



RUSSIA'S NEW GEOSTRATEGY:

Implications and Challenges for Architecture of International Security

The authors of the report describe the foreign policy of the Russian Federation from the moment preceding the Ukraine crisis as a manifestation of a rational, pragmatic and efficient Moscow's new geostrategy. The report outlines the application of this geostrategy in various regions of the world, its international political background and makes recommendations aimed at preservation of existing architecture of international security.

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SUMMARY

The actions of the Russian Federation in the framework of the Ukraine crisis, as well as in other areas of foreign policy are not dictated by the "historical trauma" of the Russian elite, nor by the belief in the "Russian world", but by a pragmatic new geostrategy.

This new geostrategy of Russia includes the following key elements:

1. Moving the strategic defence line from Russia's borders to the line passing through western borders of the Kaliningrad region, Belarus, Ukraine, Transnistria, southern borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Eastern Europe and through eastern and southern borders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Central Asia;
2. Causing instability in the countries along this strategic defence perimeter as a means of reducing the influence and presence of other world and regional powers in those regions;
3. Escalating tensions in the regions which occupy a position of priority in the foreign policy agenda of the world's key powers, especially in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific;
4. Favouring intensification of conflict dynamics where it may result in higher energy and other commodities prices in the world markets (especially in the Middle East and in Central Asia).
5. Undermining Euro-Atlantic unity, promoting disintegration of the EU and NATO as well as empowering contradictions in relations between other world powers and regional states (primarily between the United States and China, the USA and Iran).
6. Achieving deeper, critical involvement in global and regional processes with a view to exchange Russia's influence on them for the recognition of the post-Soviet as part of Russia's exclusive interest zone.

Russia's new geostrategy is extremely pragmatic and focused on achieving very specific effects in the time frame of 1 to 4 years. In the long term it is based on the hypothesis that its implementation will determine the evolution of international relations and their institutional and economic environment. Such evolution might significantly improve the long-term prospects for Russia. If the new geostrategy is successfully implemented, a "new Cold War", multi-polar in nature, will be the basic institutional framework of international security in the foreseeable future. In aspiration for this result Moscow's interests coincide with the interests of its numerous allies around the world, some of which, such as the neoconservative elites in the United States may well be playing a leading rather than a subordinate or peer role with respect to Moscow's activities.

INTRODUCTION

The Ukraine crisis created a brand new context for cooperation between Russia and the United States, European Union and other powers.

Russia came to be seen as a source of threat by the West and as an active actor who seeks to influence global agenda by the rest of the world. However, the ideological justifications of Russia's foreign policy aspirations linked to the concepts of the "Russian world", "a divided nation" and others mistakenly received widespread attention of Western media and think tanks. Whereas the real, rational motives underlying Moscow's decisions remain poorly studied.

Based on the analysis of open sources, exclusive information from the diplomatic, military and other sources, the authors of this study have formulated their own vision of Russia's activities in the international arena. The authors are firmly convinced that Moscow's actions must be understood as pragmatic and rational. Only such assumptions can be the basis of valid conclusions and effective recommendations for further cooperation between key stakeholders.

Despite a number of tough formulations in the text, the authors harbour no hostility to Russia and do not seek to make this report a manifesto of Russophobia.

The purpose of this report is to promote a better understanding of Russia's foreign policy and to contribute to elaboration of the measures that could prevent disintegration of existing system of international security.

THE "SPHERE OF INFLUENCE". INTEGRATION PROJECTS AND RUSSIA'S GEOSTRATEGY

The most important determinant of Russia's foreign policy is a "territorial imperative", that is the aspiration of the Russian leadership to ensure control over the post-Soviet area as its exclusive "sphere of influence".

Starting from 1991 and specifically since 1999 there were at least two different geostrategic visions in respect to the "near abroad" elaborated, discussed and implemented in Russia.

One of them had at its core the idea of reintegration of the former Soviet Union on the basis of sovereign equality and economic cooperation, along the model of the European Union. That vision was embodied in projects such as the Customs Union, the Eurasian Economic Community and now the Eurasian Economic Union.

The second vision was centered on strengthening Russian nation-state and tightening control over its "sphere of influence" through Moscow's unilateral actions (this vision has lately been referred to as the "Russian world"). This second approach to reintegration of the post-Soviet space was little voiced or discussed in the high level official sources. However a brief view of actual results of Russia's activities in the post-Soviet space as well as an in-depth analysis of Russian policies since 1991 show that this vision was a priority for key decision-makers in Russia.

The commodities-based model of the Russian economy does not allow it to act as a full-fledged integration center even though Moscow enjoys profound influence on and cultural proximity with the nations of the former Soviet Union. Pressures from the European Union, the People's Republic of China and in a longer run from dynamic Iran lead to rapid diminishing of Moscow's influence in the post-Soviet space. And this makes Russian leadership look for ways to maintain its "sphere of influence".

From 2009 to 2013 Kremlin put an emphasis on creating the Eurasian Economic Union, an EU-like model of integration, as a means of consolidating the region under its influence and using that as a backdrop for building an equal dialogue with Brussels and Beijing. However by the end of 2013 Russia's efforts in modernization obviously came to a dead end with official and independent analysts forecasting only a 0,2% growth for 2014 even before the Ukraine crisis. This brightly contrasted an ambitious Silk Road Economic Belt project launched by China.

In these circumstances the re-emerged problem of Ukraine's European integration pushed Kremlin to change its modus operandi in the post-Soviet space. Moscow chose deliberate destabilization of the Ukraine as the most effective method of preventing its European integration. Previously Russian or Russia controlled elements were involved in destabilizing parts of the post-Soviet space in a clandestine way (as was in the case of a coup d'etat in Kyrgyzstan or attempt of regime change in Belarus in 2010). In the case of the Ukraine Kremlin openly supported (and/or organized) destabilization of a formally friendly state. This became the first well-known manifestation of Russia's new geostrategy.

THE UKRAINE CRISIS AND "THE BELT OF INSTABILITY"

It is poorly understood and barely discussed in the media, but Moscow's direct intervention in the Ukraine crisis was carried out long before February 21, 2014 (the day of President Viktor Yanukovich's escape from Kiev). Contrary to the allegations of infringement of Russia's interests resulting from "unlawful" transition of power in Kiev in February 2014, the Russian authorities did not undertake any attempt to prevent this development in the period from December 2013 to February 2014. Moscow did not provide necessary information and special forces support to Viktor Yanukovich despite his refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013 and his demonstrated willingness to tighten integration with the Russian Federation in December 2013.

Moreover there is ample evidence that the "anti-Russian" radical nationalist structures in the Ukraine (including the Freedom Party, "Right Sector" and others) were created with essential support from and participation of Russian entities. This support was provided by the special services, Russian radical nationalist organizations whose numerous members poured into relevant Ukrainian structures, as well as by criminal organizations, especially in the West of the Ukraine, which have profound connections with Russian organized crime networks and the special services covering and controlling them.

Contrary to the official version announced by Vladimir Putin, Russia's special operation to overtake Crimea could not and was not prepared in the short period between Victor Yanukovich's ouster from power (February 21) and holding Crimea's referendum (March 14). The execution of such a large-scale operation including blocking the Ukrainian military, bribing or otherwise converting territorial divisions of the police and security services in the Crimea requires large-scale planning and preparation lasting for at least several months. This means that in the period when Viktor Yanukovich was still in power (from the end of November 2013 until the end of the second decade of February 2014), the Russian leadership was deliberately preparing for the annexation of Crimea, rather than trying to prevent "foreign interference with the internal affairs of the Ukraine."

Analysis of the Ukraine crisis is extremely important for understanding Russia's geostrategic doctrine. Moscow is not able to maintain its influence in the region through economic cooperation and "soft power." That is why it organizes military and political destabilization of the region to weaken the positions of other states and integration organizations here (EU, China, Iran, the United States).

Creating such an "instability belt" along its borders creates a number of positive effects for Moscow. In addition to the expulsion of non-regional powers from its "sphere of influence" Russia also receives such bonuses as territorial acquisitions, the opportunity to seize at cheap or no price at all the valuable equipment, qualified personnel and scientific research results from destabilized territories.

In addition, instability reduces the costs of Russia's foreign policy. For example, controlling destabilized Donbass is worth roughly 1 billion dollars annually spent for providing support of Donetsk and Lugansk "people's" armies and security forces. The same or even larger sum is spent on humanitarian aid, but this assistance is often sold to the local population thus bringing some income to the "donors". To compare with, Russia's union with Belarus was worth roughly 8-10 billion dollars annually in 2013-2014 provided through discounts on gas prices and duty free oil supply.

Thus in the short and medium-term the retention of the post-Soviet space within its sphere of influence through its destabilization seems to be a viable strategy for the Russian Federation.

RUSSIA'S NEW POSITIONING IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The second, equally important imperative of Russia's foreign policy is its "oil and gas imperative." Russian economy is totally dependent on exports of oil, gas and other raw materials. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union the country has completely lost its industrial and technological viability and has become a classic commodities-based economy, importing almost everything it needs in exchange for exported raw materials. Modernization slogans of President Dmitry Medvedev as well as the new "patriotic" and "imports substitution" wave of the past two years did not change that situation for the better.

The "oil and gas imperative" defines the priorities of the Russian geostrategy in the Greater Middle East. Here Moscow is forced to use its resources to maintain and enhance regional conflicts. The scenario of a major war in the Middle East is the only one that could bolster oil and gas prices which is of critical importance to Russia.

During the spring and summer of 2015 the Russian Federation has built and strengthened relationships with hard-liners (supporters of military solutions to the contradictions in the region) in Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iran. Moscow has done everything possible to delay the conclusion of the strategic Iran nuclear deal to complicate its entry into force after Congressional oversight. In June 2015 it concluded a strategic deal with Saudi Arabia providing the Kingdom with the guarantees of Russia's friendly neutrality in Riyadh's potential open conflict with Tehran. This deal also makes Moscow an important factor of Saudi's move to acquiring a nuclear status. Earlier in 2015 during the UN Security Council vote on Yemen Russia supported the resolution drafted by Saudi Arabia and others imposing unilateral restraints against the rebel Houthis. This development was a dejavu of Russia's support for the UN SC 1973 Resolution on Libya paving the way for West's intervention which Russia now so vigorously condemns.

Finally Russia's efforts in Syria are aimed at building up its influence on Bashar Assad, consolidating Iran-Iraq-Syria-Moscow axis and thus structuring the Middle East along Sunni-Shia contradiction lines as a pretext for a major regional war. A side-goal is also creating a safe environment for the joint development of offshore gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean together with partners from Egypt, Israel, Italy, Turkey and other countries.

Moscow's alleged intent to pass anti-air defense systems S-300 to Iran is directed primarily at achieving named political effects: strengthening Iranian "war party's" positions and contributing to the failure of US-Iran normalization. Israel's alleged ability to overcome S-300 makes their delivery to Iran largely meaningless in military terms. Moreover, according to Stratfor employees' correspondence published by Wikileaks in 2012, shortly before the Russian-Georgian conflict of August 2008 Russia exchanged the access codes of AAD systems "Tor M-1" for the access codes of Israeli unmanned aerial vehicles that were in service in Georgia. That means that Iran's Russia-provided air defense capabilities might turn out to be untenable in military terms.

Another important factor is lack or deficits of Russia's participation in fighting the Islamic State, especially in Central Asia. In the Middle East providing support to the failed regime of Bashar Assad became a way for Moscow to step up its regional role and establish its durable military presence in the region while avoiding any essential steps to fight the Islamic State. Moscow's involvement in negotiations with the USA on the subject of joint actions against IS was and remains a side step aimed at increasing Russia's critical weight in regional affairs rather than fighting terrorism. Moscow's air strikes are aiming at destroying moderate and Al-Quaeda-linked insurgents thus playing into the hands of not only Bashar Assad, but also the Islamic State. While Russia's involvement in the work of Baghdad counter-terrorism information center will be aimed at designing the Shia-Sunni war in the region rather than at achieving any other goals. United States' reluctance to participate in the center's work, correct in its intent of not playing into the hands of Moscow, will thus become a step to polarization of the Middle East with shia states aligning with Russia and Arab states holding on to the USA.

Thus the Russian Federation will continue to execute a multi-track and multidimensional strategy in the Middle East. This strategy is aimed at enhancing and controlling the conflict dynamics in the region.

RUSSIA AND THE EU AFTER THE BEGINNING OF THE UKRAINE CRISIS

Russia's geostrategy in the West is not limited to strengthening Moscow's influence in post-Soviet Eastern European states through their destabilization. It also dictates Kremlins deeper involvement in European affairs.

First of all Russia is interested in undermining the institutional unity of NATO and the European Union. It is only under this condition that Moscow's priorities in the post-Soviet space can be fully implemented. To this end Russia actively supports Eurosceptics (nationalists as well as left wing) in all EU countries and is building "special relationships" with the states dissatisfied with financial discipline and other rules imposed by Brussels (Greece, Hungary, Italy, etc.).

The second strategic objective is destroying the Euro-Atlantic unity and specifically – dismantling relations between the United States and its European allies (primarily France and Germany). This work is carried out under the slogan of "protecting the interests of Europe" that Washington ostensibly pushes to "anti-Russian policies" that harm Europe.

This rhetoric is at the heart of attempts to build a "special relationship" between Moscow on the one hand, and Berlin and Paris on the other. In establishing such relationship an important role is played by temporary coincidence of interests of the leading EU countries with Russia's new positioning in the Middle East.

However European politicians' hope for harmonizing the interests of Russia and the EU is deeply flawed. The "oil and gas imperative" of Russia's new geostrategy can be implemented under the following two conditions:

- The start of a "big war" in the Middle East, which will push the price of energy resources up and will prevent their direct transportation in large volumes from the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Libya) to Europe;
- The destruction of the institutional mechanisms of the European Union, specifically – of the European energy policy. The ultimate goal here is the disintegration of the EU and a return to negotiating energy supplies between Russia (and its partners) and individual European states. Those bilateral negotiations would allow Moscow to more effectively impose its own conditions on the energy consumers.

Meeting those two conditions is also critical for Russia' dominance in its "sphere of influence" which then would be reliably protected from any EU expansion ambitions.

"A PIVOT TO THE EAST". FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

A dramatic deterioration of Russia-West relations after the onset of the Ukraine crisis in 2014 led to acceleration of Russia's "pivot to the East". This formula is used to denote Russia's strategy of building a "special relationship" with China based on strategic exchange of resources for industrial goods and technologies, as well as declared rapprochement in the military-technical cooperation. Furthermore, prior to the Ukraine crisis "a pivot to the East" also included intensification of relations with Japan and South Korea, the formation of a free trade area between Vietnam and the Eurasian Economic Union (then United Economic Area) as well as the rapid development of the Far East of the Russian Federation.

The Ukraine crisis has changed the context for implementation of Moscow's "pivot to the East". China reacted negatively to Russia's annexation of Crimean peninsula, as well as more generally to the precedent of violation of territorial integrity in the framework of the Ukraine crisis. In addition China suffered huge losses due to destabilization in the Ukraine itself: Beijing lost the objects that have become an integral part of the Silk Road Economic Belt (a deep-water port and industrial park in the Crimea, energy projects in the Donbass region, and others).

Sino-Russian relations in Central Asia have also been rather tense. Since the Silk Road Economic Belt project was announced back in September 2013 Beijing had been showing full disregard of the Eurasian integration process led by Russia. China was implementing regional diplomacy as if the Eurasian Economic Union was not about to be launched and include Central Asian states. This erroneous line, however, was fixed by the Chinese leadership in 2014 which resulted in the formula of "conflux" of the EEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt (a corresponding political declaration was signed in Moscow on May 9, 2015). Consequently the role of China's main partner in Eastern Europe for implementation of the SREB project transferred to Belarus and was agreed on terms compatible with the legal regulations within the EEU.

Despite such a significant adjustment of Beijing's position the perspective of Sino-Russian relations looks extremely contradictory. In the medium term and even in the short run the Russian Federation is unable to oppose growing Chinese influence in Central Asia with any viable economic initiatives. Furthermore an economic crisis in Russia considerably amplified by the consequences of the military-political conflict in the Ukraine has already led to undermining the stability of the "migration" economies of Central Asian republics. Therefore it seems that in Central Asia Moscow will be forced to use the same strategy that it applied on the Western flank of the post-Soviet space: destabilizing the region in order to diminish foreign presence and influence.

Implementing this strategy on the southern flank has an additional advantage as it not only limits China's expansion in the region, but also allows to use the region for putting pressure on Beijing itself. First of all, destabilization of Central Asia allows to disrupt Beijing's oil and gas communications in the region and consequently increase Russia's importance as a source of those commodities. Besides Moscow's active operational use of Islamist movements in the region has a huge potential for exerting pressure on China in its western territories.

However, even more important is another potential effect of destabilization in Central Asia. Such destabilization would provoke China to exercising a more active presence in Central Asia which would probably also include military-political measures. Such

Beijing's steps that could be taken with little or no coordination with Washington would lead to a sharp deterioration in US-Chinese relations which is one of Moscow's top strategic priorities. Such deterioration will result in dominance of anti-American politicians in Beijing. And this will become the reason for escalation of tensions in the region of Asia-Pacific and will force Beijing to seek a compromise with Russia both in Central Asia and in solving energy supplies issues (with Russia as a major source of gas and oil).

Russia's geostrategy in Central Asia is based on various tools including Moscow's profound influence on Central Asian special services and Russian state services' extensive connections with the Islamist underground in the region. Moscow has been and remains a major recruitment center for radical Islamist organizations taking advantage of Central Asian migrants' miserable living conditions in Russian cities. A significant portion of Central Asian recruits for the Islamic state and the Syrian radical opposition were transferred to the war areas via Moscow. Recruitment is also running actively in Russia's other major cities.

THE POLITICAL NATURE AND CALCULUS OF RUSSIA'S NEW GEOSTRATEGY

It is easy to see that Russia's new geostrategy is extremely pragmatic and aimed at achieving very specific effects on the timeframe from 1 to 4 years. Wherein it looks extremely risky in terms of long-term effects. The result of its implementation would obviously be Russia's confrontation with its Southern (China, Iran) and Western (the EU) neighbours.

Nevertheless Russia's strategy seems to be quite acceptable taking into consideration its truly international character. It is based on the hypothesis that its implementation will determine the evolution of international relations, their institutional and economic environment in such a way that will dramatically improve long-term prospects for Russia.

In order to accurately characterize this hypothetical direction of evolution of international relations, we should pay attention to Moscow's allies supporting its new geostrategy. The most important ally, and perhaps the mastermind of Russia's new geostrategy turns out to be the US neoconservatives. Instigating a war in the Middle East, averting the growth of Iran's regional role, preventing the strengthening of the European Union and EU's access to cheap energy sources and finally containing China or even confronting it militarily - all of those priorities are relevant both for the interests of the neocons and for Russia's new geostrategy. Moreover through implementing its new geostrategy Moscow becomes the main partner for the neocons if not their tool.

It is very significant in this context that there is a clear sympathy among Russian political class towards US neoconservative politicians. Among the figures well portrayed are George Bush Sr., who is described as a politician seeking equal relations between the United States and post-Soviet Russia, George Bush Jr. – Vladimir Putin's "friend" – and others.

Very indicative in this regard is the complementarity with which Russian propaganda meets and publishes Stratfor's George Friedman, who also visited Moscow in December 2014, made a number of lectures and meetings with high-level Russian officials. No less significant was Russian authorities' intention to bring Sheldon Adelson as a consultant to create gambling zones in the Crimea after March 2014 (the project had to be dropped under the public pressure). Finally, worth mentioning is the leading role of Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland – a bright representative of the neocons – in the Ukraine crisis and also Russian authorities' willingness to interact with her to discuss the Ukraine crisis bilaterally (the "Nuland-Karasin" dialogue). These and other circumstances clearly indicate the degree of entwinement of Moscow's and US neocon's interests.

In this regard one should pay particular attention to the role of presidential hopefuls supported by this group for the upcoming US presidential elections. "The New Cold War" if it is successfully installed in the United States media, would be an optimal comprehensive context for strengthening the positions of the neoconservatives in the US politics.

The leading role of the American neoconservatives in shaping "the New Cold War" is complemented by active roles plaid by other relevant elite groups in different countries and regions. They are primarily Israel (Netanyahu government), Saudi Arabia ("hardliners" led by Muhammad bin Salman) and its allies Egypt and Pakistan, as well as the "hawks" in Iran (Ayatollah and conservative circles in IRGC). An important partner of the US neoconservatives are the anti-American elite groups in the People's Republic of China acting as an internal opposition to the current chairman Xi Jinping.

This international coalition which also includes Russia with its new geostrategy is based primarily on common interests. The multidimensional and multilateral confrontation which might be created by effective actions of this coalition creates numerous effects that are more responsive to the interests of each of this network's members than the effects produced by the peaceful development of international relations. Those effects include the following:

- Higher prices for oil and natural gas, a number of other raw materials;
- A dramatic expansion of global arms market, increasing defence expenses;
- Expansion of illegal trade and increase in the volume of relevant financial transactions;
- Empowerment and reducing the transparency and accountability of special security services, law enforcement agencies, defence agencies;
- Shaping an "external enemy" image that helps tighten political and economic regimes inside each of the participating countries.

An important aspect of this "new cold war" is that it is not supposed to be an all-out total war for mutual destruction of key players. For the national elites promoting this scenario the "new cold war" is a positive sum game. It creates an environment favoring the above indicated effects, as well as a context for non-public communication between the members of the network itself. Therefore, this type of evolution of international relations can be regarded as shaping of a new architecture of international security. It can be called "a multi-polar cold war."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Russia's new geostrategy and the emerging "multi-polar cold war" potentially affect all countries of the world in a variety of dimensions. However, despite the totality of this phenomenon in current situation it is important to identify the points critical for preserving the modern architecture of international security.

First of all, it is clear that this goal requires implementation of five strategic priorities:

1. Ensuring the continuity of foreign and domestic policies through the post-2016 US Presidential Administration. Promoting consolidation of relevant US elite groups on a platform alternative to neoconservatism and insuring their victory in the 2016 elections. Preventing the victory of a neoconservatives-controlled candidate.
2. Preserving the US-China strategic partnership, achieving de-escalation in the South China Sea. Looking for a way to reconcile US and Chinese initiatives for economic integration in the Asia-Pacific. Getting prepared for a joint US-China action to stabilize Central Asia.
3. Preserving the Euro-Atlantic unity, including NATO's and EU's unity. Adopting the Trans-Atlantic Trade Agreement and increasing the US and EU contribution to the global economic growth.
4. Preserving political stability and continuity in China. Cleansing the Party bodies from hard-liners promoting Beijing's aggressive stance in Central Asia and Asia-Pacific. Implementing the Silk Road Economic Belt project with due regard to all the involved states' interests and looking for ways to conflux it with the Eurasian Economic Union and other integration processes and organizations in Eurasia.
5. Building up the US-Iranian relations and their transition to the level of strategic partnership between the two countries. Avoiding a "big war" in the Middle East and supporting a growing but responsible Tehran's regional role on both its western and eastern borders. Creating the lasting balance of force in the Middle East and South and Central Asia.

Implementation of the indicated five priorities creates the space necessary for building up cooperation and promoting economic development and thus improving the situation in many regions of the world. But to achieve this it is important to make a number of steps allowing to prevent the onset of the "new cold war" during the following several months.

- 1) The US and EU support for the Ukraine should continue. The main purpose of such support should be consolidation of the central government in Kiev and improving the governance. Cleansing of law enforcement agencies from "professional revolutionaries" - persons nominated for leading positions during revolutionary events - as well as from representatives of the old Ukrainian bureaucracy linked to Russia, should continue and affect other public authorities, including the government. Radical nationalist organizations and "volunteer regiments" should gradually be dissolved. Economic support for the Ukraine in winter 2015/2016 will be of particular importance. At the same time the supply of lethal weapons to the Ukraine should be postponed for the sake of keeping the door for Russia' appeasement open.
- 2) European politicians must soberly assess the combination of factors such as growth of far-right sentiment and a further increase in migration flows to Europe from Africa

and the Middle East. It should be recognized that the present crisis is the result of adventurous policies of a number of European states in alliance with neo-conservative circles in the United States in 2010-2015. Europe should develop a strategy to face the "right turn" in politics as a necessary precondition for preserving the unity and stability of the EU. The control over financial flows incoming from Russia and the United States to support the right and ultra-left political organizations should be tightened.

3) The countries of the EU and especially Germany should have a sober assessment of the prospects for their cooperation with the Russian Federation. Moscow's proposal to "wage friendship against the United States" will inevitably result in Russia's more aggressive role in Europe and contribute to the "new Cold War". This scenario is fraught with disruption of the EU and NATO unity and the perspective of European nations dealing with an even more assertive Russia individually. This will result in European nations' either being destabilized or falling under even greater unilateral military-political US influence. EU leadership must be prepared that the debt, economic and migration problems of all countries of the Union (in particular - Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Portugal) as well as other sensitive points of disagreement might be used for undermining the unity of the EU and NATO.

4) The US and the EU should take into account the high probability of the military-political destabilization of the Republic of Belarus in the next three to six months and take measures to reduce the likelihood of this scenario. Russia is pushed towards destabilizing its western ally by a stalemate in the Ukraine where Moscow partially lost its influence on the Ukraine Security Service and the radical nationalist organizations and faces the threat of new sanctions. This coincides with the almost inevitable deterioration of situation in the Russian economy in autumn and winter of 2015 which will in turn require a new wave of war rhetoric-based mobilization of public opinion. Belarus' intentions to adhere to neutral and peace-making positions in the Ukraine crisis, to normalize relations with the EU and the USA, to become a reliable partner for China in the Silk Road Economic Belt project directly contradict the imperative of Russia's new geostrategy and push Moscow to repeating the "Ukraine scenario" in Belarus. The CSTO Collective Rapid Response Forces military drills "Interaction – 2015" that took place at the end of August 2015 point at Russia getting ready for bringing its troops into Belarus. This could be provoked by Russia-backed but seemingly "pro-Western" protests in Minsk which overthrow President Lukashenko and impel inferior Belarusian leadership to call for its Russia's military assistance to restore order. The pretext for such a step could be Minsk's decision to deny Russia positioning of its military base on Belarusian territory (the respective denial statement has already been made by Belarusian President on October 6). An important argument in favour of organizing a regime change in Belarus for the Russian leadership is a huge influence that Russia has on the special services, state apparatus, directors of state enterprises, media sphere and Belarusian economy. At the same time Belarusian leadership clearly outlined that there is no alternative to preserving country's sovereignty, which gives some grounds for optimism.

5) The Iranian leadership should fully assess the risks of deepening cooperation with the Russian Federation that is openly striving to building a strategic alliance with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Israel. In case of a military conflict in the Middle East Moscow, as in the case of Syria, will implement a complex multi-level policy aimed at supporting the conflict dynamics and preventing a decisive victory of one of the parties, specifically that of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran should also consider high probability of further

destabilization on its north-eastern and eastern borders (in Turkmenistan and Afghanistan) with a perspective of full-fledged expansion of Islamic state in the region as well as possible confrontation with Russia-backed nuclear Pakistan.

6) Iranian, Syrian and US leadership should take into account Moscow's ambiguous position in the framework of the Syrian crisis. Liquidation of the Islamic State is not a priority for the Russian government neither in the Middle East nor in Central Asia. Moscow's main "prize" for building up its own anti-terrorist coalition in the Middle East is increasing Russia's regional role, involving Iranian leadership in "the new cold war" and preventing normalization of US-Iranian relations. Besides Russia is aimed at participating in energy projects in the region on favourable terms.

7) The Chinese leadership and the leadership of Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan should consider the low priority attributed to fighting the Islamic State in the framework of Russia's new geostrategy especially in Central Asia. Destabilization of Central Asia within certain limits is an acceptable risk for the Russian Federation against the many benefits that Moscow from relevant moves including disruption of US-China partnership, distraction of Beijing's attention and resources from Central Asia to the Asia-Pacific region, as well as raising Russia's profile as a major energy supplier to China.

8) The Chinese and American leadership, together with partners from Iran and India, as well as other countries in the region should consider temporary special measures, aimed at military-political and economic stabilization and development in Central Asia. For China it would be advisable to become a de facto member of the anti-terrorist coalition created by the USA in Central Asia. The parties should also work out a procedure for their interaction in case of deepening destabilization in the region.

9) An important task for all concerned is to develop approaches and methodologies for analysis of international relations taking into account the deep changes in key stakeholders' policies outlined above. Developing an adequate approach to describing these changes and opening a broad discussion about the dynamics of international relations may have positive effects for preserving peace and stability.

One of the most important issues on international agenda is the question of Russia's future role in the modern system of international security. Is Russia an "aggressor state" in the strict sense of the word? Is there an internal opposition to Russia's new geostrategy? Is there any hope that Moscow might abandon under certain conditions this new geostrategy?

These are the questions that require a separate profound research. One point however is clear: Russia's complete international isolation would be a development both expensive, unwieldy and generally harmful. The door for Russia's return to constructive foreign and domestic policy should remain open. However, this "open door" policy should not be implemented to the detriment of taking decisive and, if necessary, tough measures necessary to prevent the transition of the world to the "multipolar cold war."

ABOUT CSFPS

Center for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies is a non-governmental non-partisan independent research organization.

Our aim is to promote wider opportunities for the Republic of Belarus through analyzing international affairs, implementing relevant programs and projects.

Center's mission is:

1. to promote better relations between Belarus and its neighbors as well as other states through articulating Belarus' national interests, aims and activities in international arena, participating in forging of international agenda involving Belarus and promoting a better understanding of international relations inside Belarus;
2. to be a sample of a non-partisan non-governmental think tank carrying out independent research and discussions in Belarus, contributing to the culture of strategic thinking and planning, popularizing think tanks phenomenon in Belarusian society and being a track-two diplomacy actor;
3. forging an experts community though providing a venue to discuss a wide range of social and political problems of global, regional and national scale.

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