution* approach to analysis of the world order is becoming increasingly influential. A. Salmin, N. Kosolapov – the authors of this approach – agree that the unipolar world acquires some features of a single global proto-state, that is governed from a single center. Having accepted that, they suggest analyzing this world through research of this governance, its nature, its forms, its regulating mechanisms, its regimes of governing, rules and practices⁵.

If some countries do not comply with Atlantic values, first and foremost, if they show no progress (which is understood as movement towards liberal-democratic values), no development (which is understood as inclusion into processes of globalization) such countries can be labeled "failed states".

¹ Kagan R. *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*. N. Y., 2003.

² Примаков Е. Мир без сверхдержав//Россия в глобальной политике. 2003. № 3. С. 84.

³ Богатуров А. Международный порядок в наступившем веке//Международные процессы. №1. 2003. С.6-23.

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

The USA and their allies differentiate between “progressive” states and “rogue” states with the same single-minded assertiveness that was typical of the USSR when it introduced socialist transformations into other socialist countries.

The UN Monterrey forum of 2002 was supposed to discuss financial aid to developing countries. In reality though, it designed a new doctrine which describes relations between the West and third world countries, a new doctrine of globalization and social progress⁶. The novelty of it is not in accepting the obvious fact that neither globalization nor free market can bridge the constantly growing gap between the developed and the developing countries. The main point of “Monterrey consensus” is that the West will be providing economic and financial aid and assistance only to those countries which are committed to liberal-democratic reforms in politics and economy. Thus, it is the weakness of state that is considered to be the main obstacle to economic development; the developing countries are strongly recommended to “strengthen the vertical of power”. The West declared state authority to be the foundation of international development. By doing so, Western countries made very serious commitments – now corruption and inefficiency of a state is not its internal affair any more.

After September 11, the notion of “failed states” became central in the new American strategy for building a safer world. Hypothetically such states could be “closed down”. In order to work out new legal practices it is suggested to implement a procedure of sovereign bankruptcy and introduction of external management – a procedure analogous to bankruptcy of corporations. Thus, the West is going to use different approaches toward issues of sovereignty: from aggressive intervention aimed at elimination of a “rogue” state, to “humanitarian interventions”.

We can come to the conclusion that – after the demise of the bipolar world based on struggle between two world systems – liberal-democratic ideology won in the Cold War and in 1980s-1990s turned into a system-forming matrix of the new international order. **We are not trying to discuss whether it was good or bad, but we accept it as reality to be taken into account by every government or ruling elite.**

External challenges to Russian security. In the sphere of international relations Russia faces many problems and does not possess sufficient resources to solve them. After the downfall of the socialist world order Russia lost *strategic initiative* at the global arena. In early 1990s Kozyrev tried to co-govern the world together with the United States. When that diplomacy failed, Primakov made an attempt to build multi-polarity. Needless to say, the attempt was doomed to failure.

When Russia became a member of the anti-terror coalition it seemed to have brought back to Russian diplomacy some stability and a sense of purpose. Having become closer to the West, Russia once again became one of the most influential countries. But Russia is a finicky partner. She supports Washington in some aspects, distances herself from the USA in others, trying to keep the relations within a framework of partnership. Russia keeps balancing between a full participation in G-8 and removal to marginal positions in the international community with an unpleasant prospect to join “failed states”.

In the present situation, when financial aid rather than military cooperation becomes the main instrument of global politics, Russia – in the foreseeable future – will have precious few possibilities to conduct an

⁶ Федюкин И. Монтеррейский консенсус// <http://www.polit.ru/documents/476633.html.25.03.2002;27.03.2002>

independent policy inside her sphere of interests. Fuel and energy dependence is a double-edged weapon and cannot guarantee long-term advantages for the exporter.

The loss of strategic initiative is demonstrated by the fact that Russian diplomacy has been associated with regimes rejected by the international community. It can be said not only about regimes of Saddam Hussein, Milosevic, Castro, Kim Jong Il – even among its neighbors Russia supports regimes that do not have exciting long-term prospects. Moscow pays little or no attention to political opposition in the CIS.

Russian leaders and political elite should realize that if Russia is to belong to G-8, it presupposes deep commitment to Atlantic democratic values. In order to secure national security interests, Russian leaders should be wise and not get spellbound by expectations of mass society, which is still cherishing pre-bourgeois illusions. Consortium of world leaders will not tolerate in their ranks such a state that does not correspond to their ideas of democracy and politics.

Neoliberal democracy and globalization remain the main challenges for Russia. Soviet superpower lost its case in an open competition. Those who still insist on experimenting with the status of a superpower, who persist in their support of non-liberal traditionalist values and forms of organization, they must have a very short historical memory.

Scholars and politicians keep arguing about Russian strategy of development. What could be the consequences of joining WTO? Russia still has quite a long way to go in order to catch up with the developed countries. Some scholars recently criticized neoliberal formulas which prescribe the developing countries opening up their economies in order to develop dynamically⁷. At the same time leaders of technogenic civilization have been developing their economies deliberately resorting to selective protection of some industries until they became strong enough to compete with foreign rivals⁸.

But who could prove it that reasonable state protectionism and strengthening of the regulating role of the state should be in conflict with development of civil society, with protection both of human rights and of freedom of mass-media? Judging from the results of 2004 presidential elections in Russia, "Izvestia" supposed that an attempt can be made in Russia to implement a concept of "modernization instead of democratization"⁹. We know it from bitter historical experience that "much of state" does not mean "a powerful state". Soviet Union where power of state was carried to an extreme turned out to be "a colossus with feet of clay" and collapsed abruptly. An international research group chaired by former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali published a report which emphasizes interdependence between democracy and development¹⁰. "Democracy cannot exist without an independent judicial system, without institutions that guarantee freedom of speech, without independent mass-media"¹¹.

Nowadays it would be difficult to impress somebody with formal characteristics of democracy. Non-democratic political regimes learned to imitate democracy by establishing quasi-democratic political institutions and procedures. Ralph Dahrendorf, a figure of authority among Eurosceptics, studied influence of globalization on internal policies. He established a direct link between crisis of democracy and

⁷ Ibidem. P. 6.

⁸ Ibidem. P. 7.

⁹ <http://www.izvestia.ru/elections2004/article45248>

¹⁰ Бутрос-Гали Б. Взаимозависимость демократии и развитие. Сводный доклад. ЮНЕСКО, 2003. С. 10.

¹¹ Ibidem.

crisis of a nation-state¹². In his opinion, presence of formal democratic institutions which are supposed to denote a rule of law is not enough to call a process or an institution democratic. Other indicators of democracy could be used, for example, whether the ruling elite are prepared to step aside from power after democratic elections¹³.

What planet should Russia follow? Owing to democratic transformations Russia managed both to find a noble and decent place within the global framework of American partnerships and to preserve a privileged position in international organizations. Alliance with the West allowed Russia to exercise positive influence on resolution of some international issues; without such an alliance this would be hardly likely if at all possible. There are many examples illustrating limits or even absolute inefficiency of Russian power politics, one of the recent striking examples is the famous “Primakov’s loop” over the Atlantic Ocean during the crisis in Yugoslavia.

Indeed, Russia, as well as many other countries, is not satisfied with the enormous role played by the USA in the process of making key decisions in world politics; this lessens the value of other countries, results in ignoring their interests and needs. But there are non-confrontational resources to tackle this and other problems. Such resources include cooperation with other countries to make the world order more democratic and to help Russia play a more important role in formation and regulation of this world order.

In order to work out foreign policy adequate for a strategy of national revival, the ruling elite should abandon some illusions, should be realistic about the position Russia occupies in the world. One of the major challenges to establishing adequate relations with the world is the fact that Russian politicians have not assessed the real position of the country in the world; nor have they made a realistic assessment of the world itself.

Our greatest failure was an internal one. We failed to work out a strategy of economic development, of political and spiritual revival. We have not understood the major issue of strategic development of the country. Instead of thinking how to ensure economic growth and how to keep our place in the world economy, we keep arguing about ideology or about theoretical models of development – liberal or state-oriented. Instead of realizing that Russian strategy does not comply with the emerging model of post-industrial development – which, as a rule, guarantees economic growth even to minor participants of it – we still keep on arguing about greatness and prestige of the country. It would be necessary to point out that many countries that do not apply the term “great” to themselves have been developing rapidly with Russia falling behind long ago (Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada, South Korea).

The series of failures in Russian foreign policy was in a way predetermined by inaccurate assessment of the outer world, by inadequate identification of priorities, by overestimation of resources. It is very likely that Russia tried to keep some positions which had been irretrievably lost and, by doing so, neglected realistic possibilities. I would like to ask the apologists of Lukashenko’s regime the following question: “Where are those political or economic dividends from supporting Lukashenko, the dividends that have been so much discussed for several years?”

¹² Dahrendorf R. *Dopo la Democrazia*. Laterza, 2001. P.7.

¹³ *Ibidem*. P. 8.

Anyway, Russian politicians, the leaders of the country should analyze the lessons of 1990s to realize where our interests in the world are, to work out a realistic and active policy to adapt to the future world, not to waste away political and economic resources of the country.

It is very worrying that a large number of our politicians do not understand the new reality; their reactions to the policies of the outer world are also worrying. A series of humiliations brought about not only a feeling of having been offended but also a feeling of living in a besieged fortress, a feeling of being surrounded by a hostile world, identified mainly with the West. Contrary to the public opinion – which is not anti-American or Anti-Western, as the results of recent polls showed – the majority of state-controlled mass-media incite anti-Western sentiments.

Despite all that, conditions are in general favorable for Russia. So far nobody can nor wants to threaten Russia with either aggression or military-political pressure. Russia does not have major allies, but she has no enemies either. Relations with the most powerful states are normal. So far Russia is waved aside, but is neither isolated nor forced into a corner. There is no point in exhausting ourselves by militarization? But this situation may change if Russia keeps getting weaker.

So far we still have breathing space. There still is an “opportunity gap” which would allow us to resort to a new paradigm of internal development, cooperation and integration with the outer environment. Such a paradigm should address new challenges and new opportunities. This gap may close in a few years. Survival and development of the country depend on whether the ruling political elite will be able to tackle new challenges, to use new opportunities, to adequately assess this new world Russia will have to live in¹⁴. Russia does not have an acceptable alternative to global process of economic integration. There is an unacceptable one though...

In that case there may appear a new planet on the international firmament. The status of that planet will be defined in words of the famous russian poet Pushkin, “as that stupid moon on that stupid firmament...”

¹⁴ Ibidem.