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U.S. – RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN GLOBAL ISSUES

Russian-American interaction (or cooperation) in global problems solution depends to a great extent on the following: 1) situation in international relations, and 2) state of bilateral affairs. Elections in the United States and Russia in 2008 gave hopes that countries are on the threshold of dramatic changes in their international strategies and in policies towards each other. And we are still in the situation of cautious optimistic expectation, though situation in the world, in certain regions and countries, spheres of world politics, is not very much encouraging.

The year of 2008: normative dilemmas and Russian-American relations

To 2008 both countries arrived with heavy luggage of mutual accusations, criticism, dissatisfaction, however friendly and cooperative form of interaction at the presidential level remained, countries continued to give assurances of genuine intention to develop partnership relations. American scholars wrote that while there were 27 meetings between President Bush and President Putin, there had been very few accomplishments. Russian scholars sounded more categorically. They stated that the most important problem was restoration of trust between the countries because bilateral relations had been thrown twenty years backward as compared to the end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s. In Gorbachev era everybody in the USSR believed that “American threat” will never come back, but after August 2008 crisis in the Caucasus, politicians and people in Russia started thinking of possible dangerous scenarios in relations between the United States and the Russian Federation. Some Russian analysts wrote that very often American policy toward Russia gives the impression that there is systemic and civilizational incompatibility between Russian and American cultures and mentality, and the Russian state is not accepted by America in any form. N. Kosolapov, a well-known specialist in international relations from The Institute of World Economy and International Relations, wrote that by 2008 Russia and the United States came very close to the possibility of serious conflict (even military). He refers to the events of August 2008 in the Caucasus when American military forces were indirectly used against Russia (in the form of assistance to Georgia), and there were no similar situations during the cold war between the U.S. and the USSR¹.

¹ Kosolapov N. Porogoviy Uroven i Veroyatnost Konflikta SSHA s Rossiey (Possibility of Conflict between the U.S. and Russia) // International Trends. Vol. 6. № 3 (September-December 2008). P. 22-24 / www.intertrends.ru

One of the observations of Russian scholars was that we could notice certain devaluation of one the most precious category of world politics – peace: global, regional, personal. War, conflict, military intervention have become principal instruments used by various countries (both great powers and smaller countries) for solving all kinds of problems: political (democratization), economic (control over territories rich in energy and natural resources), geopolitical, security, etc. Not always military actions are justified, and so called “humanitarian intervention” cannot be viewed as a legitimate action in its military form, because humanitarian consequences (gumanitarniye posledstviya) are not taken into account and are often ignored. A well known philosopher and political scientist from the Institute of the USA and Canada Studies E. Batalov wrote: “If the institution of sanctioned collective humanitarian intervention becomes international norm of the 21st century, it is necessary to think better of its form. Otherwise, certain groups of people will improve their life by making life of other groups worse”. He attracted attention to the fact that while the Iraq operation was being planned, all its military, technical and even economic aspects were analyzed. What was left outside of “the plan of attack” was humanitarian problem which became very serious not only for Iraqi people but also for American people².

Russian political scientists and politicians are concerned not only with “unjust or incorrect” estimations of Russia’s “behavior” but also with very disturbing tendencies in the world: growth of instability at regional and nation state levels, and as a result at global level; intensification of competition for resources and markets, transportation routes; severe erosion of normative basis of security system, and in general, of international relations; aggravation of problems of criminal business and networks, and other problems of global dimension (epidemics, catastrophes, etc.).

Russia, after it experienced controversial consequences of military regulation in Chechnya, tried to attract attention to the issue of conflict resolution with the use of military force and started debate on the issues of war and peace, stabilization and survival, tolerance and respect to interests of different countries³. Russian experts defined this growing negligence to the use of force as a result of getting used to live in the situation of common peace (without big conflict or war) – a kind of “syndrome” similar to “syndrome of getting used to life without economic crises”. This last “economic syndrome” ended with the global economic crisis of 2008; however, we cannot let any crisis remind us that peace is a precious category⁴.

American scholars also acknowledged that together with successes there were serious failures and miscalculations in the foreign policy of the United States who diminished importance of collective world regulation and neglected dramatic changes in international system besides the disappearance of the USSR. They also paid attention to the fact that “ideological extremism” in the form of democratization by any means and all over the world did not succeed and caused damage to the image of the United States in the world. As a well known American specialist on issues of democracy T. Carothers noted, the Bush administration pursued a realist policy (spheres of influence) for economic and geopolitical interests, instead of real democracy

² Batalov E. Antropologia Mezhdunarodnikh Otnosheniy (Anthropology of International Relations) // International Trends. Vol. 3. No.2 (May-August 2005). P. 4-16 / <http://www.intertrends.ru>

³ Shakleina T. Status Quo Kak Oppozitsia Miroporyadku (Status Quo as an Opposition to World Order) // International Trends. Vol. 4. No. 1 (January-April 2006). P. 104-110 <http://www.intertrends.ru>; idem. Kriticheskoye Napravleniye Issledovaniy Miroporiadka v SSHA (World Order as a Research Problem in the U.S.: Critical Views // International Trends. Vol. 5. No.3 (September-December 2007). P. 66-75 / <http://www.intertrends.ru>

⁴ Torkunov A. Deficit Demokratii I Mezhdunarodnoye Sotrudnichestvo (Deficit of Democracy and International Cooperation) // International Trends. Vol. 7. No.3 (September-December 2009). P. 16-24 / <http://www.intertrends.ru>

promotion⁵. The agenda of Russian-American interaction was defined as “minimalist-realist” by both sides, and reflected mistake of defining Russia as “a junior partner”, non-constructive character of constant mutual criticism⁶.

Russian experts pointed out that after the end of the cold war, in the 1990s, there was a chance to consolidate new world order: without ideological confrontation; with certain consensus on establishment of more peaceful non-confrontational relations between leading world powers, including Russia, India, China, Brazil; with tendency towards serious arms reduction; development of collective approach and collective measures to solve global problems. However, hopes for establishment of more democratic world order were not realized, and world system was more and more acquiring features of the old order with use of force, arms race, ideology, primacy of highly developed countries, tendency to slow down development and restrict opportunities of developing countries, their entrance into Western institutions (so called “manipulating leadership” of the United States⁷).

Summing up period of 2001-2008 V. Kremenyuk, Deputy Director of the Institute of the USA and Canada Studies, stated that in case the United States continue unfriendly and restrictive policy toward Russia, it will have to turn to EU and/or China for the solution of its economic and geopolitical tasks, and in this case consolidation of everything positive that is still left from the period of 1980s and 1990s will cease to exist⁸.

Both Russian and American Presidents, and Russian and American expert communities realize importance of repairing bilateral relations and giving them new impulse and new agenda despite remaining disagreements on a number of issues. We think that after 20 years of efforts to modify old order and build up a new one, after dramatic changes in distribution of power in the world, aggravation of global problems, Russia and the United States cannot ignore a chance once more to use their positive experience of past partnership relations for mutual and common benefits.

Issues of mutual interest – mutual solution

Among issues of mutual concern Russian and American scholars and politicians mention the following: arms control and WMD proliferation, terrorism, global economic regulation, energy market, conflict resolution, drugs, epidemics, humanitarian catastrophes. In some cases Russian-American interaction is not enough or decisive, because broader multilateral activities are required, however without American-Russian cooperation the majority of problems can hardly be solved.

American position for the solution of global problems is of primary importance because the United States remain a superpower, have huge financial and military resources, dominate in the most important international organizations, have the biggest organizational resources. Russia’s actions are restricted by scarce financial and economic resources, its potential to

⁵ Carothers Th. The U.S. Democracy Promotion During and After Bush. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C.: CEIP, 2007; Carothers Th. The Democracy Crusade Myth // The National Interest online. June 5, 2007 (<http://www.nationalinterest.org>)

⁶ A. Aslund and A. Kuchins. Pressing the “Reset Button” on U.S.-Russia Relations. Policy Brief. March 2009. Washington, D.C.: CSIS-PIIE, 2009 / <http://www.csis.org>

⁷ Bogaturov A. Liderstvo i Decentralizatsia v Mezhdunarodnoy Sisteme (Leadership and Decentralization in International System) // International Trends. Vol.4. No. 3 (September-December 2006). P. 5-15 / <http://www.intertrends.ru>

⁸ V. Kremenyuk. Poriadok Posle Krizisa: Kakim Yemu Bit (Order After the Crisis: What Kind of Order?) // International Trends. Vol. 7. No.3 (September-December 2009). P. 4-15 / <http://www.intertrends.ru>

influence political and economic situation in various countries and regions is smaller than America's, and it is not a member of some very influential international and regional organizations.

As American world regulation has shown, the superpower cannot positively for itself and for the world solve most of global problems. The reason is not only mistakes of American administrations, but to a greater extent scale of emerged problems that demand broad cooperation. We think that the biggest mistake of the United States was making world politics highly ideological, putting Western (American) ideology above real politics, real problems, and real life. Our common problems are earthy, and they are becoming harder to be solved because we have lost time on disputes about domination in the world, primacy, new empires, etc. There is hope – still only hope – that the United States will choose cooperation without exaggerated ideological approach, and behave like a real leader mobilizing different countries for real solutions. Russia is ready to participate and already does a lot despite economic constraints. When we speak about Russian-American agenda this point should be clearly stated to show sincere attitude for cooperation.

This is very important when we deal with such issues as *humanitarian catastrophes, epidemics (sometimes as a result of natural calamities), drugs, migration, illegal networks, etc.* Practice of humanitarian interventions of the 1990-2000s was ambivalent: in case of forceful democratization and change of political regimes, many humanitarian problems were not solved, and it is unclear whether it was planned to solve them (social and economic situation in Afghanistan and Iraq); in case of fighting natural disasters and epidemics it is also evident that we are not prepared to their practical more or less successful regulation (the last case of Haiti).

Attacks on “nation state” and “national sovereignty” - basic categories of past world order, and “obsolete organizations” (like UN) could not be justified (though changes in international system do take place), and prevented the United Nations from working out effective general approach to solution of humanitarian problems and organize real support in case of national disasters (Myanma). There is no sincere desire (or intention) on the part of many countries to participate in UN and other international campaigns (against terrorism, drugs, illegal networks, etc.); financial and other means granted by different countries for these purposes are insufficient. We think that more pragmatic and less uncompromised position of all members of world community, and first of all, of the United States, could facilitate working out generally accepted approach to solution of global humanitarian issues, and make international actions more successful and effective.

Russia's role cannot be ignored as it is situated in Eurasia where most of “battles” for resources take place; there appeared a number of new states with serious political and economic problems; terrorism and international drug business are very strong; important energy routes run. Russia is interested in more stable security surroundings, in safety of its economic interests in Eurasia, in effective policy against criminal networks. Russia's geopolitical interests (so called “special interests” in post-Soviet territories), its energy and other resources, security of its borders and problem of Russians living in foreign countries. American drive for dominating in global and regional regulation (Eurasia) – these are questions that should be discussed during bilateral conceptual interaction and practical cooperation. Each country has its strategy which will be fulfilled anyway with this or that degree of success, however we need general secure surroundings to implement our plans and to ensure general peace.

One more very important question is relations between international and regional organizations. The United States, as we mentioned, dominates in all more or less influential organizations, and American attitude was seen as desire to keep this dominant position and participate in conflict situations practically everywhere – be it ethnic cleansing, separatist movement, civil war, presence of terrorist groups or WMD, or any economic conflict (conflict of interests, projects, control of territories and pipelines). Wide-scale activities of the United States not only caused damage to American interests, but also raised question about role of regional organizations and regional powers. Critics of American overstretch have been stating that it is

time to delegate power to regional players capable of solving various regional problems, especially in conflict situations in the countries that are close to their territories and directly influence their life and policies.

Some analysts attract attention to the fact that many regional powers are already trying to keep out non-regional players from settlement of regional problems and conflicts. The United States is a non-regional actor for Eurasia, but they try to interfere everywhere and make NATO a global security organization⁹. However it is not a secret that role of China in negotiations on North Korea nuclear program remains dominant, and role of NATO is clearly marginal here. Problem of political settlement of Afghanistan and Pakistan cannot be solved by the U.S. and NATO without India, Russia and China who have vital stakes in security in the region (terrorists, drugs, arms sale, illegal migration, epidemics, etc.), while for the U.S. it is a distant territory. Present situation shows that NATO troops do not fight drugs in the region, and the United States cannot (are they really willing?) solve economic, political, social problems in the countries of Central Asia.

We think that broader and less ideological approach to cooperation with Eurasian countries, first of all with Russia, can give a new impulse to positive initiatives, when various countries will be involved into solution of regional problems having great importance for their vital interests and regional security. Russia, China and the Shanghai Organization of Cooperation can establish working relations with the U.S. or/and NATO for global issues solution, first of all, security tasks. Russian experts state that nowadays no one can deny that NATO is a very important organization which is trying to solve many global problems. However, it has rather restricted membership: Russia, China, Brazil and many other countries are not its members, however they are very important players in Eurasia and at global level.

A. Bogaturov, Vice-Rector of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University), thinks that in perspective, in case NATO becomes a universal security organization, Russia can think of closer cooperation with the Alliance (“association” with NATO)¹⁰. At present the United States continue solving global and regional issues using NATO without Russia’s participation, and with prejudice towards regional structures, like Shanghai Organization of Cooperation, with tendency to use bilateral format for promoting American interests in Eurasia.

Economic regulation, separate from problems of poverty, hunger, deceases, etc. which are subordinate to one main problem of regulation, is becoming a real global challenge. Its solution, at least partial, requires non-political collective approach of all countries, capable of regulating and sustaining their own economies, and having organizational and natural resources to do that. “Group of Twenty” is a first step to find mechanisms of effective global economic management, but there should be other ones including regional and bilateral agreements and mechanisms. Existing organizations of international and regional scale (including WTO) cannot be considered as “upravlyayuschiye” – “managing” or “regulating” because they try to solve specific problems of trade, labor markets, credits, debts, etc., but do not solve one important problem – to develop new concept of international economic development that will minimize possibility of growth of imbalance in economic development and emergence of crises. To declare that this time the crisis will be conquered by exploiting cheap Indian labor market is not a solution. Maybe it will help the U.S. and a few developed countries and India itself to improve the economic situation for a short perspective, but it does not solve key global economic and

⁹ Bogaturov A. Khochesh Otkritoy Systemi – Stroy Zakritiy Blok? (In Case One Wants an Open System – Build up a Closed Bloc?) // Nezavisimaya Gazeta – Dippcourier. 15.06.09 / <http://www.ng.ru>

¹⁰ Bogaturov A. Ravnovesiye Nedoveria: Prioriteti Rossii Na Fone Smeni Vlasti v SSHA (Balance of Distrust: Russian Priorities and Change of Power in the U.S. // International Trends. Vol. 7. № 3 (September – December 2009). P. 32 / www.intertrends.ru

financial problems. Who will be the next with its cheap labor market to save rich countries? Africa?

With this approach we will come back to similar and more severe crises. It is time when we cannot use only quantitative estimations of growth and success, and look for growth of capitals and profits. We also cannot use “hard economic measures” to destroy big economies for the sake of smaller ones¹¹. *It is necessary to evaluate correctly resources of various countries and their potential for world economic development and regulation.* Competition should take more restricted forms, and declared aims and programs should be realistic¹².

Energy issue is of great importance today, and though the United States are not directly involved in pipeline crises in Eurasia, still it is the point of contradiction in Russian-American relations now and obstacle for cooperation in the future. It happened because the United States are playing together with EU against Russia, are advancing NATO into territories of possible gas and oil roots, support plans to restrict seriously opportunities for Russia in oil and gas market, participate in “big political energy game” against Russia, using traditional method of “stick and carrot” for smaller players.

Russia understands that it is necessary to have different opportunities to get resources, however it stands for non-prejudiced estimation of actions of different players, for its inherent right to compete for most favorable conditions of sale and transit of its resources while it has urgent social and economic problems. As one of really big and rich countries Russia considers it just to be accepted into principal organizations and groups influencing and regulating world economy.

Russia and the United States have rich history of mutual efforts to minimize *international threats, first of all, WMD proliferation and emergence of war*. We think that being two biggest nuclear powers they can exert visible, even decisive, influence on the process of arms race, especially nuclear. The United States and Russia succeeded in diminishing nuclear threat after the dissolution of the Soviet Union moving out nuclear weapons from Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan to Russia. But that was the last victory of bilateral activities. Afterwards process of arms race and strive for nuclear status increased, and there are serious problems with NPT treaty.

Two factors should be meant: ambivalence of international order in general, and especially in security sphere, and autonomous and at times rather militarized American policy in security sphere that was considered by other countries – new great powers and smaller states – a sign and negative stimulus for increasing military potential and even obtaining nuclear technologies and weapons. In 1998 India and Pakistan became official nuclear powers, North Korea and Iran have come close to such status, Israel is considered a nuclear power though it does not officially acknowledge it.

The United States and Russia are trying to start a new stage in establishing normative basis for arms control – and this should be encouraged, but *the problem is whether other countries will follow, stop arms race and nuclear arms race. This is a key point in international debate and bilateral diplomatic dialogue.* While the two countries are discussing new terms and new levels of their nuclear arsenals, China and India are working hard to enlarge their potential, and India does not join NPT. Arms sale, modernization of military forces in many countries, and arms race continue. Punishment of one country (for instance, Russia) for selling weapons to

¹¹ Some Russian scholars state that we are living at the time when countries can be destroyed economically by efforts of a group of countries or one biggest economy. They define such regime as one of “mutual guaranteed economic destruction”. Like in the military sphere during the cold war countries need to be prepared to this, and have their own strategies of asymmetric answers or deterrence strategies. It is a very disturbing scenario.

¹² In the last debates on Arctic resources one can easily see geopolitics, ideology, and lack of realism. While extracting of resources from this frozen land and water is problematic and evidently very expensive, cheaper means of using resources of other territories without “eternal ice” are declared as inconvenient. The same we can say about plans of pipe-lines in very unstable, poor and not very well predictable territories that will require a lot of money and maybe troops, to say nothing of possible rivalry between poor and unstable participants of projects who do not conceal that they will use the opportunity to manipulate the consumers.

certain “bad” countries, while other states continue this business and are ready to take Russia’s place, will not bring solution or make international relations more stable. Only collective desire to change practice and norms of arms and technologies trade can bring some positive results. Otherwise, some countries will be getting economic and political advantages by suppressing and restricting other players in the market.

The United States does not give up plans for National Missile Defense, and negotiations with Russia about change of dislocation of MD systems in Europe cannot be seen as successfully finished. The United States is the strongest military power in the world, and the dominant player in NATO. Their decision for this or that plan and program will be crucial. However the United States cannot ignore Russia and China who are powerful and have distinct interests and plans for the future; they also have their own view of security regimes at global and security levels, and need to solve a lot of security problems on their borders. As General V. Esin points out, it is necessary to keep balance in the triangle: the U.S. – China – Russia, and if we fail to do it, there might be military-political crisis in relations between Russia and the U.S., and/or China and U.S. He thinks that it will not bring China and Russia to establishment of a new military block as opposition to the United States and NATO, or lead to military confrontation between these countries, but it will have negative effect on international security in general¹³.

Russian experts attract attention to the fact that plans for European MD are not really aimed to solve the problem of possible Iranian attack or defense of Europeans from any attack (unrealistic character of American plans was discussed many times by American and Russian specialists). They state that these plans have very important political and psychological component: not only to threaten the opponent, but also to provoke him and others to start analogous expensive programs and make disadvantageous compromises¹⁴. Russia is not going to repeat mistakes, nevertheless, it will have to react. What is worse, military plans of the United States and disagreements with Russia are encouraging other countries to continue arms race, and the results of this negative process will not be necessarily bad only for Russia. In such situation a serious multilateral discussion of the problem is needed, and there are hopes that the Obama administration will find it possible to take into account opinions and analyses of critics in the United States, Russia, and European countries

Russian specialists point out that the United States have great autonomy in informational and space spheres, have programs that might cause militarization of space. Both American and Russian military and civilian experts suggest working out mechanisms for exchanging information in space studies and politics. The United States cannot ignore China, Russia, India, and make space a field of uncontrolled and politicized competition dangerous for the world security¹⁵.

As we see, the United States and Russia have a lot of problems to discuss. What we really need is *desire* to really solve existing problems of arms control, proliferation, terrorism. And, as we have already mentioned, Russian-American approach and mechanisms will become basis for further multilateral negotiations and regulation of other players in security sphere. If we fail to work out bilateral approach, it will be hardly possible to establish international system of regulation. Other countries, for instance, China, India, Brazil, Japan, Pakistan and others, use for their profit uncertain situation in Russian-American interaction, and this does not add stability and predictability to regional and international security.

¹³ Esin V. Problema PRO v Mirovoy Politike (Problem of AMD in World Politics) // International Trends. Vol. 7. № 2 (May - August 2009). P. 29 / www.intertrends.ru

¹⁴ Fenenko A. Asimmetrichniy Otvet v Novom Veke (Asymmetric Answer in the New Century) // International Trends. Vol. 6. № 3 (September – December 2008). P. 124-125 / www.intertrends.ru

¹⁵ Rogovski E. Borba za Kontrol v Kosmose (Struggle for Control in Space) // International Trends. Vol. 5. № 1 (January - April 2007). P. 26 / www.intertrends.ru

One of positive results of Russian-American interaction in 2000s is that we have not lost potential for negotiations and looking for mutual approaches to solve urgent problems of global and national development.

Russia understands that nowadays its potential for wide-scale global politics is not big enough as compared to American. However, its historic experience of world regulation is very valuable, especially historic leverage of Soviet-American regulation during cold war. This organizational resource should not be ignored. Russian experts suggest that instead of playing around with the idea of “partnership” (equal or strategic) which nobody in the U.S. and Russia seriously accepts, we can bring back the idea of “peaceful coexistence”, sign new “Helsinki-2” agreement with new norms of trust between European countries, the United States and Russia in new international surroundings, and with respect to interests of all participants¹⁶. They also consider it necessary to return to practice of regular consultations between Russia and the United States on situations in certain countries, regions, spheres of world politics.

The message that Russian scholars put forward is the following: global problems – security, political, economic, humanitarian – have acquired such great importance and scale, that without collective approach nation-states and even non-state players (transatlantic companies, etc.) will not be able to safeguard their interests and pursue certain policies. Military problems can also be solved only on a broad cooperative basis. It is necessary to bring back priorities of peace and stability instead of making democratization the main priority of contemporary world.

Russia is for more democratic and non-ideological economic interaction. It is not fully included into global economic system according to its potential, as compared to rather doubtful economic potential of many countries that are members, for instance, of WTO. There are hopes in Russia that we shall open a new page in looking for mutually beneficial approaches to world regulation, and for bilateral relations. Change of rhetoric and first steps made by the Obama administration and Russia in 2009 give hope that there is realization of the necessity of formulating new conceptions and new mechanisms for using positive potential of Russian-American interaction for the benefit of both countries and the world.

¹⁶ Bogaturov A. Counter-Revolution of Values and International Security. In: Leadership and Competition in World System. Russia and the United States. Ed. by A. Bogaturov and T. Shakleina. M.: MGIMO-URSS, 2010. P. 23-24.