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European Culture: Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces

Al. A. Gromyko[#] (ORCID: 0000-0003-4228-1552)

Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

e-mail: alexey@gromyko.ru

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Abstract—The main features of the transformation of European culture in the modern world are explored. Chronologically, this study is based on the idea of the general humanistic foundations of European culture since the 1980s. The author describes its state during the Cold War, and then analyzes the search for its new meanings, including the concept of the “new Middle Ages” and the theme of fear. Another dimension of the research is the role of the Age of Enlightenment in the history of European culture and its later development in the context of liberalism, consumerism, and individualism. Contemporary European culture is characterized as an overlap of premodern, modern, and postmodern. The problem of Westernization and standardization of culture is dwelt upon together with the shift to different currents of postmaterialism and neo-avant-garde art.

Keywords: European culture, humanism, risk society, pop art, modern, postmodern, postmaterialism, avant-garde art

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The fate of Europe and European culture is an extremely broad and at the same time specific topic. It is as much historiosophical as it is narrowly specialized, depending on what becomes the object of study: politics or economics, identity or values, fine arts or everyday culture, the spiritual or material sphere, literature or cinema, museums or theater, or the culture of memory or the culture of dialogue. Infinitely much has been written about various aspects of modern European culture, but quite little has been written about this phenomenon comprehensively, for example [European ..., 2013; Rubinskii, 2002; Rubinskii, 2013].

This article traces a number of leading trends in the transformation of European culture from the era of the Cold War and industrial society to the postbipolar era and the postmodern world using iconic examples. Particular attention is paid to the historical period starting from the 1980s. In the epistemological sense and from the point of view of theoretical approaches to the study of the multifaceted phenomenon of European culture, the author analyzes the ideas proposed in the works of P.Ya. Chaadaev, F.A. Stepun, N.A. Berdyaev, D.S. Likhachev, O. Spengler, A. Toynbee, Z. Freud, J. Ortega y Gasset, U. Eco, E. Husserl, F. Fukuyama, S. Huntington, J. Gray, and others. A great contribution to the study of this phenomenon was made by scientists from the Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sci-

ences: N.P. Shmelev, Yu.I. Rubinskii, E.V. Vodop'yanov, and others.

In recent decades, the Old World has undergone tremendous changes. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, in addition to Russia, 14 new independent states have appeared on the political map of Eurasia, six of which are within geographic Europe (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine). At the same time, integration processes have been gaining momentum to the west of the Russian borders. Over the past 40 years, the number of countries that are members of the European Union (until 1992, the European Economic Community) has increased from 9 to 28. However, centrifugal forces have not bypassed it, and in 2020 Britain left the EU. Discussions about Europe are inevitably accompanied by long-standing disputes about the boundaries of the Old World, whether geographical, civilizational, political, or value-oriented. In this case, the concept of Greater Europe refers to an extremely heterogeneous civilizational space located between three oceans—the Atlantic, the Arctic, and the Pacific [Europe..., 2019].

The adult European 30–40 years ago and such an individual now are people living in different realities. Nevertheless, not so much has changed in the history textbooks over the indicated time, especially if we take the history of Europe until the second half of the 20th century. School textbooks in countries from Lis-

[#] RAS Corresponding Member Alexei Anatol'evich Gromyko, Dr. Sci. (Polit.), is Director of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IERAS).

bon to Vladivostok are essentially products of the same framework cultural matrix, albeit perhaps the most diverse and controversial in the world. Culture is one facet of a “long history,” a history of structures that change extremely slowly. Human behavior and perception of the world have never kept up with the pace of technological development. Moreover, this applies to the identity of each nation and individual person, including the cultural environment in which we are placed from childhood and with which we are permeated. This environment is highly differentiated into “high” and “low” culture, elite and folk, sophisticated and consumerist, local and global.

EUROPEAN CULTURE IN THE COLD WAR ERA

The words of E. Husserl, stated in 1935, apply to the whole of Greater Europe: no matter how hostile European nations are to each other, they still have an inner kinship of spirit that permeates them all and overcomes national differences [Husserl, 1995, p. 302]. Europeans, heirs of the Greco–Roman and Christian civilizations both before and after 1945, were brought up on classical examples and works of the Renaissance and Enlightenment; literature, poetry, painting, and architecture of the New Age; the “golden” age for Russia of the 19th century and the “Silver Age.” Possibly, the 19th century became the peak of European culture, at least in its “high” component. Then European humanism was almost trampled underfoot by two world wars. The bipolar world has largely politicized European culture but not completely. Almost 70 years after Husserl, the Russian Europeanist Yu.I. Rubinskii stated: “No matter how deep the differences between Europeans, they are related by a common destiny, compatibility, and, moreover, the complementarity of their very rich cultural heritage” [Rubinskii, 2002, p. 60].

Industrial society has become a new “mold” for culture. With the phenomenon of “mass revolt” and accelerated urbanization in the first third of the 20th century, there was a massification of culture, its democratization, emancipation, secularization, and large-scale penetration of “high” culture into the masses. In the second half of the century, Westernization became one of the leading forms of such massification, increasingly slipping into Americanization and standardization, which gave rise to a variety of mass culture—pop culture. There has been a kind of bricolage,¹ a “rebound,” expressed in the “revenge” of culture when folk culture in its vulgar incarnation crushed “high” culture under itself. As a result, the circle has closed: “high” culture again, as it once was before the “uprising of the masses,” has become the lot of the

¹ From the French *bricolage*, a billiard term that means to send the ball to the board, so that, having rebounded from it, it hits the pocket.

creative minority, and the minority that stands mainly on national and not on cosmopolitan soil. This parallels the social emancipation of the early 20th century and various revolutions and social cataclysms in the 1980s–2000s.

Culture reflects the course of history and, in many ways, shapes it. Europe of the 1980s was still a postwar phenomenon, part of the world, not only divided by the bipolar era, but also shaped by the great Victory of 1945. However, economically and technologically, Europe was already deeply involved in the process of transition from industrial to postindustrial society and from modernity to postmodernity, including in the area of culture. It was in 1980 that E. Toffler, a classic of futurology, published *The Third Wave* about the postindustrial world [Toffler, 1980]. Nevertheless, the turn of the 1980s–1990s became a real watershed, when the world, after the end of the Cold War and the departure of the Soviet Union into history, began to turn into a global one in terms of trade, market relations, finance, politics, and, of course, culture.

Until the 2010s Europe lived in this global world—the apogee of the neoliberal model of globalization, which by now has largely sunk into oblivion. The history of the last few decades is full of sharp turns. The Western part of the world has parted with the illusions of unipolarity. There was a formation of polycentrism, including its cultural component, for example, such a phenomenon as Indian Bollywood. The global world experienced a shock at the beginning of the 21st century, when the international community was challenged by international terrorism, which destroyed the monuments of ancient and modern culture. Later, most of the planet fell into the “great recession,” and the pandemic that began in 2020 brought the world into a new state of frightening uncertainty.

What is typical of history is that dates and chronological frames are relative. The postindustrial world was formed in the 1970s. D. Bell wrote about this [Bell, 1973], but a decade earlier, a “cultural revolution” (or counterculture revolution) swept through Europe, in some way anticipating the coming changes. It was no less an offspring of the mass consciousness of late industrial society than it was a forerunner of the superliberal individualism that swept the world thereafter. Culture, being in its essence a derivative of the collective and traditional, was increasingly used to please the individual and the private.

Despite the split of the world in the bipolar era, the general humanistic framework of European culture was preserved. Thus, this is evidenced by the cinema art, which is so sensitive to politics: Soviet movies were awarded the American Academy Award four times in different categories; for the last time, in 1981, at the peak of a new round of the Cold War (*Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* by Vladimir Menshov in the nomination best film in a foreign language). After the resounding success of the Bolshoi Theater tour of

London in 1956, theater visits on both sides of the Iron Curtain became fairly commonplace in the following decades.

The Soviet secondary school curriculum, not to mention the faculties of art history, studied the works of Shakespeare and Goethe, as well as other classics of European literature and poetry. In the Soviet Union, the works of A. France and G. de Maupassant, C. Dickens and J. Swift, M. Cervantes and V. Scott, E. Zola and V. Hugo, J. Byron and A. Dumas, O. de Balzac and M. Proust, A. de Saint-Exupery and E.M. Remarque were translated into Russian in large circulations—the list is long. Plays by European playwrights were shown in theaters. According to the memoirs of representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia, they perceived themselves as representatives of European culture, and this was a common occurrence. In general, the interaction of European and Russian cultures has been a two-way process, especially since the time of Peter the Great. European classicism played a huge role in Russian classicism.²

In contrast to classical art, fate prepared something else for the Russian avant-garde, primarily abstractionism. The destruction of avant-garde artists by Nikita Khrushchev in the Moscow exhibition complex Manege in 1962, as well as the closing of an exhibition of nonconformist artists in Moscow in 1974 (“bulldozer exhibition”), went down in history. The Russian avant-garde was truly discovered abroad thanks to Sergei Diaghilev’s Russian Seasons in Paris at the beginning of the 20th century, and then in 1979, when a large-scale exhibition “Paris–Moscow” was held in France, at the Pompidou Center. A landmark series of exhibitions of Russian avant-garde art called “The Great Utopia” took place already at the beginning of the post-Soviet period, in 1992, in Frankfurt and Amsterdam, as well as in the United States.

Another example of the state of the cultural space is music, and not necessarily classical. In 1978, with the permission of the Soviet Ministry of Culture, the Boney M. group came to the Soviet Union, and the following year, Elton John gave concerts in Leningrad and Moscow. An even greater public outcry was caused by the performances in the Soviet Union of the rock group Scorpions in 1988. Shortly after that, they would release their new album, which included the iconic song *Wind of Change*. In post-perestroika Russia, tours by contemporary Western musicians would become regular, including Paul McCartney’s concert on Red Square in 2003.

The end of the Cold War at the turn of the 1980s–1990s somewhat smoothed out the contradictions within the Old World, including due to the deideologization of culture. One of the symbols of this was the return of the writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1994 to

the new Russia, 20 years after the expulsion of the writer from the Soviet Union. It is appropriate to recall that Solzhenitsyn, the 1970 Nobel laureate in literature, lived in Zurich for several years before moving to the United States and traveled around Western Europe. At first, in the West, the writer was praised for his anticommunist views, but then the opinion about him changed. Long-standing disputes in Russia between the Westerners, the Slavophiles, and the Pochvenniks intertwined in the figure of Solzhenitsyn. In the West, he found shelter, sharply condemned the Soviet system, but at the same time criticized American reality, and began to be perceived as a supporter of “religious–patriarchal romanticism.” Later, Solzhenitsyn talked about a renewed union of the three Slavic republics—Russia, Belarus, Ukraine—and Kazakhstan.³ Another iconic figure among those who were expelled from the USSR for anti-Soviet views was the philosopher Alexander Zinoviev. From 1978 to 1999 he lived in Munich. In many ways, following Solzhenitsyn, the trajectory of his views developed from Westernism to Slavophilism.

After the dismantling of the “Iron Curtain,” new cultural faults, already of a different level, could not be avoided over time. Europe, confirming the diagnosis of its eternal internal contradictions, became the site of new dividing lines, and Western Europeans engaged in new social and cultural engineering. The EEC, and then the European Union, created a narrative of a new Europe, the borders of which were equated with the borders of an integration project centered in Brussels. The civilizational boundaries of the Old World were historically mobile: they either narrowed or expanded, but in general, over time, they absorbed more and more new lands. However, never until the 1990s any attempt was made to designate the borders of Europe with the outer contour of a postmodern regional integration association instead of the civilizational, historical, political, social, and cultural space of the former European metropolises, in other words, at first speculatively sharply narrow the European space to the territory of the EU and then expand “Europe” on the basis of rules constructed and formally legalized in the EU. In Russia, however, the long-standing historiographical dispute resumed, in which Russia and the West were opposed.

It is true that culture has permeated humanity throughout its existence, as well as the fact that every century, every era has its own culture. In this, continuity did not conflict with diversity and renewal. No matter how one interprets the European culture of Modern and Contemporary times, no matter how one arranges it according to national regiments and epochs, it was generally accepted that it had a common

² From the author’s conversations with Yu.A. Borko, an outstanding Soviet and Russian Europeanist, professor, and chief researcher at the RAS Institute of Europe.

³ A. I. Solzhenitsyn, “How can we equip Russia?,” *Komsomol’skaya Pravda*, Sep. 9 (1990). http://www.solzhenitsyn.ru/proizvedeniya/publizistika/stati_i_rechi/v_izgnanii/kak_nam_obustroit_rossiyu.pdf?ysclid=l37jzb6mj7

denominator—the value of Christianity and humanism. Of course, European culture has more than once encountered its antipodes, including Nazism and fascism, which almost destroyed it. While claiming their own ethics and aesthetics, they were not manifestations of a “different culture”; it was an anticulture directed against humanity.

Various forms of massification of culture in the industrial and postindustrial eras did not always lead to its degradation. For example, the replication of the *Dove of Peace* by Pablo Picasso did not deprive this work of a humanistic charge. At the same time, there has always been a danger of emasculating the value of one image or another as a result of its repeated and inappropriate reproduction. So, countless T-shirts with the image of Mona Lisa or Ernesto Che Guevara, sold around the world, led to the vulgarization of these images rather than to the popularization of symbols of beauty and passionarity. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a kind of mutation of Soviet symbols: within the framework of Sots Art, its interpenetration with Western pop art took place. Lenin was found side by side with the inscription Coca-Cola; Stalin, with Marilyn Monroe; portraits of Lenin and Stalin were placed against the backdrop of the Marlboro cigarette brand; Gorbachev was depicted in the style of Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych*, and the sculptural composition *Worker and Collective Farm Woman* was crowned with the head of Mickey Mouse.

SEARCH FOR NEW MEANINGS

The modern era of universal and all-pervading information, standardization, and unification has called into question the possibility of mass education of a cultured person in a European way. The conditions for this were difficult: the originality of the 1980s in the history of the Old World was followed by a period of illusions and then disappointments—including those of epic proportions, like the Great Recession or a pandemic. Many load-bearing structures of modern European culture began to be comprehended precisely in the 1980s. It is no coincidence that the Frenchman J. Baudrillard published his famous work *Simulacres et simulation* [Baudrillard, 1981] in 1981. One of its theses has become a reference: “We live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning.”

Over the past decades, attempts have been made in the western part of the Old World to give European culture new meanings. One of them was the concept of the “new Middle Ages,” which was developed and popularized by U. Eco, including the work “The Middle Ages Have Already Begun” (1993) [Eco, 1994]. In it, he argued with an earlier dystopia by R. Vacca *The Near Medieval Future* [Vacca, 1971], in which the author predicted the retreat of the modern technolog-

ical era into a gloomy past.⁴ Eco himself was more optimistic and viewed modernity as a “continuous period of transition,” when, as in the Middle Ages, the task was not to preserve the past, but to bring the conflict between the old and the new under control and create an adaptation mechanism. These arguments of Eco are consonant with the work of other thinkers devoted to various aspects of risk. So, in 1986, the canonical book by W. Beck *Risk Society: Towards Another Modernity* [Beck, 1986] was published. E. Giddens studied the phenomenon of risk in his works on late modernity [Giddens 2000].

The past few decades have related the feelings of a European with medieval themes of fear, even with the expectations of the end of the world, at least the end of the world to which they are accustomed. Such feelings were bizarrely intertwined with periods of euphoria. However, a new spiritual upsurge always ended in a return of pessimism. In the 1980s Europe was afraid of a third world war between the Soviet Union and the United States because of the deployment of nuclear missiles on its territory and on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In 1986, the man-made disaster of Chernobyl broke out. The euphoria of the end of the Cold War was replaced by a cold shower of conflicts in the post-Soviet space, the Yugoslav wars, and the struggle to preserve the territorial integrity of Russia itself. Perestroika illusions were overshadowed by the dramas and tragedies of millions of people who found themselves on the wrong side of the borders after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

At the turn of the millennia, expectations of a happy “end of history” were replaced by gloomy forecasts of a “clash of civilizations.” Approximation in the chronology of the magic number “2000” was associated by some with the Last Judgment and by others with the “computer Apocalypse.” No sooner had the new millennium begun than the problem of international terrorism rose from Russia to a new level after 9/11. The project of the so-called world caliphate of ISIS⁵ was directed to the destruction of European culture and its physical extermination. In 2008–2009 Europe was rocked by the Great Recession, and in 2020, by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessing the current state of Europe, other intellectuals did not start from the Middle Ages but from another period in its history—the Enlightenment, which laid the foundation for the political philosophy and ideology of liberalism, culture, and then the cult of personality and freedom of the individual. J. S. Mill and I. Berlin, separated by a century, spoke about the problems that accumulated in this area. Promoting liberal ideas, each in his own way, they recognized the

⁴ Long before the European intellectuals of recent decades, for example, Nikolai Berdyaev wrote about the “new Middle Ages” in his work “The New Middle Ages” (1924). Berdyaev compared his time with the period of late antiquity.

⁵ This organization is banned in Russia.

need for collectivity in culture, belonging to one community. The problem of recent decades in the life of the Old World is largely connected with the emasculation of the principles of classical liberalism, with the vulgarization and absurdization of ideas about freedom, with the transformation of liberalism into a secular religion, and with the exhaustion of the universality of the Enlightenment project. J. Gray called this kind of thinking hyperliberalism, which produced cultural deconstruction and freed the individual from cultural identities [Grey, 2018; Grey, 1999; Gray, 1993; Bellamy, 1992].⁶

Manifestations of such hyperliberalism began to multiply, for example, the requirement introduced in several European countries to remove symbols of faith from public places and from the outer vestments of a person. Thus, from the point of view of conservative social thought, and even common sense, Europe deprived itself of cultural roots and cultural immunity and became vulnerable to the expansion of other cultures, including the fundamentalist part of Islamic culture. The system of values of the modern European has increasingly represented a deformed and unbalanced set of ideas, dominated not by liberalism in its classical form but by neoliberalism to the detriment of the conservative and collectivist traditions of social thought and consciousness [Gromyko, 2020].

Since the 1990s European culture and European identity has been tested by unprecedented migration processes. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, several tens of millions of former Soviet citizens ended up in new states in which they became a national minority. This especially affected more than 20 million Russians. At the same time, paradoxically, the new Russia, whose borders were pushed to the east, ethnically turned into a more European state than the Soviet Union, as the proportion of Russians, whose worldview was based on European culture, increased dramatically in the country (up to 80%).

In Western and Central Europe, an unprecedented migration crisis unfolded later. It peaked in 2015, when several million people from the Middle East and Africa arrived in the EU as a result of “uncontrolled migration.” Germany was at the center of these events. Disputes based on different ideas about state sovereignty and the relationship between the interests of “indigenous people” and “outsiders” became a bone of contention in relations between EU member states. The Mediterranean Sea, whose basin was the cradle of several ancient civilizations, including the Greco-Roman, became the grave for tens of thousands of refugees who dreamed of finding the promised land in Europe. Since then, large-scale migration problems have not stopped, inevitably exacerbating the issue of European self-consciousness, culture, and identity.

⁶ Grey J. “The problem of hyper-liberalism,” TLS, Mar. 30 (2018). <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/john-gray-hyper-liberalism-liberty/>. See also [Grey, 1999; Grey, 1993; Bellamy, 1992].

Criticism of the ideas of the Enlightenment, a by-product of which in the 20th century became Nietzsche’s superman and mass consumer society, sounded in many modern literary works, for example, in P. Süskind’s *Perfume* [Süskind, 1985]. The hero of his novel *Grenouille*, who killed himself, is a kind of superman in reverse. The theme of smell in this novel is, in fact, an instrument of mass consumption driven to hysteria. W. Golding’s book *Lord of the Flies*, which later became a cult classic, appeared in 1954, but the writer received the Nobel Prize for his work in the critical 1980s [Golding, 1954]. Many years later, in 2009, *The Times* would list this work as one of the best 60 books of the previous 60 years.⁷ Its meaning lies not in the praise of Man—this is not a book about Prometheus or Icarus—but about the fall of man.

The category of empire has become another direction in understanding the modern culture and identity of Europe. Literature appeared devoted to the European Union as an empire, including elements of culture and identity, for example [Zielonka, 2006; Tevdoi-Bulmulu, 2019]. Here it is appropriate to mention the phenomenon of “enlargement fatigue” in the European Union. It outlined the limits of the EU as an empire ennobled and “neomedieval.”

“BREAD AND CIRCUSES!”

Modern European culture appears as an interweaving and stratification of the old and the new: premodern, modern, and postmodern. From the depths of history, the attitude “Bread and Circuses!” was transferred to Europe of the Newest Time, which took on an exaggerated mass-consumer character. One of its personifications was malls—huge shopping and entertainment centers that brought the cultural industry to the absolute, to the merging of mass culture with the entertainment industry, including cinema, mostly American. The share of Hollywood movies on the screens of Western Europe increased in 1975–1995 from 41 to 75% (by ticket sales). It was a one-way street: even Britain’s share of audio-music exports to the United States in 1986–2001 decreased from 30 to 1% [*European...*, 2013, p. 262]. The European film industry was caught between the Hollywood model and the “art house.”

The thinkers of the Frankfurt School (T. Adorno, M. Horkheimer, H. Marcuse, and others) argued about the pitfalls of massification and standardization of culture back in the distant 1920s. The great folk culture, which hundreds of years ago gave rise to a comical, amusing, and carnival culture in Europe, has almost degenerated in the era of postmodernity and “numbers.” After the collapse of the socialist camp, the cultural industry swept over the post-Soviet space. Throughout Europe, theater has given way to the

⁷ “The best 60 books of the past 60 years,” Sunday Times, Aug. 3 (2009).

onslaught of cinema and other forms of visual entertainment. Cosmopolitanism led to massification in architecture as well. N. Foster's buildings turned into a symbol of prestige, but had nothing to do with national identity.

In recent decades, the religious component of culture and self-consciousness in Europe has increasingly moved to second and third roles, except for Russia and a number of other countries. However, the belief in the other world, characteristic of religious thinking, was somewhat replaced by other phenomena, for example, the virtual reality of computer games, and the feeling of a believer's involvement in one flock was replaced by a feeling of the interconnection of social network users, where you can, as in confession, pour out your soul without seeing and without even knowing the interlocutor. Christian humanism, with the fading of the religiosity of European society, gave way to humanism "universal"; there was a unification of values in the spirit of the "end of history," which is somewhat akin to the expectations of the end of the world characteristic of religious thinking. As people used to go to church en masse, then they also sat en masse in front of television pop art, which is another powerful tool for moral and aesthetic degradation.

This problem has long been pointed out by those who played the role of guardians of "high" European culture. Among them is K. Popper, who in 1994 gave a detailed interview to *Reset* magazine. He talks about the devastating impact of the "blue screen" on children and adolescents [Popper, 2007]. One of the embodiments of the negative side of the Americanization of European culture was the MTV channel (youth music and reality shows), created in 1981. In other countries, numerous offspring from its have appeared, for example, MTV-Russia, which opened in 1998. They were distinguished by the dominance of base products, about which Popper warned.

In the late-perestroika Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, a wave of occultism, mysticism, and magic swept over the television screen and concert halls. Millions of educated people fell under the influence of "healers" and "psychics," such as A. Kashpirovskii and A. Chumak. Pseudoscience flourished. It turned out to be a clear illustration of the theory of cultural development by J. Frazer, the author of the famous work *The Golden Bough*, who built his research according to the formula "magic—religion—science" [Frazer, 1894]. The postmodern wave of massification of culture in the form of pop culture has become a relapse, a rollback of culture in its development. There was a movement back from science to religion and then to magic. It should be noted that in moments of social crises, irrational value systems, including religious ones, more than once have played the role of a social "airbag." However, if a society "gets stuck" in this rollback, then there is a danger of falling into the archaic. Therefore, it is quite understandable that

modern European culture pays so much attention to the concepts of archaization and barbarization, including the vulgarization of the Russian language, and "political barbarism" (international terrorism), and "ecological barbarism," etc.

Classics of postmodern European culture turned to these and similar motifs. The meaning of J. Barnes's novel *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* [Barnes, 1989] was the story of a man's journey to paradise, which turned out to be a consumerist and unbearable place. The English writer turned out to be more perspicacious than F. Fukuyama, who in the same year published the essay "The End of History?," which marked the beginning of a well-known discourse [Fukuyama, 1989]. In 1988, i.e., five years before the publication of S. Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations?" [Huntington 1993], *Satanic Verses* by S. Rushdie was published—a work built on the image of the conflict of cultures and civilizations [Salman, 1988].

The year 1989 in the history of Europe is forever associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall as a symbol of the division of the world in the bipolar era. This and the accompanying events sparked an upsurge of speculation about what would come "after." For example, in Germany, the phenomenon of "postwar literature" arose, one of the personifications of which was the novel by G. Grass *The Wide Field* (in Russia, the novel is better known under the name *Long Conversation*, proposed by the translator B.N. Khlebnikov) [Grass, 1995]. The end of the Cold War led to a clash in the European culture of passionarity and idealism with everyday life, prosaic reality, and the imperfection of human nature. The successive cycles of expectations and disappointments in recent decades are obvious. Examples are the late Soviet Union and the new Russia of the 1990s, Germany after unification and still divided German society thirty years later, perestroika illusions in the spirit of "Europe is our common home" and the resumption of confrontation between Russia and the West, the idealism of the "Arab Spring" and the tragedies of entire peoples of North Africa and the Middle East that replaced it, and anticipation of the "European dream" of the leading role of the European Union in the 21st century and the subsequent series of dangerous crises.

At the same time, the improvement of technology has continued, and technological progress has left less and less time for realizing reality. As a result, the theme of confrontation between man and machine has regained popularity. In the cinema, it is vividly embodied in blockbusters about merciless terminator robots. COVID-19 also brought with it a new kind of Luddism—the "rebellion of people against machines": in 2020 in Europe, due to fear of a pandemic, modern Luddites destroyed 5G mobile network towers. This is also reflected in the shift from the culture of consumption to postmaterialism taking place in the European mass consciousness, as evi-

denced by the ideology of European environmentalists and the “greens.”

A very crucial topic is the culture of memory. It is almost inevitable that with the passage of time, new generations increasingly regard the events of the receding past as something abstract. The oblivion of wars, on the one hand, served to reconcile the once warring states, as happened with France and Germany; on the other hand, it deprived people of “immunity” against the revival of militaristic sentiments. Such militarization is well traced in the history of the EU in recent years and decades. Russia, perhaps, today is the only country in Europe in which, on a systematic basis, work continues to preserve the memory of the Second World War (the Great Patriotic War) as a “living history.”

It cannot be said that modern European art does not pay attention to antiwar themes. However, often this is outrageous, grotesque, and conscious provocation aimed at emotional shake-up, the purpose of which is not so much a reminder of the fragility of the world as drawing attention to the newfangled representatives of art. One example is the exhibition “Jake and Dinos Chapman: ‘The End of Fun’” in St. Petersburg, which took place in 2012 in the Hermitage. The composition of the installations of many figurines, a kind of bestiary in which the Nazis kill each other, was designed by the authors to depict hell on earth. The Chapmans’ creative work is based on allusions referring to the series of engravings by F. Goya “Caprichos” and “Disasters of War,” as well as to the work of I. Bosch. At the same time, the scandalous presentation of such exhibitions leads, as a rule, to hypertrophy of form at the expense of content and meaning.

Europe and European culture over the past few decades have been deeply immersed in the reality of postmodernism; its new offshoots have emerged—postpostmodernism, transhumanism, and posthumanism. The humanistic foundations of the European civilization of Modern and Contemporary times, rooted in antiquity and Christianity, today coexist with modern mass culture and “digital” society with all their light and dark sides. The cultural resistance to stress of European peoples largely depends on the national literary, theatrical, and cinematographic schools. The leading national museums remain the bastion of high art, of which Russia can be proud. In our country, there has been a rapid increase in the attendance of museums and theaters in recent years. Thus, in 2018, 140 million visitors to art exhibitions were registered, and the audience of theaters amounted to 40 million spectators.⁸

⁸ “Attendance at Russian theaters in 2018 broke Soviet records,” Interfax Jan. 16 (2019). <https://www.interfax-russia.ru/kaleidoscope/poseshchaemost-rossiyskih-teatrov-v-2018-godu-pobila-sovetskie-rekordy>

In the cultural space, an active creative search continued, often far from unambiguous. There was a boom in private theaters in Russia: in Moscow and St. Petersburg, there were about 60 of them by the end of the 2010s. The same applies to private museums of contemporary art, among which the Garage Museum in Moscow’s Gorky Park has become one of the most famous. The V-A-C Contemporary Art Foundation has created a multiformat contemporary art space (art center) in the building of the former HPP-2 opposite the Kremlin. Since 2005, the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art has been held, within the framework of which much attention was paid to Sots Art as the most famous postmodern direction of Soviet art abroad in the 1970s–1980s. Russia has not bypassed Manifesta, a pan-European biennale that was first held in 1996 in Rotterdam. In 2014, St. Petersburg became the first Russian city to host Manifesta 10.

The topic of a common cultural space, based on European humanism, was constantly raised. The exhibition “Facing the Future: Art of Europe 1945–1968,” which was held in 2017 at the Moscow Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, became a unique project. The foreign partners of the project were the BOZAR Fine Arts Center (Brussels) and the ZKM Arts and Media Center (Karlsruhe). The project focused on the post-war art and culture of 18 countries of Western and Eastern Europe (neo-avant-garde art), dedicated to the themes of antiwar and youth rebellion, the horrors of violence, and new searches in the realm of realism and idealism. The pandemic in 2020–2021 hit hard on exhibition and museum projects. The large-scale exhibition “Diversity, Unity, Modern Art of Europe: Moscow, Berlin, Paris” after a long forced pause, nevertheless opened at the Tret’yakov Gallery in November 2021.

Whether the European cultural space will continue to experience fragmentation, politicization, and, to a large extent, degradation is an open question. Can classical culture continue to serve as its “cementing mortar”? Is it possible to harmonize national traditions with a “digital” world full of conflicts? It seems that the colossal cultural heritage of Europe still has a margin of safety to withstand bad taste, primitivization, clip thinking, and deconstruction of high and popular culture.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest.

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US–Indian Relations: Formation of an Alliance or a Temporary Partnership?

A. A. Davydov^{a,*} and A. V. Kupriyanov^{a,**,#}

^a*Primakov National Research Institute of the World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia*

**e-mail: adavydov@imemo.ru*

***e-mail: a.kupriyanov@imemo.ru*

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Abstract—This article analyzes bilateral relations between India and the United States in the context of a new round of confrontational bipolarity between Washington and Beijing. The analysis of the historical dynamics of relations between the United States and India demonstrate that the US policy towards New Delhi has always been of an opportunistic nature and depended primarily on the events in southern Asia and the Indian Ocean, and on the dynamics of US relations with key Asian powers—the Soviet Union and China. India has never had an independent value for the United States. The existence of common values has always been used by both parties only to justify the next rapprochement between them and has always been determined by purely pragmatic considerations. At the same time, maintaining close relations with the United States is a strategic necessity for India, since the development of the Indian economy and the ability of New Delhi to balance between great powers depend on them. The authors come to the conclusion that today the imperatives of Washington and New Delhi have not changed significantly; therefore, there is no need to talk about a deep transformation of American–Indian relations.

Keywords: India, United States, Joseph Biden, Donald Trump, Barack Obama, US foreign policy, US spatial policy, political space, Indian foreign policy

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the third decade of the 21st century can be characterized as the period of the greatest intensification of international competition since the end of the Cold War. The strategic line of the largest states and international political associations towards strengthening political independence, observed in recent decades, is increasingly contributing to the diversification of their international relations. In parallel with this process, a reverse trend has recently been observed: throughout the 2010s, as US–Chinese tensions escalate, various states are seeking to fit into the logic of a new confrontational bipolarity in order to secure themselves and, with luck, benefit from the clash of giants.

One of the most striking examples of the intersection of these two processes was the accelerated

strengthening of relations between the United States and India in the second half of the 2010s. Today's mutual rhetoric, their foreign policy goal-setting, and bilateral ties are in stark contrast to the situation that existed twenty years ago, when relations could have been characterized as neutral–friendly at best.

The growth of the mutual strategic importance of these countries in the current conditions of the transforming structure of international relations raises a number of important research questions. First of all, they relate to the assessment of the qualitative state of bilateral relations between the United States and India. Are there any prerequisites for the long-term consolidation of these relations as allied ones, or are the dynamics observed today in the long term a market fluctuation under the influence of the international situation in the Asia–Pacific region? Does the structure of the bilateral relations being built allow them to be characterized as asymmetric, or are countries so far apart that they determine the line of strategic behavior completely independently, while maintaining equal subjectivity in international affairs?

US–Indian relations have traditionally been the focus of attention of both domestic and foreign researchers. Soviet and Russian Americanists studied

Alexey Andreevich Davydov, Cand. Sci. (Polit.) is a Researcher at the Center for North American Studies, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences. Alexey Vladimirovich Kupriyanov, Cand. Sci. (Hist.) is Head of the Group on South Asia and Indian Ocean of the Center for Asia Pacific Studies, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences.

them in the context of US foreign policy in southern Asia, regional conflicts, and the struggle against national liberation movements. Among such studies, one can separately note the class papers of V.A. Kremenyuk (1979; 1985), studies by N.S. Beglova (1984), A.D. Portnyagin (1977, pp. 189–203), and V.I. Batyuk (2021). This topic has also been studied by domestic Indologists: among the key fundamental papers, one can single out the monograph and numerous articles by S.I. Lunev (1987, 2018, 2020), as well as the classic general work and articles by F.N. Yurlov (2010, 2013). Individual aspects of the interaction between India and the United States were studied by N.B. Lebedeva (2019), A.I. Zakharov (2016), and E.P. Shavlai (2020).

Great attention is paid to the topic of bilateral relations by English-speaking, primarily Indian, researchers, many of whom work closely with American universities and think tanks. Relatively recent papers include monographs by R. Chaudhuri (1947), A. Bhardwaj (2018), N. Acharya (2016), a collective paper edited by S. Ganguly, E. Scobell, and B. Shoup (2006), as well as the paper by H. Pant and Y. Joshi (2015).

THE UNITED STATES FOR INDIA, INDIA FOR THE UNITED STATES

The formation of US–Indian relations took place mainly under the influence of external factors and in relatively difficult circumstances. Back in the late 1930s, before India gained independence, the subject of the suffering of the Indian people under British rule was a concern in American intellectual circles, primarily due to historically widespread anti-British sentiment among them. Back in 1941, US President F.D. Roosevelt raised the question of the need for decolonization, which met Washington’s strategic interests in strengthening its economic position in new markets, before the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, W. Churchill. Britain invariably rejected any attempts to influence the British position on India under the pretext that the Indian question was an internal affair of the empire, although the president repeatedly returned to this problem (Dulles and Ridinger, 2015; Rubin, 2011). For ordinary Americans, however, a direct acquaintance with Indian realities occurred during the Second World War, in which India became the base for operations of the American air and ground forces that acted against Japan in the Chinese and Burmese theaters of military operations (Raghavan, 2018). Accordingly, beyond the sympathies of the political class (initially determined by external reasons) and the interests of business, as well as the historically brief direct contact of citizens during the war, the United States had no other significant internal imperatives for developing relations with India.

India turned out to be a rather difficult partner in foreign policy as well. Its first steps in the foreign policy field demonstrated to Washington that India, although it supports the very idea of decolonization, is not going to change one master for another. Indian elites, who were in awe of their newly gained independence, were initially wary of communist expansion in southern Asia, trying to balance between the United Kingdom and the United States. Subsequently, the government of J. Nehru increasingly shifted towards neutrality, seeing India as the leader of a bloc of Asian and African post-colonial states (Singh, 1976, p. 46).

In Washington, the strategy for southern Asia was initially developed based on the need to contain the growth of the influence of communist forces supported by the Soviet Union, and subsequently by China.¹ The bloc approach in foreign policy determined the State Department’s misunderstanding of the entire complexity of the situation that was developing in South and Southeast Asia, and led to unsuccessful steps: for example, in December 1947, the United States tried to put pressure on New Delhi, forcing Nehru to “immediately join the democratic camp,” which caused resentment among the Indian political elites (McMahon, 1994, p. 40). The visit of Prime Minister J. Nehru to the United States in 1949 helped resolve a number of misunderstandings, but did not lead to a breakthrough in relations and was characterized by both sides as a failure.

Over the ensuing decades, US–Indian relations developed in an uneven sine wave, where occasional ups were followed by deep downs. American politicians interested in strengthening the Western camp in the Cold War often perceived the Indian strategy as hypocritical and duplicitous. Thus, New Delhi was one of the first to recognize the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and in the Korean War of 1950–1953, India supported UN forces by sending a mobile hospital to Korea. The White House tried to strengthen its influence on Indian politics by sending cash and food aid. Between 1954 and 1971, Washington allocated \$57 billion to New Delhi, of which \$25 billion accounted for food aid (data in 2019 prices of the US Agency for International Development²). Thus, the United States not only contributed to solving the problem of hunger and poverty in India, but also provided support to its farmers.

At the same time, the United States actively strengthened cooperation with India’s key regional adversary, Pakistan, where elites were more sympathetic to Washington’s bloc policy. Islamabad joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in

¹ Democratic Party Platform 1952, The American Presidency Project. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1952-democratic-party-platform>. Cited August 6, 2021.

² USAID, The complete Foreign Aid Explorer dataset, USAID. https://explorer.usaid.gov/prepared/us_foreign_aid_complete.csv.

1954, and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1955, which contributed to the buildup of American military assistance to Pakistan. For the period of 1954–1971, Pakistan received \$5 billion worth of military aid and \$1.6 billion worth of weapons, which exceeded the corresponding deliveries to India by five and three times respectively (AID data in 2019 prices, SIPRI data in current prices³). Despite assurances from Washington that it would not allow these weapons to be used against India, such a disproportion aroused concern in New Delhi.

A sharp thaw in relations between the United States and India occurred in the last years of D. Eisenhower's rule and under J. Kennedy. They saw India as a strategic partner and key player in South Asia to deter the expansion of communist China. After the outbreak of the Indo–Chinese war in 1962, the United States provided India with significant assistance in weapons, ammunition, and military equipment, and after the defeat of India, helped restore the combat effectiveness of the Indian army. The issue of possible US intervention in the event of a new Sino–Indian conflict was seriously discussed, up to the use of nuclear weapons to protect India.⁴

By supporting India, Washington pursued its own goals and reluctantly made reciprocal concessions. By inciting India to move away from the principle of neutrality in order to turn it into an anti-Chinese foothold, the United States simultaneously tried to maintain good relations with both India and Pakistan, but gradually increased pressure on New Delhi, trying to induce it to make concessions on the Kashmir issue. Such a policy turned out to be erroneous and only led to an aggravation of bilateral contradictions, resulting in a new Indo–Pakistani war, which was only stopped by the joint efforts of the United States and the Soviet Union.⁵

The failure of the “carrot and stick” policy, the uncertain outcome of the war, and the aggravation of the situation in Vietnam significantly weakened the US position in the subcontinent and forced a qualitative review of its strategy in Asia and approaches to India. As Soviet–Indian cooperation strengthened, L. Johnson and R. Nixon, who replaced him, began rapprochement with the PRC in opposition to the Soviet Union and gradually moved away from supporting India, relying on Pakistan, an ally of China. This trend was clearly manifested during the third Indo–Pakistani war in 1971, when the United States

accused India of aggression and sent the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* to the Bay of Bengal.

The crushing defeat of Pakistan in the war and the general reorientation towards strengthening ties with China contributed to a decline of the interest of the American elites in South Asia. The catastrophic outcome of the Vietnam campaign, Pakistan's withdrawal from CENTO, and the revolutions in Iran and Afghanistan pushed South Asia to the periphery of the Cold War in the minds of American strategists. Despite the fact that the consistent position of New Delhi as the leader of the nonaligned movement was objectively more beneficial to the Soviet Union, the United States no longer tried to win India over to its side, confining itself to the gradual development of trade and economic ties. The prevailing set of circumstances, in fact, brought New Delhi out of the logic of bipolar confrontation.

The end of the Cold War seemed to create fertile ground for a qualitative change in the nature of US–Indian relations. However, the US strategic line towards India remained the same. The Clinton administration tried to force India to carry out structural reforms, demanded economic liberalization, repeatedly criticized New Delhi for violating human rights, and questioned the legitimacy of the actions of the Indian authorities in Kashmir (Zakharov, 2016). An additional problem in bilateral relations was the development of the Indian nuclear program, because of which the White House imposed sanctions on India in 1998 (Tellis, 2006).

A breakthrough in relations was achieved only after the United States, faced with a new threat, reconsidered its priorities in the Indian direction. The military campaign in Afghanistan that followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, significantly updated for Washington the importance of India's geostrategic position and its experience in fighting Islamist separatists. In 2004, a “strategic partnership” between New Delhi and Washington was announced, which was based on common values and interests.⁶ An additional and very significant catalyst for the further strengthening of the US–Indian partnership was the growth of tension in relations between Washington and Beijing after the attempts of the Obama administration to increase cooperation with China within the framework of the so-called G2 failed.⁷ It is significant that the United States chose the Indian concept of the Indo–Pacific region, formulated back in 2007, as the conceptual geopolitical basis for the formation of a system to deter China.

³ SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Importer/exporter TIV tables, SIPRI. <http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/values.php>; USAID: *Ibid.*

⁴ JFK, aides considered nuclear arms in China–India clash, *Taipei Times*. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/world/archives/2005/08/27/2003269368>.

⁵ A. Braterskii, How the USSR reconciled India and Pakistan, *Gazeta.ru*, January 10, 2016. https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2015/12/29_a_8002691.shtml.

⁶ United States–India Joint Statement on Next Steps in Strategic Partnership, The U.S. Department of State. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/36290.htm>.

⁷ The United States and China: A G-2 in the Making?, Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-united-states-and-china-a-g-2-in-the-making/>.

Thus, the mutual strategic importance of the United States and India was determined primarily by the transformation of the global strategy of the United States. Washington's policy towards New Delhi has always been opportunistic in nature and depended primarily on developments in neighboring countries and the region, as well as on US relations with the Soviet Union and China. When relations between Washington and Beijing improved, the need for India as a counterbalance to Chinese influence disappeared, and American political elites lost interest in it. The factor of common democratic values was used only to justify another attempt at Indian–American rapprochement. India, for its part, throughout the history of bilateral relations, proceeded from the fact that it needs US assistance to ensure security in the face of the Chinese threat, as well as to develop its economy. At the same time, the preservation of strategic autonomy remains an unconditional priority for New Delhi, and India does not perceive the Chinese threat as existential due to centuries of being in the same neighborhood.

MODERN STRATEGY AND BILATERAL RELATIONS

The arrival of the D. Trump administration to the White House marked the consolidation of the conceptual vision of the US policy towards India that had been formed under B. Obama. The American Indo-Pacific strategy announced in November 2017 implied a qualitatively different positioning of India as a key US ally in South Asia and the Asia–Pacific Region.

From a strategic point of view, India has taken a central place in the implementation of the US Indo-Pacific strategy in the Asia–Pacific Region and South Asia. The Trump administration justified the need for this strategy at a conceptual level to strengthen the principles of freedom and openness in regional relations in order to counteract the aspirations of the revisionist countries, primarily China. Most likely, this line will be pursued further, given the existence of a cross-party consensus on this issue in Congress.

At the macro level of the Asia–Pacific Region and Southeast Asia, the United States, without hiding the anti-Chinese orientation of its actions, is trying to build new or strengthen existing multilateral formats of cooperation between the countries of the region, emphasizing the central importance of India in them. At the moment, the political interests of the United States and India in the field of security largely coincide. Both countries are interested in containing Beijing, weakening its foreign policy positions, and disrupting the Belt and Road project. Thus, a significant step was the resuscitation in 2017 and the rise to the ministerial level in 2019 of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) between the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, which addresses the issues of naval security, cybersecurity, working against terror-

ism, and infrastructural interconnectedness (Mishin, 2020). The United States points to the open nature of the dialogue and the prospect of its expansion. In addition, following the logic of supporting multilateral formats, Washington emphasizes the role of ASEAN as a key forum for the development of regional economic relations and actively supports the admission of India to APEC.⁸

Joint exercises of the United States and India, as well as their potential allies, have intensified. Thus, in 2020, New Delhi invited Australia to participate in the Malabar trilateral naval exercises, which India had not done before in order to avoid accusations of anti-Chinese maneuvers.⁹

Meanwhile, in the long run, the views of Washington and New Delhi diverge significantly. If the United States is interested in maintaining world hegemony, or at least forming an alliance powerful enough to prevent Beijing from dominating, then India's goal is to achieve recognition from China as a great power and to create a separate center of power and a zone of influence around it, which should include all of South Asia (except Pakistan) and the Indian Ocean (Brewster, 2014, pp. 35–37). Many representatives of Indian political and expert circles are pro-American, arguing that there is no alternative to further rapprochement with the United States. However, the ruling alliance, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, advocates a multi-alignment strategy in which India would develop ties with all major players and their alliances while maintaining strategic autonomy (Jaishankar 2020).

At the level of the South Asian region, the United States is using India as a springboard to put pressure on China. Thus, with the accession of D. Trump to the White House, the United States intensified the practice of supporting Tibetan separatism that had been started under George W. Bush, Jr., seeking to attract India and Nepal to it. Since 2018, Washington has been allocating at least \$8 million annually to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. NGOs in India and Nepal receive upwards of \$6 million each year for programs for the preservation of the Tibetan cultural heritage, educational projects, and the education of a new galaxy of Tibetan leaders. Furthermore, the United States provides over \$3 million annually to strengthen the work of Tibetan state institutions¹⁰.

⁸ Deputy Secretary Biegun Remarks at the U.S.–India Strategic Partnership Forum, The Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/deputy-secretary-biegun-remarks-at-the-u-s-india-strategic-partnership-forum/>.

⁹ India is set to invite Australia to join controversial naval exercise with the US and Japan to counter China's aggression in the region after deadly border clash and COVID-19 origin row, Daily Mail. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8543727/India-calls-Australia-help-contain-threat-China-Malabar-naval-exercises.html>.

¹⁰ Appropriations Status Table, The Congressional Research Service. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/AppropriationsStatusTable/Index/AppropriationsStatusTable?id=2021>.

With the next round of aggravation of the Indo-Pakistani conflict in 2016, the United States chose not to intervene in the situation, fearing that India's unilateral support would significantly damage relations with Pakistan, which could seriously aggravate the situation in Afghanistan. In connection with this fear, the Trump administration decided not to impose sanctions against Pakistan and not to designate it as a state sponsor of terrorism and not to deprive it of its status as a Major non-NATO ally (all these measures were seriously considered at the beginning of Trump's presidency).¹¹ After the repeal in August 2019 of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which guaranteed autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Washington refrained from assessing this move, instead offering the services of an intermediary in negotiations between New Delhi and Islamabad.¹²

At the same time, the US made certain concessions to India so as not to spoil relations with a key partner in the framework of the Indo-Pacific strategy. Washington de facto recognized the change in the status quo in Kashmir and did not impose (at least for now) sanctions against India for the purchase of Russian weapons (primarily the S-400) and for maintaining a minimum share of oil imports from Iran (in 2018, India imported \$13.3 billion worth of oil from Iran, which accounted for 7.9% of all Indian oil imports, and in 2019 the volume decreased by 78.2% to 2.9 billion dollars, or to 1.9% of oil imports).¹³ Instead of putting pressure on New Delhi, Washington is seeking to offer an alternative whenever possible, for example, India, the United States, and Israel began to build trilateral cooperation between companies from Silicon Valley, Tel Aviv, and Bangalore to develop their own 5G technologies with the potential to involve other US allies in this cooperation.¹⁴

At the bilateral level, the United States is taking steps to develop a strategic military partnership with India. Qualitative shifts have taken place within the framework of the US–Indian Defense Technology Trade Initiative, launched in 2012.¹⁵ During the presi-

dency of D. Trump, the United States entered into agreements with India to simplify the creation of joint production chains in the field of the military-industrial complex and to exchange information in the field of security, which should increase the compatibility of various types of weapons of the United States and India. An agreement on the exchange of satellite and topographic data for long-range navigation is under development.

The United States has moved India into the category of states with the most simplified export control regime for security-sensitive goods, services, and technologies (it includes 37 countries). This regime applies to 26 of the 30 NATO countries (except for the United States itself, Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia), five of the 18 main allies outside NATO and six countries that do not formally have allied relations with the United States (Austria, Finland, India, Ireland, Sweden, and Switzerland).¹⁶

The United States is increasing arms exports to India: the US now accounts for 0.64 of 2.9 billion dollars, or 21.6% of India's total arms imports. According to this indicator, the United States reached the third place after Russia (1.1 billion dollars or 39.5%) and Israel (0.7 billion dollars or 24.7%). It is important to note that Russia's presence in the Indian arms market has noticeably declined over the past six years, both in absolute terms (from 3.8 billion dollars in 2013) and in share.¹⁷

Washington is also purposefully developing trade and economic cooperation with New Delhi. Although the proposal made by D. Trump in 2018 to create a free trade zone with India was never implemented, the United States greatly increased its direct investment in India, reaching reached \$43.6 billion, \$13.8 billion dollars of which was invested in 2020.¹⁸ Total trade turnover increased from \$59.5 billion in 2009 to \$146.1 billion in 2019, thus, trade is carried out with a growing deficit in favor of India (from \$8.3 billion to \$28.8 billion).¹⁹ This trend eventually forced the Trump administration to take tough measures: it abolished the preferential trade regime with India, accusing it of promoting protectionism and abusing the status of a country with a developing economy. Nevertheless, the measures that the United States applied

¹¹Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia, The U.S. Department of State. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-strategy-afghanistan-south-asia/>.

¹²Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference, The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-press-conference-4>.

¹³List of supplying markets for a product imported by India, Trademap. https://www.trademap.org/tradestat/Country_SelProductCountry_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c699%7c%7c%7c%7c27%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c2%7c1%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1.

¹⁴From T3, the India–US–Israel tech alliance can become T11, Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/from-t3-the-india-us-israel-tech-alliance-can-become-t11-73161/>.

¹⁵U.S. and India Deepen Bilateral Defense Trade, Sign Two Defense Technology and Trade Initiative Agreements, The U.S. Department of Defense. <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2044183/us-and-india-deepen-bilateral-defense-trade-sign-two-defense-technology-and-tra/>.

¹⁶BIS License Exception Statistics, The U.S. Department of Commerce. <https://bis.doc.gov/index.php/documents/technology-evaluation/ote-data-portal/2173-sta-use-july-2011-december-2016/file>.

¹⁷SIPRI: Ibid.

¹⁸Quarterly Fact Sheet on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from April 2000 to March 2021, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. https://dpiit.gov.in/sites/default/files/FDI_Factsheet_March,21.pdf.

¹⁹India, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/south-central-asia/india>.

against India turned out to be much softer than those applied to China.²⁰

For India, bilateral trade and economic relations are much more important than for the United States. The United States is one of India's largest trading partners along with China: they account for 11.8% of all Indian foreign trade, while India's share is only 2.1% of the US foreign trade (10th place). Similarly, with investments: if India accounts for only 2% of FDI in the United States (\$5 billion out of \$246 billion²¹), then the United States is 8% of FDI in India, and if one considers American allies, then their total share exceeds 30%. Thus, for India, trade with the United States and the influx of American investment play a critical role, and breaking these ties will entail serious economic difficulties, but for the United States, India is a relatively insignificant trading partner that can be sacrificed if necessary.

Finally, US–Indian relations are influenced by the mood of the Indian community in the United States, which in 2018 numbered 4.1 million people (2% of the total US population). Today, the Indian community in the United States holds a steady lead in terms of income per person among all diasporas in the country, since it mainly consists of highly qualified specialists (Thomas, 2018). Nevertheless, the high integration of the diaspora into business and political circles has not led to an increase in pro-Indian lobbying. For example, participation in the election for the post of US Vice President K. Harris did not mobilize the diaspora, as happened with B. Obama and African Americans in 2008. On the contrary, sympathy for the Republicans is growing in the Indian community due to the fact that the Democrats, trying to win Muslim votes, have repeatedly criticized the Indian authorities for violating human rights in Kashmir and reproached the Republican administration for ignoring this problem. As a result, some Indians have abandoned their traditional support for the Democratic Party,²² despite the initiatives of the Republicans to restrict immigration, which is painful for the diasporas.²³

The recent steps of the Biden administration towards India (in particular, the warm welcome extended to N. Modi during his visit to the United States in September 2021, and the fact that during his visit the American side avoided raising the subject of

human rights violations) instigated tough criticism from American human rights activists and part of the Democratic Party activists. However, the new US leadership has made it clear that it plans to further develop ties with New Delhi, seeing it as a counterbalance to Beijing, and is not ready to criticize the Modi government openly for violating human rights. According to high-ranking American diplomats, the geostrategic importance of India for the United States is so great that it is not advisable to spoil relations with it at the current stage.²⁴

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

The dynamics of the development of US–Indian relations clearly demonstrates their dependence on the transformation of the system of international relations in general and the global strategic goal-setting of the United States in particular. While New Delhi has always been more interested in the development of bilateral trade and economic and investment ties, Washington saw India primarily as a regional power, the potential of which could be used to curb communist, and then just Chinese, expansion, as well as to fight against Islamist extremism and terrorism.

The structure of bilateral relations is largely asymmetric. This feature, however, does not give grounds to talk about the complete dependence of India on the United States. The latter is stepping up its military–political cooperation with New Delhi in the area of trade in weapons and defense technologies, trying to include India in multilateral anti-Chinese coalitions. However, India advocates a more inclusive approach to cooperation within its Indo-Pacific “vision” and does not view China as an existential enemy and Russia as an adversary. There is a powerful pro-American lobby in Indian political and expert circles that promotes the idea that further rapprochement with the United States has no alternative, but the Bharatiya Janata Party–led alliance in power prefers to maintain strategic autonomy. India's aspirations look much more modest than the American ones and allow reaching an agreement with China on the division of spheres of influence, which could potentially bring India out of active confrontation with China.

The increased trade, economic, and military–technical cooperation between the countries did not lead to political steps by the United States towards India on sensitive issues. Moreover, Washington retains in its arsenal the ability to impose sanctions for the supply of Russian S-400s, for human rights issues, and for New Delhi's policy in Kashmir. The declared strategic partnership is not accompanied by the US signing binding defensive treaties or transferring India

²⁰U.S.–India Trade Relation, The Congressional Research Service. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IF10384.pdf>.

²¹United States: Foreign Investment, Santander Trade. <https://santandertrade.com/en/portal/establish-overseas/united-states/foreign-investment>.

²²Kashmir issue draws Indian–Americans to Republican camp, India Today. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/kashmir-issue-reasons-indian-american-shift-donald-trump-us-1722583-2020-09-17>.

²³Why Trump's H-1B visa freeze will hurt India most, BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-53150214>.

²⁴N. Toosi, Biden needs India to counter China, but it comes with a cost, Politico, 2021. <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/09/23/biden-modi-india-human-rights-china-514041>.

to the status of a major ally outside NATO. In general, this line of behavior coincides with the American approach during the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, and also additionally emphasizes the situational nature of increased cooperation.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Security Challenges

Global Missile Proliferation: Challenges and Solutions

K. V. Bogdanov^{a,*} and D. V. Stefanovich^{a,**,#}

^aPrimakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations,
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

*e-mail: cbogdanov@imemo.ru

**e-mail: stefanovich@imemo.ru

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Abstract—Developments in missile proliferation are analyzed, including the main drivers, trends, and actors. The increasing complexity of the global missile proliferation landscape is shown. Key areas of technological development are identified, as well as several types of missile proliferators, to substantiate the importance of missile proliferation in the context of international security. Existing and prospective mechanisms are discussed with respect to arms control, nonproliferation, and multilateral risk reduction measures. It is stressed that the existing mechanisms are aimed primarily at reducing the risks associated with creating delivery vehicles for weapons of mass destruction whereas the greatest importance is now attached to the potential use of conventionally armed missiles. It is proposed to concentrate efforts on “soft arms control” in order to lay a foundation for a gradual increase in controllability in the absence of real prospects for verifiable and intrusive multilateral measures.

Keywords: arms control, ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, missile proliferation, nonproliferation, Missile Technology Control Regime, Hague Code of Conduct

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The development, proliferation, and integration of technologies are changing the landscape of the missile engineering industry and the national missile capabilities on a global scale. This change necessitates a transformation in the set of key factors that were previously in the focus of missile nonproliferation programs and the corresponding measures and methods of arms control and exports control.

The issues of missile proliferation and control over it have been widely researched by Russian experts. A substantial body of research on the systemwide issues of missile technology proliferation in the context of proliferation of nuclear weapons and the development of new technologies for nonnuclear high-precision weapons has been carried out over the past two decades at the Center for International Security, Institute of the World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences (IMEMO RAS), under the leadership of A. Arbatov and V. Dvorkin (*Yadernoe oruzhie...*, 2006; *Yadernoe rasprostrane-*

nie..., 2009; *Yadernaya perezagruzka...*, 2011; *Kontrol' nad vooruzheniyami v novykh...*, 2020).

The general issues of missile proliferation and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) were analyzed by V. Mizin (2009), V. Novikov (2012), and V. Veselov (2012). The missile proliferation trends in Asia—a region of great concern from this perspective—were studied by P. Litavrin (1998), V. Sazhin (2011), and S. Oznobishchev and P. Topychkanov (2012). The legal aspects of missile proliferation were discussed by Yu. Gusynina (1999).

The issue of missile proliferation also presents research interest for well-known Western think tanks. In particular, the European Leadership Network published reports by K. Kubiak (2019) on the need to move missile weapons up the hierarchy of priorities for the international political agenda and by F. Hoffman (2021) on the trends in cruise missile proliferation. The proliferation of hypersonic weapons was studied by the RAND in a large-scale research, which has become a kind of desktop reference guide for specialists in this field (Speier, Nacouzi, Lee, and Moore, 2017). In addition, several reports on the issue of hypersonic weapons were published by UN agencies (UNODA, 2019; UNIDIR, 2019). A team of authors from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) scrutinized the issues around the arms race on

Konstantin Vadimovich Bogdanov, Cand. Sci. (Eng.) is a Senior Researcher at the Center for International Security, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Dmitry Viktorovich Stefanovich is a Researcher at the Center for International Security, Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

the Korean Peninsula with a focus on missile technology (IISS, 2021).

In addition to the growing availability of the fruits of technological progress, the main reason for the ongoing missile proliferation, the rapid development of national missile programs, and frenzied foreign purchases of missile weapons by former Third World countries lies in the struggle for regional leadership against the backdrop of a sharply increased security deficit. This motive has always been there, but it was aggravated after a series of external interventions by major world powers during the end phase of the Cold War, when the unstable world order failed to transform into a new, clearly defined one. Nevertheless, fears about the development of intermediate and intercontinental range missiles, which threaten the leading powers (the United States, Russia, and European states), have every reason to exist. However, this is not the main risk because the missile potential is being developed primarily against regional competitors for the entire extent of their territory.

Finally, a fundamentally new factor is the aggravation of the issue of destabilizing strike missile weapons beyond the scope of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). One reason for this is the substantial progress in technologies of long-range precision weapons, and the other one is the growing fragility of critical infrastructures, which have already experience strategic effects from targeted nonnuclear impacts. On the scale of regional confrontations, these effects can be considered as significant deterrent damage, which changes the very role of nonnuclear missile systems—from now on, they are able to act not only as battlefield assets but also as a means of deterrence, while maintaining a relatively low use threshold (compared to WMD).

The accumulated changes require solutions in the field of arms control. The prospects for upgrading entire classes of missile weapons and associated types of military equipment (platforms, control and targeting systems) show that this task will not lose relevance in the coming decades, especially against the backdrop of the landslide degradation of the international legal security system, which formed upon the results of and immediately after the end of the “previous” Cold War.

MAIN ISSUES OF MISSILE PROLIFERATION IN THE PRESENT PERIOD

The typical concern about missile proliferation as of the end of the 1980s looked rather narrow. It focused, for the most part, on operational and tactical ballistic missiles. The focus was mainly on the Soviet-made R-17 (Scud-B) liquid-propellant missiles, which were relatively easy to upgrade, primarily in terms of range (which also provided promising groundwork for the development of medium-range missiles). For a long time, the development of this

class of missile weapons had been a cornerstone for the authentic schools of missile engineering in Iraq (under Saddam Hussein) and North Korea, as well as, partly, in Iran and Pakistan.

A distinctive feature of this class of missiles was its low accuracy, which is why they could not be truly effective without WMD (chemical or nuclear warheads). The contradictory experience of the “war of cities” during the Iran–Iraq war of 1980–1988 showed that the conventionally armed missiles were useless against military targets due to their low accuracy. When used as a counter-value (terrorist) weapon through indiscriminate strikes on urban areas, they gave no significant military and strategic effect whereas the moral and psychological outcome in the enemy camp could even be the opposite (Bogdanov, 2020). Similar were the outcomes of the 1991 Gulf War, when Iraqi ballistic missiles achieved no significant military results, and Saudi Arabia refrained from using its Chinese-made medium-range missiles against Iraqi cities precisely because of the indiscriminate nature of the strikes (Khaled bin-Sultan and Seal, 1995, p. 350).

By that point, the issue of missile proliferation had firmly amalgamated with that of WMD nonproliferation, and this way it was reflected in the main technical parameters of systems that fell under the 1987 MTCR transfer restrictions (Ozga, 1994). Thus, the notorious 500-kg weight limit was justified by the mass—dimensional parameters of typical nuclear warheads made using the relatively low technology of potential candidate countries (Feickert, 2003, p. 1) (the high technologies at the disposal of the United States and the Soviet Union allowed a mass of 100–150 kg even for warheads of the medium yield class). However, missile technologies did not stand still, and their availability was only increasing, including for countries with no record of trying to circumvent this “double” regime of nonproliferation.

The revolution in the electronic components of onboard control systems and the emergence of new materials changed the face of rocket and missile engineering. Firstly, the changes made it possible to develop a fundamentally new class of missile weapons, i.e., conventionally armed high-precision long-range ballistic missiles. Solutions that were previously available only to the superpowers (as was the case with Pershing II missiles, which were equipped with onboard radar and digital map references) spread to the former Third World. These developments manifested themselves in a new generation of Iranian ballistic missiles with guided warheads, which demonstrated high accuracy, as evidenced by the January 2020 Ain al-Assad attacks (Savelsberg, 2020).

Secondly, precision-guided cruise missile technologies, which also were the privilege of the superpowers back in the 1980s, became available to other countries. The reasons were both the general pace of science and

technology progress and targeted actions to acquire key technologies, e.g., Iran in 2001 organized a criminal supply of Soviet strategic Kh-55 cruise missiles (without nuclear warheads) from the territory of Ukraine (Einhorn and van Diepen, 2019, p. 13).

The results of proliferation of these weapons are evident in the Yemeni (Iran-backed) Houthis attacks on oil refineries and terminals in Saudi Arabia in recent years. In the past, even hitting them with conventionally armed ballistic missiles did not guarantee deterrent damage due to the high chance of missing. Cruise missiles are accurate enough to hit select buildings, and in the absence of the impact protection of buildings and buried structures, these missiles are virtually certain to succeed against explosive and fire-prone “soft targets” like oil refineries and terminals.

The above examples show the transformation of the missile development strategies of regional powers towards nonnuclear strategic deterrence. The ability to deliver relatively accurate strikes with conventionally armed ballistic and cruise missiles against selected military facilities and critical civilian infrastructure is a new reality for regional powers. Thus, missile proliferation is separating from its “shadow alter ego” (i.e., WMD) and acquiring a much broader scope.

In recent years, the topic of hypersonic missile weapons has raised widespread concern, even created a turmoil. Currently, several approaches exist to defining what hypersonic missiles are, but all these approaches are largely provisional. For the purposes of this paper, the authors propose to distinguish between three main categories: boost-glide systems (ballistic missiles with gliding winged reentry vehicles as battle payload, also called hypersonic glide vehicles), hypersonic cruise missiles with scramjet engines, and aeroballistic missiles with either maneuvering or integral warheads (capable of controlled maneuvering on the trajectory). It is worth noting separately that some authors define glide vehicles as a subspecies of the maneuverable reentry vehicles (Lysenko, 2016, p. 237). In the situation with the development of hypersonic weapons, we are witnessing the evolution of two long-known types of missile weapons: aeroballistic and ballistic missiles with maneuvering reentry vehicles and high-speed cruise missiles.

The key feature of hypersonic weapons is the combination of high speed (hypersonic, i.e., exceeding Mach 5 at the appropriate altitude), flying in the atmosphere over a substantial part of the trajectory, and endoatmospheric maneuvering. According to the developers and operators, these characteristics contribute to the effective thwarting of enemy missile and air defense systems as well as to increased precision. Depending on the situation, they put an emphasis on one of these advantages.

The priority type of hypersonic missile payload can be regarded as a separate issue since, theoretically, the high precision combined with high speed may help

reduce the power and weight of the warhead, both nuclear and nonnuclear. However, as of today, there is very limited information in the public domain on the actual characteristics of the respective items and their test results. Their combat use is generally limited to the attacks using the Kinzhal air-launched hypersonic aeroballistic missile system on individual (presumably highly protected) targets in March 2022 on the territory of Ukraine. However, while Russia and—as far as one can judge—China are developing selected hypersonic systems with “dual” battle payload (nuclear and nonnuclear), the United States has so far been focusing on the exclusively nonnuclear nature of its hypersonic programs. Meanwhile, France, e.g., carries out hypersonic projects (based on the available information) in the interests of nuclear deterrence forces (Tertrais, 2020, p. 65). A similar situation is observed in North Korea. Other countries (India, the United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, Australia, etc.) either avoid concentrating on this issue in principle or do not possess a nuclear status (Sayler, 2022).

A hypersonic missile system is a very costly project. The implementation of such a program requires heavy investments in the design (or acquisition and introduction) of electronics for control and guidance systems, in special materials (including ablative and heat-resistant), in a new type of fuel, in new engines, and in test facilities (wind tunnels and long testing ranges with all the necessary telemetry instruments). The effective use of high-precision long-range weapons (especially hypersonic ones) depends in large part on the infrastructure of reconnaissance, targeting, and communications.

Despite these difficulties, hypersonic weapons are turning into an increasingly visible feature of the global missile landscape, including in the proliferation context. The heated interest in this technology may revitalize and optimize the existing control mechanisms, or based on the accumulated experience, it may lead to the development of new tools, which could cover the entire category of high-precision long-range weapons.

Technological progress leads not only to an increase in the availability of missile weapons for regional players. The integration of technological solutions and the general trends in the emergence of new classes of weapons are creating a fundamentally different military-technical environment, including in matters not directly related to missile proliferation. First and foremost, this issue concerns the development of precise sensors based on the new-generation electronic components as well as high-performance computing and digital communication tools that allow integrating onboard equipment into the overall control loop of forces and assets in a theater of operations.

Thus, it is absolutely clear that combat unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), a clear component of modern high-precision weapons, are becoming a substitute for

manned attack aviation and army air force, on the one hand, and for cruise missiles, on the other hand. The same applies to the “fusion class,” i.e., loitering munitions (“kamikaze drones”) and such future weapons as lethal autonomous weapons (LAWs), in which combat use decisions are made by the algorithms of self-learning onboard artificial intelligence.

In this sense, the development of unmanned (autonomous) platforms and their increasingly conspicuous proliferation, as evidenced by the experience of military operations in recent years in Yemen, Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Ukraine, should be discussed in the context of missile proliferation in general. Such a discussion is becoming increasingly urgent because certain interpretations of the existing norms (e.g., the United States tends to interpret them in the context of simplifying its UAV exports) clearly contribute to the increased availability of strike weapons systems that formally fall under the MTCR (Kimball, 2020).

A noticeable trend is the intellectualization of weapons. In fact, we are witnessing a gradual merging of categories such as cruise missiles, loitering munitions, and combat UAVs. They are brought together on both sides by the increasingly advanced small-sized high-precision battlefield missiles, which have evolved from antitank missile systems (including the Israeli SPIKE or the Russian Germe), and by cruise and MLRS guided missiles equipped with detachable or cluster combat payload, which, in the limiting case, also fall into the category of hypersonic aircraft (e.g., the American project Vintage Racer). It seems that over time, due to the miniaturization and relative availability of the electronic components, a situation may develop whereby almost all types of weapons operating at ranges beyond direct visibility will possess an autonomous capability of additional reconnaissance and targeting as well as programmed maneuvering to evade intercept.

The integration of these new advanced types of weapons with old cruise and ballistic missiles made on a new technological base into unified automated command and control systems for forces and assets in a theater of operations can endow them with additional combat potential simply through the amalgamation into a single circuit of reconnaissance, target distribution, and control. This prospect creates new combat capabilities, which were previously unavailable to the typical armies of the former Third World countries, and potentially becomes a destabilizing factor in the context of regional conflicts (including due to a sharp compression of combat control cycles, i.e., the decrease in the “time to make a decision,” an important factor of escalation).

Thus, we are witnessing the classical arms race pattern, i.e., parallel investments in both the “sword” and the “shield.” Its driver is primarily the perceived threat

of lagging behind potential opponents or that the latter would gain a qualitative advantage.

Such a race is already underway—first of all, a race of quality. However, under the very likely conditions of further destabilization of international security, it can quickly turn into a race of quantity (Horowitz and Schwartz, 2020).

MISSILE PROLIFERATION: ACTORS AND THEIR MOTIVES

For the purposes of this study, all missile proliferation actors can roughly be divided into three main categories.

The first one is *suppliers*, i.e., technologically advanced countries, most often—the great powers, which produce advanced missile weapons systems and offer them for export. This category stands at the top of the “food pyramid”—it is from here that missile technologies set out on a difficult journey to less developed countries, crossing formal and informal restriction lines on their way. When the suppliers enter the proliferation process, they are driven by a complex array of military, political, and economic motives, which further complicates the development of effective arms control regimes.

The second category is *customers*, i.e., the recipients of potentially dangerous missile weapons systems from the supplier countries. The customers play a dual role. On the one hand, they act as objects or, in some cases, as instruments of the foreign policy pursued by the superpowers (i.e., the suppliers), which are guided by considerations of exercising external control over regional balances of power by modulating the flow of modern weapons. On the other hand, some of the present-day customers themselves claim regional leadership, especially in the modern world, which is becoming increasingly multipolar. The customers are thus trying to obtain, at least, modern strike capabilities or, as a maximum, technologies for the development of their national defense industry (including for export purposes). Some of the customers are now in a transitional state; these are, e.g., Turkey or India, which can, theoretically, act as suppliers of certain types of missile weapons.

The third category are *proliferators*, i.e., countries that, for one reason or another, are excluded from the system of the quasi-legitimate distribution of missile technologies from the suppliers but consider it necessary to acquire the appropriate capabilities because of the way they perceive their military and political environment. This category includes North Korea, Iran, Pakistan, and, in a sense, India; in the past, it comprised Iraq, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. The proliferators are known for their informal cohesion and propensity to create shadow markets of “forbidden” technologies, as was the case with the large-scale transfer of North Korean missile engineering solutions to Iran and Paki-

stan (Kampani, 2002). The threats of counterproliferation from the supplier countries compel the proliferators to attempts at acquiring, in the interests of deterrence, advanced missile technologies and, as in the case of North Korea, nuclear weapons.

These considerations inevitably affect the pattern of relations between the suppliers and customers, following the principle of technological segregation, which builds upon considerations of bilateral relations rather than military and engineering reasons (the parameters of systems allowed for transfer under certain regimes and agreements). Thus, an environment emerges in which exceptions work as a rule, which destroys the universality of the arms control regimes.

The past, too, saw cases of “informal” technological segregation. The “birth trauma” of the MTCR is the supplies of Tomahawk cruise missiles and Trident II ballistic missiles from the United States to the United Kingdom—the transfer of missile weapons to NATO’s allies was excluded from the regime as it was deemed not associated with risks of uncontrolled proliferation (Khromov, 2000, p. 89). In 1997, the United Kingdom took the next step, this time towards the United Arab Emirates. It made a transfer of Black Shaheen cruise missiles (a modification of the Storm Shadow cruise missile) to the Emirates, causing a scandal and further changes to the procedures for determining fuel-efficient flight profiles when calculating the maximum range for the needs of the MTCR. However, this measure did not prevent further supplies to Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Stefanovich, 2019). Subsequently, similar solutions were employed by the United States for the supply of JASSM and JASSM-ER cruise missiles to Poland and Finland as well as by Germany and Sweden for the supply of Taurus KEPD 350 missiles to Spain and South Korea. At the moment, there is every reason to believe that Tomahawk missiles will also be transferred to Australia as part of a new deal to build nuclear attack submarines for it.

These developments reveal the main contradiction of missile proliferation—the leading players seek to stay on the market by putting up for sale increasingly advanced weapons, and this process gradually blurs the boundaries set by the previously adopted restrictions. The issue is far from being purely commercial in nature as the military and political importance of delivering modern weapons to friendly nations equalizes or even outweighs the considerations of maintaining a certain threshold of overseas sales, and so do the considerations of competition between the great powers for influence in the former Third World.

The current situation also affects those players that are excluded, for military and political reasons, from the transfer of advanced weapons. The best example here is Iran. At the beginning of the 1990s, this country found itself without access to any modern strike weapons (especially tactical aircraft and the corresponding precision weapons), but it eventually devel-

oped its own original, diversified, and fairly effective missile industry—primarily because Iran needed to keep its combat potential on par with the neighboring states of the region, which received high-tech weapons from the United States and Western Europe.

The relationship dynamics in the suppliers—customers—proliferators triangle is self-sustaining and provides additional incentives to all parties involved to step up the scale of proliferation, including beyond the restrictive regimes. This situation raises the question of viability and focus for the entire arms control system and calls for determining the real purpose of this system in the new conditions.

IS THERE A SOLUTION THROUGH ARMS CONTROL?

There are currently two key multilateral mechanisms directly related to the missile issue. Firstly, this is the MTCR, designed in 1987, which has now been joined by 35 states, including all technologically advanced countries except China and Israel.

Today, the MTCR itself acts primarily as a platform for a dialogue on technology, which remains one of the priority topics. Of special value are detailed lists of specific controlled technologies and products (so-called Category II), the export of which, although not prohibited in principle, should be carefully watched. Outreach activities, too, should not be underestimated, i.e., meetings between representatives of the MTCR states and those not participating in the regime but possessing a considerable missile potential. In addition to the possible (with reservations) expansion of the MTCR membership, these events help develop a single conceptual and categorical apparatus and literally discuss the issues of missile proliferation in one language. Simultaneously, the MTCR agenda includes the missile dossiers that are hot topics in the media, including Iran and North Korea (*Public Statement...*, 2021). Despite the great importance of technical consultations, there is no doubt that the final solution to these issues must be found and approved at other forums.

Russia’s presidency in the MTCR in 2021–2022 has not and could not have achieved any significant results for reasons related to the aggravation of international rivalry. However, it should be noted that Russia made specific proposals to revive the initiative for creating the Global Missile Nonproliferation Regime (GMNR) and the Global Control System (GCS) for the Nonproliferation of Missiles and Missile Technology (Russian Foreign Ministry, 2021). Although understandable concerns were raised about the prospects of the GCS and GMNR in the short-to-medium term, the need to establish a comprehensive mechanism was identified as a long-term priority.

The Hague Code of Conduct (HCoC) is an even softer instrument than the MTCR. Its key elements

are mutual notification of ballistic missile and space rocket launches and technical consultations. One cannot say all the HCoC member states completely fulfill their voluntary obligations, but at least it provides yet another venue for a substantive and (ideally) depoliticized discussion of the issue.

To a certain extent, the common issue of the MTCR and the HCoC is the legacy of the fight against potential WMD delivery vehicles, which was laid at the foundation of these regimes. However, as was shown above, an equally urgent concern today is conventionally armed precision missiles.

In general, both the MTCR and HCoC appear to be workable mechanisms able to contribute to the mitigation of missile threats on a global scale. Meanwhile, both regimes are voluntary in nature and rely on the common values and priorities of the participating states, which is further complicated by the far from universal nature of this participation. In the event of different priorities, the effectiveness of the corresponding instruments drops sharply. A relevant example is the US sanctions against several Russian missile-engineering companies (Chernenko and Dzhordzhevich, 2017). Nevertheless, in the missile sector as well as in arms control in general (especially in the verification of compliance with the existing agreements), much depends, as practice shows, on the parties' intention for cooperate in good faith (Podvig, 2022). In the end, the terms and conditions signed by participating countries are only a "zero mark" as no one forbids them from taking on stricter obligations and keeping more detailed records at the national level (as we see in the nuclear nonproliferation regime).

Today, the key threat to be addressed by an effective and comprehensive system of control over missile proliferation is the further uncontrolled horizontal and vertical proliferation of escalation-dangerous weapons and military equipment. These should include all those weapons that maintain by default a high degree of combat readiness in peacetime, are capable of inflicting damage at operational and strategic depth, and can also be used for signal and reconnaissance actions, including formally during combat training activities (so-called "simulated electronic launches") in the immediate vicinity of the contact lines of potential opponents.

On the nonproliferation track, it seems appropriate to focus today not so much on direct restrictions in the field of military-technical cooperation and export control but on identifying the basic, underlying causes and contradictions that force certain countries to participate in the arms races. Presumably, no country in the world would invest heavily in the development or acquisition of a certain type of weapons solely from the desire to possess them for the sake of the military and political status. Of course, status considerations are often reinforced by the presence of certain modern equipment in the arsenal (as is the case, e.g., with

India's nuclear missile program, where the status aspect ranks high but is not the main or even dominant one (Bogdanov and Kupriyanov, 2020)). However, the real driver is the perception of national security threats, no matter how realistic they are. Therefore, it is necessary to identify in a timely manner these perceived threats and their mutually reinforcing pairs—and look for alternative ways to deescalate expectations. The following arguments can be used in favor of the alternative ways: descriptive models of the security dilemma and promotion of threat reduction and arms control measures as an effective tool for ensuring national security.

A rather radical idea could be to avoid discussing the detailed engineering characteristics of certain types of missile weapons and their components, reducing the problem of control over missile proliferation to behavioral issues. It seems to be at least a potentially workable option to discuss the above-mentioned perceived threats and approaches to their mitigation at the conceptual level, i.e., not in terms of, e.g., ballistic missiles as such but in the context of escalation-dangerous scenarios of their combat use as well as doctrinal guidelines that are perceived as destabilizing. An example of such a discussion, albeit in a very limited format, is the dialogue on doctrines between the five nuclear-weapon states (P5) (*P5 Conference...*, 2021).

Another work area could be the development of restraint measures, including unilateral ones. One example of such measures is the Russian initiative for a moratorium on the deployment of intermediate and shorter-range missiles in certain regions of the world in the context of the termination of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. In addition, the parties concerned could discuss confidence-building measures regarding certain types of long-range precision weapons, which are now a major concern, including in terms of exchanging data on the existing and planned quantitative indicators and the geography of deployment of the corresponding systems (Stefanovich, 2021).

To sum it up, we should note that, in the current conditions, the measures to enhance control over missile proliferation must, in a sense, start from scratch because the existing mechanisms have either failed repeatedly or simply overlooked certain destabilizing potentials due to the sharp increase in technological progress. Such an "after-explosion landscape" paradoxically simplifies practical efforts since even a small improvement in the situation with missile proliferation can be achieved through "soft arms control," i.e., through simple, in some cases, even unilateral restrictions. However, the importance of pursuing a dialogue about the threats is beyond doubt. The existing arms control regimes retain a certain potential as additional tools for ensuring the nonproliferation of WMD, but this potential is gradually deteriorating in the context

of technological progress. In the meantime, we are compelled to conclude that the development of truly strict global missile proliferation regimes with an intrusive verification base does not benefit any of the categories of the proliferation actors and, therefore, seems unlikely.

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Security Challenges

The Influence of NATO Regional Missile Defense on European Security

O. O. Krivolapov[#]

Institute for US and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 121069 Russia

e-mail: o.krivolapov@iskran.ru

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Abstract—The problem of missile defense is considered by Russian researchers, first of all, as part of the strategic stability problem in relations between Russia and the United States. At the same time, the impact of regional missile defense (theater missile defense) on regional security remains largely unexplored. The US and NATO leadership continue to claim that Russia has deployed intermediate-range missiles in the European part of the country. As a response to this step, in addition to other measures of regional deterrence towards Russia, it is planned to strengthen NATO's regional missile defense system. The purpose of this article is to determine the potential impact of enhancing NATO's theater missile defense on regional security. The answer to this question is important for understanding the prospects for European security. This article provides a critical analysis of Western experts' scenarios of actions of Russia and NATO around the Baltic countries the place and role of theater missile defense in these scenarios and compares the doctrinal guidelines of the United States and Russia regarding regional nonnuclear deterrence. There are situations in which NATO's enhanced regional missile defense could strengthen regional deterrence, and there are situations where this is less likely. Taking into account the doctrinal guidelines of both sides, conclusions are drawn about the destabilizing potential of NATO's regional missile defense enhancement and that, in strengthening regional stability, there is no alternative to arms control and transparency regimes.

Keywords: regional missile defense, theater missile defense, NATO, Russia, deterrence, political–military crisis, nonnuclear deterrence, left-of-launch, escalate-to-de-escalate

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INTRODUCTION

An important part of the problem of international security is the issue of European security. Relations between Russia and NATO, and between Russia and the United States, are at their lowest point since the Cold War. The expert community is intensively looking for ways to reduce the risks of a direct military clash between both sides.¹ One of the central places

among many issues in relations between Russia and NATO is the problem of missile defense. Official Moscow speaks of the *Aegis Ashore* missile defense systems in Europe as part of the problem of strategic stability, as a potential threat to the strategic nuclear forces of the Russian Federation. The Russian side is also considering missile defense as part of the issue of bringing NATO's infrastructure closer to Russia's borders. The missile defense problem has a very important regional dimension. The collapse of the INF Treaty increased the likelihood of the deployment of intermediate and shorter-range missiles in Europe. In this context, the role of regional missile defense systems (theater missile defense) is growing.

The problem of missile defense is mainly studied by scientists and experts in Russia and the United States as part of the strategic stability in Russian–American relations (Rogov, 2021; Esin, 2017; Thielmann, 2020). Such an impact of theater missile defense on regional stability is much less discussed (Dvorkin, 2019). Unlike strategic missile defense systems, theater missile defense systems have much more successful intercepts during tests. The interpretation of this fact as an

[#] Oleg Olegovich Krivolapov, Cand. Sci. (Polit.) is a Senior Researcher in the Department of Military–Political Research, RAS Institute for US and Canadian Studies (ISKRAN).

¹ Recommendations of the Participants of the Expert Dialogue on Reducing the Risks of a Military Confrontation between Russia and NATO in Europe, Institute for US and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences, December 2020. <http://iskran.ru/rossiya-nato-novye-rekomendacii-ekspertov/>. Cited February 1, 2022. Expert dialogue on reducing the risks of military confrontation between Russia and NATO in Europe. Seven recommendations, Institute for US and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, February 2022. <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/group-statement/the-expert-dialogue-on-nato-russia-risk-reduction-seven-recommendations/>. Cited February 1, 2022.

indicator of the higher reliability of these systems is one of the reasons why the stabilizing potential of the theater missile defense for the regional situation is hardly called into question. Another reason is the view of missile defense as a purely defensive tool that contributes to stabilization, especially in a nonstrategic, regional context.

Many experts admit that a nuclear conflict between the Russian Federation and the US/NATO is possible as a result of the escalation of a nonnuclear conflict in the development of a political–military crisis in Europe. In the array of research literature on this topic, there are a number of articles that mention the factor of theater missile defense. Almost everywhere this mention goes at the level of separate theses within the framework of articles devoted to more general issues. For example, within the framework of relations between the US and allies in Europe (Früling, 2016; Kühn, 2018), prospects for deploying intermediate-range missiles (Kühn, 2019; Simon, Lanoszka, 2020), Russian long-range high-precision weapons (Johnson, 2017), and the escalate-to-de-escalate doctrine (Kort et al., 2019; Anderson, McCue, 2021; Kroenig, 2018; Kofman, Fink, Edmonds, 2020). There are practically no studies specifically devoted to analysis of the factor of regional missile defense in the context of the actions of the United States and NATO aimed at regional deterrence of Russia in Europe. This article is a development of the author’s research on the impact of US regional missile defense architectures on regional stability (Krivolapov, 2021).

The purpose of this article is to determine how the strengthening of the NATO missile defense architecture can affect regional security. In this regard, it is necessary to answer the following questions: (1) Will the strengthening of the regional missile defense (a) help to deter the offensive operation of the Russian troops in the region, presumed by Western experts and NATO leadership, carried out by Moscow using non-nuclear missiles and with the subsequent threat of using nuclear weapons within the framework of the Russia’s alleged escalate-to-de-escalate doctrine? or (b) deter the use of nuclear missiles by Russia in the framework of the above scenario? (2) Will strengthening theater missile defense of the NATO bloc destroy or strengthen regional stability? Outside the scope of this article are topics such as the impact of missile defense in Europe on the strategic balance between the Russian Federation and the United States, as well as the ways of escalating the nuclear conflict between Russia and the United States/NATO from the regional to the strategic level.

We will only talk about the regional missile defense of NATO, which refers to systems designed to protect against ballistic missiles with a range of less than 5500 km, as well as against cruise missiles of various

ranges.² They could be used to strengthen the theater missile defense architecture. The need to take into account the missile defense systems of NATO countries (including the American missile defense systems present in Europe) is due to the existence of long-term US plans to integrate them into a single architecture through the NATO missile defense command and control center at Ramstein Air Base (Germany).³ The offensive missiles of the Russian Federation, which will be discussed in this article, include operational–tactical missiles (range of 100–500 km), sea- and air-launched cruise missiles (SLCM, ALCM), hypersonic aeroballistic missiles, and being developed ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles and hypersonic sea-, air-, and ground-launched missiles (range of less than 5500 km).

The concept of “deterrence,” which is one of the main ones for this study, has two interpretations. The first is *deterrence by punishment*. The second is *deterrence by denial*, namely, the creation of military capabilities to prevent the success of potential aggression (Mazarr et al., 2018, pp. 7–8). The former is most often associated with the deployment of offensive weapons, the latter with defensive ones.

“Regional deterrence” is associated with the actions of the parties in the framework of a regional confrontation. The region refers to Europe, in particular, its Baltic subregion. Unlike strategic deterrence, regional deterrence involving theater missile defense and nonnuclear missiles does not imply the destruction of Russia or the NATO bloc as such as a result of first and retaliatory strikes. Since there is the risk of escalation of a conventional armed conflict between Russia and NATO to the nuclear level, answers to the above questions about the effectiveness of deterrence of offensive deterrence and missile launches are also required in the regional context.

Another key concept is a “political–military crisis.” Its main components are the risk of an armed clash (including an inadvertent one, as a result of a misunderstanding of the intentions of one of the parties or both parties due to a lack of information and poor communication between them), psychological pressure from outside on the leadership of a country involved in the crisis, an exceptionally low level of trust between the parties in confrontation with each

² Taking into account the missile systems available to Russia, we mean the following missile defense and air defense/missile defense systems of NATO countries: *Aegis*, *Patriot*, *SAMP/T* with the corresponding models of anti-missiles *SM-2*, *SM-6*, *PAC-3*, and *Aster*. NATO documents only talk about air and missile defense, which includes all these systems. In addition, the SM-6 interceptor is officially declared as part of the potential in the field of defense against hypersonic weapons (See Vice Admiral Jon A. Hill, Director, Missile Defense Agency Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, June 9, 2021, p. 16). It can also be used as an offensive missile to destroy ground and surface targets at ranges up to 240 km.

³ Missile Defense Review, U.S. Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 71, 77.

other, and fear of a sudden attack by at least one of the parties (Schelling, 2008, pp. 95–101). Accordingly, “regional stability” in this article refers to the situation of the absence of a political-military crisis.

THE CONTRIBUTION TO REGIONAL DETERRENCE

Russian missiles with a range of less than 5500 km were officially named among the missile threats to US troops and their allies in the 2019 Missile Defense Review. Representatives of the administration of J. Biden at the hearings in Congress repeated this position. The June 2021 NATO Brussels Communiqué reflects in this regard the intention to strengthen NATO air defense/missile defense.⁴ Washington considers these offensive missiles to be part of the Russian potential of *anti-access/area denial*, *A2/AD*, which in the event of a regional political and military crisis in Europe will give Russia an advantage.⁵ Although the US military calls air defense/missile defense systems and coastal defense missile systems the basis of the *A2/AD* potential, offensive missiles have an auxiliary role, consisting in preventing the free movement of NATO troops and the arrival of reinforcements to Europe from the United States. Accordingly, one of the tasks of regional missile defense, including NATO air defense/missile defense, is to impede the *A2/AD* strategy.⁶

As the most likely scenario for the use of these missiles and anti-missile weapons in Europe, military and civilian experts of the NATO countries considered Russian aggression against the Baltic countries (Kelly, Gompert and Long, 2017, pp. 140–163, 167–180; Hodges et al., 2020; Brauß and Rácz, 2021). According to their estimates, although the total number of conventional armed forces (CAFs) of NATO countries is higher than the total number of Russian CAFs, in the Baltic subregion Russia has a numerical superiority over NATO forces, and many *A2/AD* assets are deployed there. This, according to Western experts, creates the conditions for a rapid local Russian offensive against the Baltic countries, and to support such an offensive, Moscow will use nonnuclear sea-, air-, and ground-launched missiles with a range of less than 5500 km. According to the authors of the reports and representatives of the military–political leadership of the United States and NATO, Russia, having taken control of a certain territory in the Baltic states, will threaten to use tactical nuclear weapons in order to

prevent the rest of NATO countries from interfering in what is happening and pushing Russian troops back.

Regional missile defense in Europe is officially a tool for maintaining not only nonnuclear, but also nuclear deterrence, as it is written in the main current NATO policy documents.⁷ In the United States, Strategic Command officers and Defense Department officials place theater missile defense among the tools to counter Russia’s alleged “escalate-to-de-escalate” doctrine (Kort et al., 2019: 78; Anderson, McCue, 2021: 44, 45). A number of civilian experts agree that theater missile defense can be quite successfully used as a means of countering the escalate-to-de-escalate doctrine (Kroenig, 2018, pp. 17–18; Kofman, Fink, Edmonds, 2020, pp. 26, 65, 75).

In analyzing the possible role of a regional missile defense system in deterring the use of short- and intermediate-range nuclear missiles, one should take into account the conditions under which the Russian Federation can use nuclear weapons. Official representatives of the Russian Federation deny that Russia has the escalate-to-de-escalate doctrine.⁸ According to the Fundamentals of Russian Nuclear Deterrence Policy of 2020, Moscow will use nuclear weapons in one of four situations.⁹ Considering the nature of the situations described, the presence of a regional missile defense system in the adversary is unlikely to become a deterrent to the use of, for example, nuclear operational-tactical missiles.

Even if we adhere to the scenario proposed by the NATO leadership and Western experts and assume that Russia has the escalate-to-de-escalate doctrine, it is necessary to take into account the fact that if even one nuclear warhead overcomes such a missile defense system, this could lead to severe consequences for the defending side. Building an effective missile defense (including regional) from nuclear missiles is still questionable (Zolotarev, 2019). Accordingly, it is hardly possible to deter the use of these nuclear-armed missiles effectively with the help of theater missile defense.

Much more complicated is the situation with the role of a regional missile defense system in deterring an offensive by the Russian Federation using nonnuclear weapons in the framework of the scenario under consideration.

According to the 2019 Missile Defense Review, a regional missile defense system will deter missile

⁴ Brussels Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, June 14, 2021.

⁵ Missile Defense Review, US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 18.

⁶ Statement of Ms. Leonor Tomero, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Missile Defense, June 9, 2021. p. 6; Missile Defense Review, U.S. Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 71, 77.

⁷ See Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, May 2012; Brussels Summit Communiqué ... 2021.

⁸ Ambassador Antonov called the words about the development of the escalate-to-de-escalate doctrine by the Russian Federation erroneous, TASS, Apr. 9 (2019).

⁹ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 355 of June 2, 2020 “On the Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the field of nuclear deterrence,” paragraph 19.

attacks against the United States and its allies deployed in various regions of the world and give Washington additional time and options to respond to aggression, beside striking.¹⁰ Civilian experts argue that the presence of a regional missile defense system will raise the threshold for aggression using nonnuclear weapons, in particular, from the Russian side.¹¹ It is concluded that regional missile defense is among the tools for controlling escalation along with intermediate-range missiles (Kaushal, 2019, p. vi; Fröling, 2016, p. 93; Karako, 2016). Accordingly, the success of the entire deterrence of the alleged Russian aggression depends on the success of deterring the use of these missiles by Russia.

Theater missile defense systems are proposed to be deployed in such a way as to protect only command centers, forward deployed troops, military bases, warehouses, *Aegis Ashore* systems, transport hubs, and large population centers (Karako, 2016, pp. 6–7; Fröling, 2016, p. 91; Kuhn, 2018, pp. 60, 69).

In view of the foregoing, it is possible to answer questions about the contribution of theater missile defense to deterring the use of nonnuclear missiles by Russia in the framework of the scenario envisaged by NATO. For the purposes of this analysis, we will accept the thesis that the Russian leadership has both the intention to attack and enough time to prepare it.¹² To guarantee success, the Russian side will carry out a quick operation only if there are sufficient means to overcome the NATO missile defense system.

Although tests of theater missile defense systems are much more successful than tests of strategic missile defense, taking into account the experience of the combat use of the *Patriot* systems by Saudi Arabia in 2015–2020 (Williams, Shaikh, 2020, pp. 24–25), the Russian side may well proceed from the possibility of overcoming this system with the missiles that Russia has.¹³ This means that NATO's theater missile defense systems will not be able to deter the use of these nonnuclear missiles in such a scenario if the Russian Federation has a clear offensive intention and confidence in overcoming these missile defense systems. This is the confidence that the number of missiles available to

Russia is sufficient to guarantee the destruction of the intended targets, and its hypersonic missiles are even more likely to overcome the existing NATO regional missile defense systems. This takes into account that hypersonic missiles are very expensive and there cannot be a large number of them.

In theory, a situation is also possible where the Russian side does not have the opportunity to allocate the required amount of any part of the missile arsenal (either hypersonic or other missiles) to accomplish tasks of guaranteed destruction of a limited number of the most important targets within the framework of support the specified attack. Based on the logic of Western experts, Moscow is interested in a quick operation. Thus, NATO's theater missile defense systems, which outnumber Russia's missile system capabilities, could deter a Russian offensive. Then Russia will continue the corresponding missile systems' buildup in the subregion. In such a situation, another question arises: will a regional missile defense system enhance regional stability?

IMPACT ON STABILITY

In the works of T. Schelling and other deterrence theorists, situations are analyzed where the steps described in the scenarios of Western experts (invasion, missile strikes) are not always the result of a unilateral initiative. Sometimes this is a consequence of a situation where the alleged aggressor finds itself in conditions that it, for some reason, perceives as hopeless for itself (Mazarr et al., 2018, pp. 1–2). There is a risk of sliding into war due to actions that are originally designed to deter the aggressor (Schelling, 2008, p. 225).

Deterrence as such is associated primarily with the obstruction of the intention, which has already been formed by a potential aggressor. Stability implies situations where neither side has an incentive for aggression, that is, the absence of a crisis. Consider a situation where Russia initially has no intention of either invading or launching missile strikes. In this case, its armed forces near the Baltics are built only to provide protection against potential aggression from the alliance. In the immediate vicinity are St. Petersburg, the base of the Baltic Fleet in Kronstadt, and Kaliningrad oblast, which is vulnerable to blockade. With this in mind, will the strengthening of the theater missile defense architecture by NATO in the Baltic countries and Poland lead to tension?

On the one hand, this strengthening may not lead to an aggravation of the situation. According to Western experts, in the units of the armed forces of the Russian Federation near St. Petersburg, near the border with Estonia and Latvia, as well as in Kaliningrad oblast, there are a total of 33 batteries of air defense/missile defense systems (S-300 and S-400).¹⁴

¹⁰See Missile Defense Review, U.S. Department of Defense, 2019, pp. 27, 29–30.

¹¹The expert community of Western countries has different views on the effectiveness of theater missile defense as part of regional deterrence. A detailed analysis of these discussions and a critical analysis of the arguments of the US administration and various expert groups was given by the author earlier (Krivolapov, 2021).

¹²Western experts, generally do not consider situations that Moscow may perceive as threatening to the national security of the Russian Federation. For example, the emergence of NATO plans to deploy nonnuclear short-range and intermediate-range missiles or elements of strategic missile defense in the Baltic states.

¹³The potentially low effectiveness of the *Patriot* systems against the Kalibr and Iskander missiles was discussed by some Western experts. For example, (Kühn, 2019, p. 158; Simon and Lanoszka, 2020, p. 20).

¹⁴Details are available in (Muzyka, 2021, pp. 39, 50).

Comparable Patriot systems have not yet been deployed in this subregion. In 2022, the delivery of two *Patriot* batteries purchased by Poland is expected (Friesel et al., 2021, p. 91). Germany already has these systems (up to 14 batteries) (Friesel et al., 2021, p. 103), as does the United States (up to 12 batteries in Germany). The other countries of the alliance have fewer such missile defense systems. Thus, in total, NATO has about 26 batteries theoretically available for a quick transfer to the Baltic countries.¹⁵ Russia has a numerical superiority in these systems in the subregion under consideration. Based on this, it can be assumed that a small addition of such complexes to the area by NATO may not lead to tension. For example, Russia practically did not react in any way to the purchase of *Patriot* systems by Poland and Sweden.

At the same time, deployment of a larger number (more than four batteries) of such systems to the area in order to equalize the air and missile defense capabilities of the parties can be perceived by Moscow as preparation for more decisive actions or an attempt to exert pressure.¹⁶ Then this will lead to pulling in additional Russian missiles to the region (Kühn, 2019: 158), including, possibly, hypersonic ones.¹⁷

Additional deployment of these offensive missiles by Russia may be dictated by support for the concept of nonnuclear deterrence. According to the military doctrine of the Russian Federation of 2014, nonnuclear deterrence is a set of foreign policy, military, and military–technical measures aimed at preventing aggression against the Russian Federation by nonnuclear means.¹⁸ This includes “demonstration of readiness to fulfil the threat of causing damage in retaliatory or preemptive actions by nonnuclear means to the vital interests and facilities of potential aggressor states, which obviously exceeds the benefits from the implementation of aggression” (Burenok and Achasov, 2007, p. 12). As Western experts admit, theater missile defense can limit or exclude some options for nonnuclear deterrence for Moscow at the regional level, in particular, “violate the principle of ‘dosing’ and guaranteed fulfilment of assigned ‘de-escalatory’ activities” (Johnson, 2017, p. 74). Overcoming air defense/mis-

sile defense is an important factor in ensuring nonnuclear deterrence (Kokoshin, 2014, p. 201).

Thus, two scenarios are possible. If the Russian side is confident in the ability of its offensive missiles already available near the Baltic to overcome NATO’s regional missile defense systems to carry out nonnuclear deterrence, the likelihood of additional deployment of Russian offensive missiles in the region is objectively reduced, as is the likelihood of escalation. If there is no such confidence in Moscow (for example, a low number of missiles), then the likelihood of additional deployment of Russian missiles in the region increases.

In a crisis situation, there is a high probability of misunderstanding of each other’s intentions. There may be fears in NATO about the Baltic states, and in Moscow there may be fears about the possibility of blockading Kaliningrad, even if neither is the intention of the respective party. Under these conditions, the actions of any of them to pull in forces and capabilities to the subregion will be interpreted precisely as the preparation of aggression. So, the action–reaction cycle will continue.

During a crisis, if the leadership of the Russian Federation considers that the enemy is ready to deliver a strike (including a limited one), then, within the framework of the concept of nonnuclear deterrence, a decision can be made to deliver “highly effective selective strikes, not associated with losses of population and manpower of the enemy” (Burenok and Achasov, 2007, p. 13). Among the possible targets of these nonnuclear strikes may be such objects in NATO countries as ships and aircrafts with SLCMs and ALCMs, ships with missile defense systems, radars (Ponomarev, Poddubny and Polegaev, 2019, p. 100), ground-based electronic intelligence centers, large ships of a similar functions, communication and control centers (Kokoshin, 2014, p. 201). The decision on demonstration strikes will be made only if the current situation is perceived as extremely dangerous, and then the presence of missile defense systems at these objects will not be able to deter the use of nonnuclear missiles against them.

The volume of this article does not allow a full study in this context of the factor of deployment of short- and intermediate-range missiles in NATO countries. For a more complete picture of the doctrines of both sides in the field of nonnuclear regional deterrence, it is necessary to point out that the United States also has a concept that provides for the use of nonnuclear high-precision weapons against an enemy prepared for a missile attack (left-of-launch measures as part of missile defense strategy).¹⁹ It also applies to regional missile defense.²⁰ The employment of these

¹⁵This scenario does not consider the possibility of pulling in additional ships with *Aegis* systems and SM-2 and SM-6 interceptors to the Baltic Sea to cover ports, since the alleged presence of SLCMs makes them a priori a more de-stabilizing factor than *Patriot* systems.

¹⁶For comparison, during the most dangerous periods of confrontation with Iran (May 2019 and March 2020), the United States deployed only 1–3 additional batteries in the Middle East to cover key facilities.

¹⁷The appearance of hypersonic weapons in the region during a crisis in itself can de-stabilize the situation. Because when using hypersonic missiles in a regional context, the opposing side (1) has practically no time to react, (2) the target of these missiles is unknown, and (3) the equipment of such missiles is not known for certain, whether it is nuclear or nonnuclear.

¹⁸Military doctrine of the Russian Federation, November 2014, p. 4.

¹⁹Missile Defense Review, US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 60.

²⁰US Missile Defense Policy, Prepared Remarks by Dr. Robert M. Soifer before the Senate Armed Services Committee, June 9, 2021, p. 2.

measures is possible both after the immediate start of the conflict and before its start.²¹

CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account the analysis of the scenario of the Russian offensive in the Baltics presented by Western experts, the strengthening of NATO's regional missile defense system (including air defense/missile defense) will not help deter the use of these nuclear-armed missiles by Russia as a response to one of the four conditions described in the Fundamentals of Russian Policy in the field of nuclear deterrence of 2020, and even as a response within the framework of the Russia's alleged escalate-to-de-escalate concept. The positions of Western military officials and civilian experts are not convincing here. At the same time, such a strengthening of NATO's theater missile defense in most cases will help deter the use of nonnuclear missiles by Russia. Here, the views of representatives of the military-political leadership and the expert community of NATO countries are more well-reasoned. However, it must be taken into account that, in a situation where the potential of theater missile defense exceeds the potential of offensive missiles, a threat to regional stability is still created.

On the one hand, a large number of Russian air defense/missile defense systems near the Baltic and the low assessment of the effectiveness of NATO missile defense against Russian missiles may reduce the likelihood of a sharp response from Moscow to strengthening this missile defense system. On the other hand, a comparison of the doctrinal provisions of the United States and the Russian Federation in the field of regional nonnuclear deterrence showed that a significant strengthening of the air and missile defense architecture (more than four additional batteries of the Patriot systems) can be perceived in Moscow as a preparation to counter its concept of nonnuclear deterrence and demand additional deployment of missile systems to the subregion.

At the same time, Western experts and the military-political leadership of NATO periodically repeat that for the effectiveness of Russia's regional deterrence, it is necessary not only to strengthen the theater missile defense system, but also nonnuclear offensive missiles with a range of less than 5500 km. Despite the fact that both sides have the concept of preemptive nonnuclear strikes against an enemy ready to attack, and there is also a misunderstanding in the field of nuclear doctrines of at least one of the parties (for example, disputes about escalate-to-de-escalate), the strengthening of the NATO regional missile defense architecture (including air defense/missile defense)

will rather have a negative effect on regional stability. There is a risk of an action-reaction cycle in the area of arms buildup in the region, and in the area of an exchange of limited nonnuclear missile strikes against the enemy. Thus, despite at first glance, the purely defensive nature of theater missile defense systems, these systems cannot be recognized as a reliable means of stabilization in the region under consideration. This means that there is no reasonable alternative for strengthening the regional stability than arms control options and transparency regimes.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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²¹Unclassified Report to Congress, Declaratory Policy, Concept of Operations, and Employment Guidelines for Left-of-Launch Capability, U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 10, 2017, p. 1.

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The Factor of Australia in British Foreign Policy

K. A. Godovanyuk[#] (ORCID: 0000-0002-5205-0021)

Institute of Europe (IE), Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

e-mail: kira.godovanyuk@gmail.com

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Abstract—The Australian component of UK foreign policy in the context of the changing world order is outlined. It is highlighted that, in a value and ideological sense and due to the common Anglo-Saxon identity, London assigns Canberra a key role in the coalition of like-minded countries (“network of liberty”); in geostrategic terms, it perceives Australia as a platform to expand the UK influence in the Indo-Pacific. At present, the “special” partnership between the two countries is underpinned by a number of new agreements, including a “historical” trade deal aimed at strengthening economic ties and in-depth political, diplomatic, and defense cooperation, based on a new military alliance, AUKUS. At the same time, the traditional pragmatism inherent in the foreign policy of Australia, which positions itself as a reliable international actor, is being replaced by increasing military–political and economic dependence, which plays into the hands of London. Coming closer with Australia also allows Britain to present itself as the key extraregional player in the system of anti-Chinese alliances in the Indo-Pacific, with Washington and Canberra in the forefront.

Keywords: Global Britain, Australia, United States, China, Indo-Pacific, defense cooperation, naval drills, AUKUS, Five Power Defense Arrangements, cybersecurity

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INTRODUCTION

After Brexit, London is actively restoring alliances that have weakened for various reasons and is counting on rapprochement with traditional partners through political, defense, and economic agreements, as well as value systems aimed at preserving the liberal world order. This implies strengthening bilateral dialogue with like-minded countries, “connecting” allies to the international agenda that meets British foreign policy interests, and concluding new trade agreements [*Britain after Brexit*, 2021, pp. 13–34; Portanskii, 2020], as well as military–political partnerships in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific in accordance with the new national security strategy [Anan’eva and Godovanyuk, 2021].

London builds situational alliances with individual countries (Turkey) and considers the states of Northern and Eastern Europe primarily as allies in the geopolitical confrontation with Russia; as for India and Brazil, it evaluates ties with them proceeding from its long-term geostrategic and geoeconomic interests. Australia stands out in the modern system of Britain’s alliances; partnership with it is determined by a complex of historical, economic, political, military, and strategic interests, based on a common identity and assessment of threats to the modern world order.

PREREQUISITES FOR PARTNERSHIP: COMMON IDENTITY AND FOREIGN POLICY TRADITIONS

In intellectual discussions, Brexit has brought to the fore questions of identity, reflecting myths about the confrontation between the “Anglo-Saxon” and “European” nature of British foreign policy [Vucetic, 2022].

The debate continues on whether special attention to the “Anglosphere”¹ was an inevitable consequence of leaving the European Union or its cause, as the Brexiters claimed. The opinions of experts concerning what should be viewed as the Anglosphere vary. It was perceived either as a reference to Britain’s imperial past [Hill, 2019] or as a synonym for the Five Eyes (United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand) intelligence alliance. Some foreign studies view the community of English-speaking countries as a conditional geopolitical actor, the weight of which in world politics has increased owing to Brexit [Peters, 2021]. This mindset began to dominate in the strategic planning of the United Kingdom against the backdrop of the discourse about distancing itself from the European Union and strengthening Atlanticism and its interpretation in the Eastern Hemisphere—promoting

[#] Kira Anatol’evna Godovanyuk, Cand. Sci. (Polit.), is a Leading Researcher in the Department of Country Studies of the RAS IE.

¹ The *Anglosphere* is a collective term for English-speaking countries (United States, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia) [Wellings and Mycock, 2019].

the American interpretation of security in the Indo-Pacific.

As opposed to the former metropole, Australia has no complex about a special role on the world stage, perceiving the Pacific Ocean and Southeast Asia as the sphere of its priorities. In 1988, Australian Foreign Minister G. Evans (Labor Party) put forward the concept of “good international citizenship” as the basic setting of foreign policy [Evans, 2022]. While modernizing their political course, the British “New Labor” adapted the Australian concept to the tasks of the “Third Way,” defining “an ethical foreign policy” as their goal [Wheeler and Dunne, 1998]. Later, the ideological framework of the British strategy underwent several transformations, acquiring the features of “Global Britain” as a symbol of the rejection of a Eurocentric foreign policy. Australian foreign policy was not characterized by ideological “swings,” and its adaptation to the changing international environment was more inert. Foreign and Russian authors are unanimous in their assessments that in international relations Canberra willingly acts as a “middle power”² [Ungerer, 2007; Aleshin, 2020].

Australia has never perceived the association of the former British colonies and dominions as the main line of foreign policy, although it is the Commonwealth of Nations that remains a symbol of the inseparable history and common identity, and hence the common interests of London and Canberra. Researchers noted that Australia’s actions in the logic of a “good international citizen” were clearly manifested precisely within the Commonwealth, where it even managed to act as a mediator [Bridge, 2006].

Over the past 20 years, the country has positioned itself as part of the collective West, participating in NATO military missions—for example, in Afghanistan in 2001. In June 2012, Australia signed a Political Declaration with the North Atlantic Alliance, which was followed by special programs of individual partnership and cooperation in 2013 and 2017 (Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programs). In 2014, Canberra received the status of a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner. It subsequently became part of the global coalition against ISIS/Daesh,³ acted as an operational partner of the alliance in Iraq, and contributed to NATO antipiracy missions.

In 2014, the former British dominion adopted anti-Russian sanctions in connection with the reunification of Crimea with the Russian Federation, and in

² International relations theorists began to use the term *middle powers* after World War II, primarily to refer to the status of Australia and Canada. In the absence of a strict definition, various schools of international relations offer their own interpretations of this term. In the ideological paradigm of neorealism, which dominated until the mid-20th century, the dichotomy of *great powers* vs. *others* was generally accepted. Later, *middle powers* were mainly classified according to functional, behavioral, and hierarchical characteristics [Chapnick, 1999, 73–82].

³ A terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation.

2018, amid the Skripal’ scandal, it expelled two Russian diplomats. Australia, as part of the Anglo-Saxon world, shares the principles of the neoliberal world order with its center in Washington against the backdrop of the deepening split between the “collective West” and the countries that challenge it (Russia, China, etc.).

Britain, which positions itself as a “force for good” and defender of democratic values, has taken the initiative to accept Australia into the “club of Western democracies” (D10). In response, Australia’s Prime Minister S. Morrison proposed on the eve of the G7 summit in 2021⁴ to restore the harmony of the liberal world order, of which Canberra sees itself as a part.⁵ In connection with the special military operation of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine, Australia adopted several packages of anti-Russian sanctions against banks; legal entities; and individuals, including journalists.

With the advent of the concept of a secure Indo-Pacific, Canberra’s claim to regional leadership became more obvious, which can be explained, among other things, by its geographical position at the intersection of the Indian and Pacific oceans (at the center of the geopolitical construct of the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR)). In 2013, Australia was the first to include the term *Indo-Pacific* in its defense strategy.

Although Australia has practically formed a Sino-phobia-based internal political consensus [Brophy, 2021], researchers are increasingly expressing doubts that Canberra will be able to maintain its role as a “good international citizen” in the context of growing confrontation with China [Abbondanza, 2021]. In 2018, Australia was one of the first countries of the collective West to ban officially the use of telecommunications equipment from Huawei and ZTE. Relations with the Celestial Empire deteriorated further after the Australian government called in April 2020 for an international comprehensive investigation into the causes of the COVID-19 pandemic and China’s role in it.⁶ Under such conditions, the support of nonregional allies that claim leadership in the region has become vital for Australian foreign policy.

At the same time, upon revising its foreign policy priorities as a consequence of Brexit, Britain has also

⁴ In 2021, Australia, along with India and South Africa, was invited to Cornwall for the G7 summit. According to media reports, Morrison expressed disappointment that he had no chance to meet with US President J. Biden on a bilateral basis since British Prime Minister B. Johnson joined their conversation.

⁵ “We Aussies want to use our G7 invite to help build an enduring liberal order,” Telegraph, June 11 (2021). <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/06/11/aussies-want-use-g7-invite-help-build-enduring-liberal-order/>.

⁶ “Marise Payne calls for global inquiry into China’s handling of the coronavirus outbreak,” ABC News, Apr 19 (2020). <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-19/payne-calls-for-inquiry-china-handling-of-coronavirus-covid-19/12162968>.

identified the Indo-Pacific as a zone of its own interests [Godovanyuk, 2020]. In the Integrated Review on national security (March 2021), London recognized the special role of middle powers in the transforming world order, and Australia as a critical ally in the region.

THE BRITISH–AUSTRALIAN PARTNERSHIP: THE ECONOMIC ASPECT

Australia was the first of the countries of the collective West to take the blow of Beijing's response to the sanctions, demonstrating in practice its "decoupling" from the Celestial Empire. In 2020, trade with China accounted for 29% of all trade and 39% of Australian exports.⁷ However, in response to the open anti-Chinese conduct, China reduced the volume of imports from Australia by imposing duties on a number of goods (barley, wine, beef, cotton, and iron ore). The scale of China's boycott of Australian goods was unprecedented, affecting 13 sectors. The most painful were the restrictive measures against the exports of coal, almost a quarter of the volume of international sales of which came from China.⁸

In an effort to minimize the negative effect on its economy, Canberra in 2021 resumed negotiations on a trade agreement with the EU, which had been stalling since 2018. The trade agreement with London, the parameters of which have been worked out by a special working group since 2016, has come to the fore. Britain is the second largest foreign investor in the Australian economy after the United States. However, trade volumes remain very modest. In 2020, Australia became London's seventh trading partner outside the EU with a turnover of £13.9 billion (exports amounted to £9.8 billion, and imports, to £4.1 billion). For comparison, the annual volume of trade of the United Kingdom with the EU is £660 billion. The general parameters of the Free Trade Agreement between London and Canberra were agreed in June 2021, and in December 2021 the document was signed.⁹ However, the agreement will enter into force only after discussion in parliament, which, according to various estimates, may continue until 2023.

For Britain, the deal was the first "from scratch" after the end of the transition period in relations with the EU. All previously concluded trade agreements (with Japan, Canada, etc.) were "carbon copies" of Brussels' agreements with third countries, which pre-

viously had included London. The British government declared the trade deal with Canberra a priority, guided by interests that are not limited to economic reasons. Politically, the agreement is intended to demonstrate the success of the independent trade policy of "Global Britain." Emphasizing the special character of the deal, the British establishment confirmed the exclusive status of Australia in their own foreign policy priorities. In June 2021, Minister of International Trade L. Truss, in particular, called the agreements historic and bound to become the "gold standard" of post-Brexit trade agreements. However, according to analysts, the maximum possible economic benefit for Britain will be from 0.01 to 0.02% of GDP (£500 million over 15 years under an optimistic scenario).¹⁰

Negotiations were greatly facilitated by the fact that Australia is a relatively small and open economy, which has established minimal trade barriers to goods and investment from the United Kingdom. The parties agreed to remove all tariffs on exported British goods, particularly on cars, whiskey, textile products, etc. (turnover for about £4 billion), and on almost all Australian goods exported to Britain.

The deal opens the British livestock and agriculture market (beef, mutton, dairy products, sugar, etc.) for Australia, which is still subject to quotas. It was decided that after the agreement has entered into force, tariffs and quotas, for example, for beef and mutton, will be reduced within 15 years and for sugar, within 8 years. However, the agreement faced opposition on the part of British farmers,¹¹ for whom the deal was an "unpleasant Christmas present." They expressed fears that market liberalization would hit British manufacturers, increase imports by several times, and intensify separatist sentiments in Scotland. In addition, the deal with Australia, as well as the hypothetical trade agreement with the United States, raised concerns about the possible lowering of production standards (Australian farmers use pesticides) since the document does not spell out a standard control mechanism.

The developers hope that the trade agreement will stimulate online commerce and create opportunities for the free movement of digital data and a common "electronic environment" in the field of commercial services. The latter item is of concern to the British due to fears that British standards for regulating the Internet environment may be lowered.

The agreement does not provide for the freedom of the movement of labor between Britain and Australia,

⁷ Australia's trade in goods with China in 2020. Australian Bureau of Statistics. <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/australias-trade-goods-china-2020>.

⁸ Australia annually produces about 500 million tons of coal, most of which (up to 75%) it exports. In 2019, the country exported \$64 billion worth of coal, which provided up to 8.3% of GDP.

⁹ UK–Australia Free Trade Agreement. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement>.

¹⁰ UK–Australia free trade agreement: the UK's strategic approach. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-approach-to-negotiating-a-free-trade-agreement-with-australia/uk-australia-free-trade-agreement-the-uks-strategic-approach>.

¹¹ "Farmers' opposition to UK–Australia trade deal grows," BBC, June 2 (2021). <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-57268681>.

as was expected, but provides for measures that greatly facilitate the movement of young people (from 18 to 35 years old). Under a special mobility scheme, Australians will be able to stay in Britain for three years.

More importantly, the trade deal, along with the previous one with Japan, paves the way for the United Kingdom to enter the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), negotiations on which began in June 2021.¹² UK trade volumes with countries of this group in 2019 amounted to £111 trillion, an increase of 8% since 2016. London expects Canberra to provide lobbying support for its entry into this economic bloc.

MILITARY–POLITICAL COOPERATION: THE REGIONAL ASPECT

Since the second half of the 20th century, Britain, by decision of the Labor government of H. Wilson, withdrew most of the military contingent from the region “east of Suez,” losing its strategic positions in the Indian and Pacific oceans. In 1966, Australian Prime Minister H. Holt called such a decision a historical error since the “strength, stability, and peaceful progress” of the region needed the “moral, material, and even military help of the United Kingdom.”¹³ Experts pointed out that it was the reliance on Australia that allowed London to feel the terra firma in the region [Howard, 1966]. The reorientation of the former dominions towards cooperation with Washington, reinforced in 1951 by the military–political agreement of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS), in fact meant the “narrowing” of the zone of influence of the United Kingdom to the European continent.

However, Britain did not leave the region fully. Thus, according to experts, the Five Power Defense Agreement (Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom), signed in 1971, allowed Britain to join the “ecosystem” of defense alliances in Southeast Asia. The agreements differ from NATO’s principle of collective defense: they oblige countries to consult in the event of an attack on one of them. Today, such formats, along with the Five Eyes Alliance, are of particular value for British foreign policy, although, as many point out, they remain the legacy of the empire and the Cold War era.

An increased interest in military–political cooperation with Australia was demonstrated by the coalition government of conservatives and liberal democrats (2010–2015), which, long before Brexit, had pursued

a policy of diversifying trade and political partners. In 2013, the countries signed an agreement on defense and military cooperation (Australia–United Kingdom Defense and Security Cooperation Treaty).¹⁴ After a long break, the AUKMIN ministerial dialogue was revived¹⁵ between the heads of the foreign policy and defense departments.

In the strategic documents of Australia, the priority nature of cooperation with Britain is fixed. Thus, the 2016 Defense White Paper notes that British–Australian relations are based on historical and cultural ties. Both countries are for a “rules-based order,” coordinate approaches to ensuring international security, and agree on threat assessments.¹⁶ The 2017 Australian Foreign Policy White Paper names Britain as the most important international partner.¹⁷

Since 2017, at the suggestion of Washington, Canberra has been actively involved in anti-Chinese political formats in the region. For example, it participates in a four-sided security dialogue with India, the United States, and Japan, reanimated by D. Trump. With the advent of the Biden administration, the role of military–political alliances in the Pacific increased in connection with the American vision of the concept of a “free and open Indo-Pacific” [Wallis and Powles, 2021]. In line with the general trend towards the militarization of the region, the updated Australian Defense Strategy of 2020 provides for a significant increase in military spending (over \$270 billion over the next ten years).¹⁸ This trend opens additional “windows of opportunity” to strengthen the strategic position of Global Britain as a “natural ally” of Canberra in the long term and brings direct benefits to the British military–industrial complex.

Since 2017, the parties have been holding a high-level ministerial dialogue on defense and defense cooperation, the Defense Industry and Capability Dialogue, aimed at close cooperation in the defense industry. A year later, the British BAE System won a tender for the development and construction of nine new-generation Hunter-class frigates based on the British Type 26 Global Warship for the Royal Australian Navy. Production will be handled by ASC Shipbuilding in Osborne, South Australia (the birthplace of Australian shipbuilding). The most important

¹⁴“Australia–UK defence arrangements,” ASPI Strategist. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/australia-uk-defence-arrangements>.

¹⁵Britain and Australia began regular AUKMIN consultations in 2006.

¹⁶Defence White Paper, 2016. <https://www.defence.gov.au/white-paper/Docs/2016-Defence-White-Paper.pdf>, pp. 137–138.

¹⁷2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/minisite/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper/fpwhitepaper/foreign-policy-white-paper/chapter-six-global-cooperation/our-global-partnerships.html>.

¹⁸Defending Australia and its interests, Prime Minister of Australia. <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/defending-australia-and-its-interests>.

¹²Britain launches negotiations with £9 trillion Pacific free trade area, June 21 (2021). <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-launches-negotiations-with-9-trillion-pacific-free-trade-area>.

¹³Will AUKUS cement ‘Global Britain’? ASPI Strategist. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/will-aukus-cement-global-britain>.

aspects of cooperation were noted in a special memorandum of the defense ministers of the two countries in October 2020.¹⁹

The return of Britain to the region was expressed primarily in naval activity with the support of the closest allies. The most important event on the 2021 agenda was the naval maneuvers of the aircraft carrier group, announced back in 2017 by Foreign Minister B. Johnson during his visit to Sydney. Britain actively coordinated the maneuvers in the IPR with Australia. Moreover, it was decided that two British warships, HMS *Spey* and HMS *Tamar*, would be permanently stationed in the region, supported by the Australian Navy.

In addition, large-scale military drills of Australia and the United States began in July 2021, which were also joined by 11 states, including the United Kingdom.²⁰ A month later, the navies of the two countries actively participated in the Bersama Gold exercise to mark the 50th anniversary of the Five Power Defense Agreement.

The culmination of the international agendas of the two countries was the announcement of the creation of a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United States, and Britain in the fall of 2021, which will legitimize Britain's presence in the IPR in the long term. The agreements involve in-depth cooperation in the field of the exchange of military developments and technologies, as well as the coordination of defense and diplomatic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. The first step of this partnership was the decision to assist Canberra in the construction of eight nuclear submarines, in connection with which, in November 2021, the parties signed an agreement on the transfer of relevant nuclear technologies.²¹ In April 2022, it was announced that the next stage of trilateral cooperation would be joint work on hypersonic weapons.²² The agreement on AUKUS is aimed at ensuring that the closest allies continue to involve Australia in the arms race in the region and escalate tensions, which the Chinese authorities have repeatedly called a manifestation of "cold war thinking." Chinese media have

described Australia as a "gangster" that promotes an "axis of white supremacy" in "a US-centered mafia-styled community."²³

AUKUS with broader goals of military and defense cooperation is a triangle of privileged partners, autonomous from the Five Eyes Alliance, united by common goals in the region. The constant solidarity with the American interpretation of security in the IPR [Scott, 2013], according to experts, is changing the foreign policy tradition of Australia, which upsets the balance between the behavior of a "middle power" and a "dependent ally" [Taylor, 2020]. In fact, Australia is gradually turning from a "good international citizen" into a player whose behavior is subordinated to Washington's strategy. London, in turn, acts as a force that cements the union of the three powers; seeks to try on the role of a bridge, tested in the transatlantic direction; and, by appealing to a common identity, tries to present itself as a party capable of influencing Canberra. Military experts do not rule out that, to demonstrate its presence, Britain will deploy a military contingent in the former dominion, where the US military presence has already increased since 2018 (in particular, in the capital of the Northern Territory, the city of Darwin).

Further strengthening of the bilateral dialogue was confirmed by the next round of negotiations in the AUKMIN format in January 2022.²⁴ The visit of two key members of the British Cabinet (Foreign Minister Truss and Defense Minister B. Wallace) to Australia took place against the backdrop of an aggravation of the military-political situation in Europe and the circulating reports of an allegedly planned "Russian invasion of Ukraine." Symbolic was Truss' speech at the leading Australian think tank, the Lowy Institute, where she called Australia the closest ally "in defense of freedom and democracy around the world."²⁵ This speech echoed the keynote speech of Truss at Chatham House in December 2021, where she called the "network of liberty," which will be created with the closest allies, a priority for London.²⁶

The results of the British-Australian AUKMIN negotiations were of applied character as well. In particular, the parties agreed on the Strategic Infrastructure and Development Dialogue. The new agreement

¹⁹Australia and the United Kingdom cooperate on frigate programs, Australian Government, Ministry of Defence. <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/lreynolds/media-releases/australia-and-united-kingdom-cooperate-frigate-programs>.

²⁰"11 nations participate in massive US-Australia military drill," Times of India, July 16 (2021). <https://timesofindia.india-times.com/world/rest-of-world/11-nations-participate-in-massive-us-australia-military-drills-as-tensions-escalate-in-indo-pacific/articleshow/84458710.cms>.

²¹UK/Australia/USA: Agreement for the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/australiausa-agreement-for-the-exchange-of-naval-nuclear-propulsion-information-ms-no82021>.

²²AUKUS Leaders' Level Statement: April 5, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/aukus-leaders-level-statement-5-april-2022>.

²³Chinese state media calls Australia a "gangster" as trade war flares, February 26, 2021. <https://www.news.com.au/world/five-eyes-china-accuses-australia-of-being-part-of-an-axis-of-white-supremacy/news-story/14599f6ca8e6100632b30557c2105a75>.

²⁴Australia-UK ministerial meeting, January 21, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/aukmin-2022-joint-statement/australia-uk-ministerial-meeting-joint-statement>.

²⁵Foreign Secretary Liz Truss' speech to the Lowy Institute. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretarys-speech-to-the-lowy-institute>.

²⁶Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and the UK's foreign policy priorities, Chatham House, December 8, 2021. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/events/all/members-event/foreign-secretary-liz-truss-and-uks-foreign-policy-priorities>.

provides support for high-tech projects, such as disaster- and climate-resilient infrastructure in the IPR. The countries get access to one another's training grounds and research programs and are engaged in joint military developments on an ongoing basis.

Finally, still another future area of cooperation is the Cyber and Critical Technology Partnership. In February 2022, during the virtual summit of the two prime ministers, an agreement was signed to strengthen the contribution of Britain to cybersecurity, maritime security, and countering threats from states, in the amount of £25 million.²⁷ The focus of the parties is on global technology supply chains and countering malicious activity in cyberspace and countering "malicious state actors" in line with London's efforts to create a "network of liberty," including in the information sphere.

The parties are actively expanding cooperation in the field of science and technology: the British government will support the Australian fintech company PEXA, and the British energy company Octopus will work on renewable energy projects in Australia.

In general, London positions itself as the preferred European partner in the IPR, competing with Beijing and emphasizing common values, historical destiny, and identity with Canberra.

CONCLUSIONS

The complex of historical, political, economic, and geostrategic factors, aimed at overcoming intense competition in modern international relations, has led to increased attention in London to the former dominion. As conceived by the developers of the Global Britain concept, the emphasis on the defense component of the partnership with Canberra should stress the exceptional role of London in ensuring security in the megaspaces from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific.

Britain seeks to influence Australia using the rhetoric of a "special" and "natural" partnership. Johnson's cabinet promoted the so-called Australian-style trade deals and Australian-style immigration reform, which was most often just a figure of speech designed to emphasize the special importance of Canberra in British politics and the similarity of their interests. Since the EU membership referendum, the British establishment has become more vocal about the similarities between the British and Australian government models and, more broadly, about adherence to the neoliberal system of international relations, to which the Chinese media reacted with a rhetorical question whether Britain would be the next target of large-scale Chinese sanctions.²⁸ The paradox of London's policy

²⁷Joint statement on UK–Australia virtual summit: February 16, 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-on-uk-australia-virtual-summit-16-february-2022>.

²⁸"Will UK be the next Australia and inflict damage on itself?," *Global Times*, Feb. 18 (2021). <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202102/1215833.shtml>.

for a long time was that the country did not formulate an unambiguous line in relation to the Celestial Empire. For example, the United Kingdom was the last among the Five Eyes allies to take a hard line on Chinese tech giant Huawei, which shows the forced nature of that decision.

At the same time, the British leadership has repeatedly stated that London will support Canberra in its confrontation with China. Washington and London are counting on Australia as a "stronghold" in the Indo-Pacific, which was formally confirmed by the AUKUS military–political alliance, which cements the common course of the allies to contain Beijing in an attempt to shift the balance of power in their own favor in the region.

The Australian government's course of confrontation with China is drawing criticism from the opposition since the country risks losing international economic competition under the Chinese sanctions, as well as being involved in a direct conflict with Beijing. The role of the United Kingdom, despite attempts to mediate in the Indo-Pacific and be Canberra's "special partner," remains subsidiary to American policy, while London's willingness to engage in a direct military clash in the region is unlikely.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest.

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Countermeasures for Hybrid Threats: The Experience of the European Union and Its Member States

D. Yu. Bazarkina[#]

Institute of Europe (IE), Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
e-mail: bazarkina-icspsc@yandex.ru

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Abstract—The methods and tools used by the European Union to counter hybrid threats are identified: from the fight against terrorism to measures aimed at combating economic competitors and political opponents (mainly, to squeeze Russia and China out of European markets). It is concluded that it is not by chance that neither EU institutions nor the research community have worked out a comprehensive definition of operations to combat hybrid threats. A broad understanding of hybrid threats as practically any (depending on the political situation) actions of the opponent serves to justify the application of any counteraction tool. In the fight against global threats such as terrorism, cybercrime, and the spread of false medical data, the EU takes a systemic approach, which makes it possible to assess the level and degree of the convergence of threats to critical infrastructure and the infosphere, as well as the possibilities of counteraction. At the same time, attempts to use economic, legislative, political, and informational tools to achieve one-sided economic, political, and military advantages do not reduce the degree of tension in the EU's relations with Russia, China, and some other countries, only increasing the number and strength of hybrid threats. This reduces the EU's ability to achieve strategic autonomy.

Keywords: hybrid operations, hybrid campaigns, hybrid threats, European Union, European Commission, European Parliament, European Union External Action Service

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Against the backdrop of growing international tension and accusations against state actors of creating hybrid threats for other countries or integration associations, it is topical to analyze the practice of combating hybrid threats in national and supranational structures. The purpose of this article is to identify the methods and tools through which the practice of countering hybrid threats is being implemented in the EU, both with positive goals (such as combating cybercrime) and as part of the ousting of economic competitors (mainly Russia and China) from European markets and political opponents from the infosphere. Achieving this purpose requires answering the following research questions: (1) How are operations to counter hybrid threats defined? (2) How do the EU and its member states carry out operations to combat hybrid threats relevant to third countries, including Russia (in particular, regarding actions of terrorist organizations, cybercrime, etc.)? (3) How does the EU use the approach to countering hybrid threats to explain the measures taken against economic competitors and political opponents (especially in the context

of US–China trade wars and US and EU tensions with Russia)?

HYBRID THREATS, HYBRID CAMPAIGNS, AND HYBRID THREAT COUNTERMEASURES: DESIGNATION ISSUES

Both in theoretical works and in official EU documents, the concepts of *hybrid operations* and *hybrid campaigns* are very closely related to the concept of *hybrid threats*. The line between them is often vague. Thus, F. Hoffman, whose works underlie the theory of hybrid warfare, in works of different years gives almost identical definitions of hybrid warfare [Hoffman, 2007, p. 29] and threats [Hoffman, 2010, p. 444], highlighting the combination of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, and criminal behavior on the battlefield. Most likely, this was one of the causes of a certain confusion about the concepts of war and threat both in subsequent scientific publications and in strategic documents, including in the EU. Nevertheless, while Hoffman focuses primarily on the conduct of war (including by nontraditional means), in the later definitions by EU and NATO experts, the concept of hybrid threats is gradually changing (for

[#] Dar'ya Yur'evna Bazarkina, Dr. Sci. (Polit.), is a Leading Researcher in the RAS IE Department of European Integration Research.

example, such threats are interpreted as widespread use of traditional and nontraditional means by the enemy to achieve their goals¹).

The European External Action Service (EEAS) characterizes *hybrid threats* primarily as actions, listing their options from cyberattacks to disruption of energy supplies.² While the understanding of a threat as, for example, a state capable of developing into a military conflict (such an interpretation is present in the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation³) implies the absence of this conflict and is not always associated with a subjective factor (the enemy) alone, a threat as an action always implies active efforts of the enemy, which in this situation ceases to be a suspected one; consequently, countermeasures will be aimed not so much at resolving the situation as at limiting the capabilities of the other side. A stable definition of operations to counter hybrid threats has not yet been developed either; rather, it is formulated from the contrary (the fight against disinformation, cybercrime, foreign interference, etc.). All this makes it difficult to analyze theoretically the fight against hybrid threats, especially when the combination of traditional and nontraditional actions has become a feature of the very system of international relations [Cusumano and Corbe, 2018, p. 6]. Note, however, that in relation to actors such as criminal and terrorist organizations, the assessment of any action as a threat is quite fair due to their inherently antisocial nature.

The term *hybrid campaign*, which has not yet fully taken shape in the scientific literature, is equally difficult to define. The components of a hybrid campaign are information operations (which justifies the use of counterpropaganda as a response), cyberattacks, espionage, actions of proxy structures⁴ (for example, people or organizations that are conductors of the enemy's propaganda), and economic and political influence and pressure [Mareš, Holzer, and Šmíd, 2020, pp. 39–41]. Both in theoretical works and in the EU's approach, certain double standards can be traced: hybrid campaigns, actions, or operations are always those of the enemy, while "countering hybrid threats" is the prerogative of the "goodie" [this is

noted by Simons, 2021; Fridman, 2018], identifying as the defensive side.

At the same time, the broad interpretation of hybrid threats adopted in the EU serves as a solid justification for initiatives to develop space infrastructure, health care, food security, etc., as branches of ensuring the security of society. Hence, measures to counter hybrid threats are understood as programs to protect critical infrastructure, health, etc. Operations against hybrid threats in such areas imply, for example, the fight against sabotage in food production or misinformation discrediting scientific approaches in medicine; i.e., they provide an objective benefit. Such operations begin to acquire a negative tenor when they are aimed at squeezing out an economic competitor, limiting the opponent's freedom of speech in the information space, and expanding military blocs.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCE OF COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS IN THE EU

The experience of the EU in combating hybrid threats is considered using examples from only a few areas (prevention of terrorism, suppression of propaganda, cybercrime, and disinformation related to the coronavirus infection pandemic). Since mid-2020, these threats have increased around the world, and there are predictions artificial intelligence will increasingly be used for criminal purposes [Caldwell, Andrews, Tanay, and Griffin, 2020]. The pandemic and the associated crisis are being used by extremists and terrorists to spread their ideas. At the EU level, a number of agencies are responsible for countering the above threats, including the EU agencies for cooperation in the field of law enforcement (Europol), criminal justice cooperation (Eurojust), and the EU cybersecurity agency (ENISA).

A systematic approach to countering hybrid threats is being implemented in such key areas as the modernization and harmonization of legislation, the blocking of funding channels for the actors of hybrid threats, and the cooperation of supranational EU structures with national authorities (not only of the member states but also of third countries) within the framework of special operations. Technical security solutions are often provided by their developers, private companies. The unquestionable advantage of the system for combating hybrid threats in the EU is the reliance on expert knowledge, for which cooperation is established with as many specialists as possible, not only from security structures but also from the civil sphere, which makes it possible to assess the consequences of the measures taken for different groups and layers of society.

A useful example of coordinating the operational work of law enforcement officers of the EU, its member states, and third countries is EMPACT (European

¹ NATO Allied Command Transformation, 2010. Bi-SC Input to a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats, August 25. https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2010/20100826_bi-sc_cht.pdf. Cited December 15, 2021.

² European External Action Service, 2021. A Europe that Protects: Countering Hybrid Threats. https://www.dsn.gob.es/sites/dsn/files/hybrid_threats_en_final.pdf. Cited December 7, 2021.

³ See Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (approved by the President of the Russian Federation on December 25, 2014, no. Pr-2976).

⁴ In this term, one can notice the influence of the concept of *proxy wars*—conflicts in which a third party pursues its interests without open participation while supporting one of the warring parties (the latter acts as a conductor ("proxy")) [see Mumford, 2013, p. 40].

Multidisciplinary Platform for Combating Crime), which brings together specialists from law enforcement and judicial bodies, EU agencies, customs and tax services, and private companies. Europol reports are used within EMPACT by the Commission and President of the Council of the EU to advise Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs, who take the EU's priorities in the fight against crime for four years as the basis of national operational action plans. EU and nation-state coordinators organize joint police operations, which usually last several days or weeks.⁵ The EMPACT platform has shown its effectiveness, particularly in the fight against cybercrime, including the detention of twelve suspects in cyberattacks against critical infrastructure on October 26, 2021. The operation was attended by officers from Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the United States, Ukraine, France, and Switzerland,⁶ which shows the high possibilities for coordinating such work by EU agencies, including those outside it.

Expert networks remain an important tool in the fight against the described group of hybrid threats, in particular, the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), created by the EU Commission in 2011 and uniting 6000 practitioners in the member states, working with groups at risk of terrorist recruitment, as well as with active sympathizers of terrorists and extremists.⁷ Network members share positive experiences, particularly in working with young people or using new ICTs. For example, the "Gaming with the Police" project, launched in the Netherlands in 2020, connects police officers with young people from risk groups in online games;⁸ at present, this practice is used by 21 police teams in the country. The Belgian Federal Police shares its practice of interviewing children returned from conflict zones in the Middle East using a special protocol adapted to work with children.⁹ Steps are being taken to disseminate this experience not only through the RAN channels but also on the UN sites.

The cooperation between law enforcement and digital service providers helps create important practi-

cal tools to combat hybrid threats, such as the electronic evidence system. The SIRIUS project has been implemented since 2017 jointly by Europol and Eurojust in cooperation with the European Judiciary Network and offers guidance, training, and tools to access data required in criminal investigations and held by online service providers. These tools are available to law enforcement and judicial authorities through a special closed online platform and mobile application.¹⁰ Europol and Eurojust view the project as an important step in formalizing cooperation between law enforcement and private companies, although its activity is still largely dependent on the goodwill of the latter. The adoption of the Digital Services Act, designed to strengthen the control of online platforms by EU institutions, will accelerate the introduction of mandatory assistance from digital service providers to law enforcement agencies.

Combating hybrid threats means not only stopping the activities of criminal actors but also conducting information campaigns to prepare society for protection against a growing threat or minimizing information and psychological damage from the actions of intruders. The participants in such campaigns are representatives of supranational EU institutions, national governments, media, business, and civil society institutions. Prevalent is the participation of EU agencies in information operations, among which is the Europol-initiated termination of the activities of 21 websites of groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, banned in Russia, in October 2021.¹¹ The removal of content by Europol remains the main method of countering terrorist propaganda on the Internet. It receives more attention at the official level than, for example, the dissemination of counternarratives, developed primarily by representatives of civil society, or the redirection of search engine users to sites exposing terrorism (a method used by online platforms). In curbing pandemic-related disinformation, the EU is also relying on cooperation with major online platforms, for which the signing of the Code of Practice on Disinformation has made this work mandatory.¹² In this area, tools to monitor and rank materials using artificial intelligence, the dissemination of counternarratives through the joint efforts of online platforms, governments, and the media are used.

⁵ Eurojust, 2021. *EMPACT leaflet*. <https://www.eurojust.europa.eu/empact-leaflet>. Cited December 7, 2021.

⁶ Europol, 2021. *12 targeted for involvement in ransomware attacks against critical infrastructure*. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/12-targeted-for-involvement-in-ransomware-attacks-against-critical-infrastructure>. Cited December 7, 2021.

⁷ European Commission, 2021. *Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)*. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran_en. Cited December 7, 2021.

⁸ European Commission, 2021. *Gaming with the police*. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/collection-inspiring-practices/ran-practices/gaming-police_en. Cited December 7, 2021.

⁹ European Commission, 2021. *Interviews of returnee children*. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/networks/radicalisation-awareness-network-ran/collection-inspiring-practices/ran-practices/interviews-returnee-children_en. Cited December 7, 2021.

¹⁰ Europol, 2021. 3rd Annual SIRIUS EU Digital Evidence Situation Report. European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, The Hague, Netherlands, p. 9.

¹¹ Europol, 2021. *Germany, the UK and Europol target violent jihadist websites*. <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/germany-uk-and-europol-target-violent-jihadist-websites>. Cited December 7, 2021.

¹² European Commission, 2021. *Reports on June Actions—Fighting COVID-19 Disinformation Monitoring Programme*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/reports-june-actions-fighting-covid-19-disinformation-monitoring-programme>. Cited December 7, 2021.

Of course, the agencies also discuss issues of foreign interference in EU affairs, which are currently deeply politicized. Europol refers to the EBU, repeating that state actors are spreading disinformation in an effort to destabilize governance in the European Union,¹³ but the department's official website does not mention the specific practice of combating foreign interference. More attention is paid to this area by ENISA, the reports of which provide data on state-sponsored cyberthreat subjects;¹⁴ however, security practitioners generally avoid overly politicized assessments (including in the publications analyzed above).

HYPERPOLITICIZATION OF COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS

In the practice of countering foreign interference in EU affairs, excessive politicization is clearly manifested, including in economic issues. The clash of business interests and fierce competition are fundamentally inherent in capitalism. However, political elites are now increasingly involved in economic rivalry in the exchange of accusations of hybrid threats. This ultimately affects the quality of life and information and psychological security of citizens. In the process of squeezing Chinese and Russian companies out of the European market under the slogans of combating hybrid threats, one can trace both the economic interest of local and American suppliers and the political interest of the "Atlantists" as part of the European elite (which reduces not only the quality of EU international cooperation but also the ability of European US allies to strengthen real strategic autonomy [Danilov, 2021, p. 19]). Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are considered by the Atlantists as the primary object of Russian hybrid influence, which "is due to the continued energy dependence of these countries on Moscow" [Smirnov, 2020, p. 15].

The restriction of foreign influence is being undertaken in the EU using a scheme reminiscent of the set of measures to combat criminal actors, but with a number of differences. Thus, direct legislative bans on the activities of organizations from an opponent country (denied at the official level) can be replaced by bureaucratic obstacles (many stages of contract consideration, risks of vetoing, etc.) and sanctions pressure (even though it reduces the possibility of making weighted solutions [Biscop, 2021, p. 2] beneficial to both parties). Informational and psychological influence on citizens to discredit the opponent is being exerted, just like in the fight against terrorist propaganda, through all possible channels. Public state-

ments by representatives of the leadership of the EU, its member states, and politicians, broadcasting a message about the actions of the opponent country as a hybrid threat, are accompanied by information campaigns by specialized structures (such as the joint EU–NATO Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats) or through relevant publications. Third parties (business entities, private think tanks, representatives of the scientific community, etc.) are involved not only in assessing the current situation or practical decisions (for example, removing content distributed by an opponent) but also in public politicized statements. Setting the agenda in the media remains an important information lever.

Indicative in this regard are information campaigns involving government bodies and the media carried out against the Russian and Chinese presence in the European market [Seaman, 2021, p. 7]. According to the Swedish Ministry of Defense, "Disinformation and hybrid activities sponsored by state actors such as China and Russia are part of a new normal."¹⁵ The European Values Center, a member of the EU strategic communications group for the east, launched the Kremlin Watch project, where the Russian leadership is accused of trying to put pressure on countries economically dependent on Russian energy to force them to support the Nord Stream 2 project [Svárovský et al., 2019, p. 6].

In the EU countries, government agencies distribute publications containing accusations against China of industrial espionage, and the scientific community is almost directly referred to as its nontraditional subject (for example, in a publication of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution of Germany¹⁶). Chinese companies are becoming targets for reputation attacks [Pashentsev, 2020, pp. 15–16]. All this, of course, has a negative impact on the reputation of not only business but also Russia and China themselves among Europeans. In 2020, the attitude toward Russia was extremely negative in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands (at least three-quarters of the citizens of these countries).¹⁷ The growth of anti-Chinese sentiment was manifested in protests against the creation of a large Chinese university in the center of Europe [Shishelina, 2021, p. 28].

An example of a combination of legislative and informational measures is the campaign to oust the

¹⁵Regeringskansliet, 2021. "France and Sweden to further develop defence cooperation." <https://www.government.se/opinion-pieces/2021/09/france-and-sweden-to-further-develop-defence-cooperation/>. Cited December 7, 2021.

¹⁶Spionageabwehr, 2021. *Chinas neue Wege der Spionage. Single Point of Contact—SPOC*, [online] 1, pp. 30–34. <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/SharedDocs/publikationen/DE/2021/spoc-wirtschaft-und-wissenschaft-schuetzen.html>. Cited December 7, 2021.

¹⁷Huang C., 2021. *International opinion of Russia and Putin remains negative in 2020*. <https://pewrsr.ch/3888Ncl>. Cited December 7, 2021.

¹³Europol, 2020. *Catching the virus cybercrime, disinformation and the COVID-19 pandemic*. https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/catching_the_virus_cybercrime_disinformation_and_the_covid-19_pandemic_0.pdf. Cited December 7, 2021.

¹⁴ENISA, 2021. *ENISA Threat Landscape 2021*, European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), Attiki, Greece, pp. 16–23.

Chinese telecommunications company Huawei from the EU countries. At the EU level, the Toolbox¹⁸ and the Report on risk assessment of 5G networks security¹⁹ indicate the possible interference of third countries in EU affairs if the 5G supplier has strong ties with the government of the country of origin or if the government can put pressure on the supplier in any form. The latter has been the subject of controversy since practically no company is completely free from the influence of the government of its home country. In the case of China, the reason for noncooperation in the EU countries is the National Intelligence Law, according to which Chinese companies must cooperate with the national intelligence service. A number of EU countries have already banned the use of Chinese 5G equipment; an example is Sweden, where telecom operators must exclude it from their infrastructure until 2025.

In Belgium, a scandal involving Huawei erupted in December 2020. The company sponsored an article by lawyer E. Vermulst criticizing the protectionist law on security measures for the implementation of 5G, which was forcing Chinese manufacturers out of the Belgian market. Later, this article, as well as several others, were circulated on Twitter using 14 fake accounts (according to the New York–based online disinformation investigation agency Graphika, their profile pictures were generated using artificial intelligence²⁰). Huawei representatives retweeted messages from fake accounts: according to Graphika, Kevin Liu (Huawei's head of communications in Western Europe) made 60 such retweets within three weeks, and the official Huawei Europe account, 47. The agency admitted that it was impossible to establish who stood behind the incident. Of course, the mere fact that Huawei managers reposted tweets of fake profiles was a rash move. However, despite the uncertainty of the situation, several Belgian civil servants publicly accused Huawei of attacking the government's reputation.²¹ Thus, the information was introduced into the already prepared infosphere, where the actions of companies from China are used to discredit the country.

Both the media of the EU countries and its government structures provide a platform for politicians who

demand further pressure on Russia and Belarus. Certain double standards in the fight against hybrid threats are evidenced by S. Tikhonovskaya's speech from the rostrum of the European Parliament; Tikhonovskaya de facto openly called for the undermining of public trust (one of the hybrid actions of which the EBU accuses potential opponents) in the Belarusian president, stating the need for the EU to use a "non-traditional" approach by reaching out to Belarusian civil society on the ground,²² in particular, by initiating the nonrecognition of the Belarusian authorities.

On November 28, 2021, during the visit of NATO Secretary General J. Stoltenberg to Latvia and Lithuania, President of the EU Commission U. von der Leyen called for closer cooperation between the EU and NATO in the fight against hybrid attacks.²³ During this meeting, Director of the Joint EU–NATO Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats T. Tiilikainen accused Russia, China, and Iran of using nontraditional hybrid methods to compensate for the lack of influence at the international level, and the Belarusian government, of deliberately organizing a migration crisis.²⁴ Attempts to connect the latter with the movements of the Russian military against the backdrop of accusations against Russia of plans to invade Ukraine are not new in the context of reports about the instrumentalization of migration on the Russian side (for example, in 2015 a number of such publications appeared in the Finnish media [Alenius, 2021]). There is reason to believe that in the EU, in a situation where "interests in the field of migration policy at different levels of government do not always coincide, and conflicts arise" [Potemkina, 2020, p. 109], blaming, first of all, external actors (Belarus and Russia) is used by the part of the European elite that seeks further confrontation.

CONCLUSIONS

Both in EU institutions and in the research community, there is no succinct definition of operations to combat hybrid threats. At the same time, the understanding of hybrid threats as practically any (depending on the political situation) actions of the opponent serves as a justification for applying countermeasures to the latter.

In the fight against global threats such as terrorism, cybercrime, and the spread of false medical data, the EU takes a systematic approach, where practice is constantly supported by expert knowledge. This makes it possible not only to assess the level and degree of convergence of threats to critical infrastructure and the infosphere, as well as the ability to counter them,

¹⁸European Commission, 2020. *Cybersecurity of 5G networks—EU Toolbox of risk mitigating measures*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/cybersecurity-5g-networks-eu-toolbox-risk-mitigating-measures>. Cited December 7, 2021.

¹⁹European Commission, 2019. *Member States publish a report on EU coordinated risk assessment of 5G networks security*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_6049. Cited December 7, 2021.

²⁰Graphika, 2021. *Fake Cluster Boosts Huawei*. Graphika Reports. <https://graphika.com/reports/fake-cluster-boosts-huawei/>. Cited December 7, 2021.

²¹Cimpanu C., 2021. *A network of Twitter bots has attacked the Belgian government's Huawei 5G ban*. <https://www.zdnet.com/article/a-network-of-twitter-bots-has-attacked-the-belgian-governments-huawei-5g-ban/>. Cited December 7, 2021.

²²Agence Europe, 24.11.2021 (Brussels, Belgium).

²³Agence Europe, 29.11.2021 (Brussels, Belgium).

²⁴Hybrid CoE, 2021. *On-going hybrid threats against the EU and NATO*. <https://www.hybridcoe.fi/news/on-going-hybrid-threats-against-the-eu-and-nato/>. Cited December 7, 2021.

but also to develop tactics to combat them constantly, using the latest technical means and mastering the most relevant platforms (evidence of this is the development of a system of electronic evidence, improving the removal of extremist content, monitoring and suppressing cybercrime, and working with young people in their comfort zones, such as online games, etc.). As such initiatives develop, the fight against hybrid threats could become the basis of EU strategic communication as a synchronization of long-term policy and its communication support for internal and external audiences.

At the same time, in politically sensitive issues, such as the fight against foreign interference, a developed system for combating hybrid threats, combining economic, legislative, and political tools with information campaigns, is used in the framework of trade wars and related informational and psychological confrontation. This does not reduce the degree of tension in the EU's relations with Russia, China, and some other countries, increasing the number and strength of hybrid threats, which can lead to a military threat and reduce the EU's ability to achieve strategic autonomy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest.

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Transregional Processes

Politics and Strategy of the United States, the Russian Federation, and China in the Middle East

V. I. Batyuk^{a,*} (ORCID: 0000-0003-1838-8616) and Yu. V. Morozov^{a,b,**,#} (ORCID: 0000-0003-2047-6420)

^a Institute for the U.S. and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 121069 Russia

^b Institute of the Far East, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 117907 Russia

*e-mail: ctas@inbox.ru

**e-mail: morozovyury51@yandex.ru

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Abstract—The “triangle” of America—China—Russia formed during the Cold War of 1945–1991 still has a huge impact on modern world politics. And the balance of power within this “triangle” has been determined and will be determined by the ability of Washington, Moscow, and Beijing to promote their interests in various regions of the planet. Of course, one of the most important of these regions was, is, and will be the Middle East, where the economic, geostrategic, and ideological interests of the leading centers of power in the modern world collide.

Keywords: “Triangle,” military—political strategy, balance of power, economic interests, the Middle East

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INTRODUCTION

The policy of the great powers, the United States, the Russian Federation, and China, in the Middle East remains the focus of the expert community both in Russia and abroad. Thus, the events in Afghanistan in the spring and summer of 2021, for obvious reasons, aroused the keenest interest among the American political and academic elite. According to one of the most authoritative American international experts, W. Mead [8], no one, neither friends nor opponents of the United States, expected such a rapid collapse of the pro-American Afghan ruling regime as a result of the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. Hence, the question: is the American ruling class generally capable of pursuing a consistent and effective foreign policy in the region of the Near and Middle East? The consequences of the Afghan failure for the ideology of American foreign policy did not pass by the attention of American experts. According to Professor J. Munch at Johns Hopkins University, leaving Afghanistan had disastrous consequences for the credibility of the West, whose promises to protect the security of allies threatened by authoritarian competitors such as Russia and China will now sound even more false (J. Mounk, 2021). In general, American international experts believe that the US defeat in Afghani-

stan will have far-reaching consequences for the American military—political strategy in the Middle East.

Among Russian experts on the Middle East, there is a widespread point of view that the gradual weakening of American positions in the region is a long-term trend, and it originated long before the tragic events in Afghanistan in 2021. Thus, researchers of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations O.I. Rebro and M.A. Suchkov state that even President B. Obama proclaimed a course towards a “pivot to Asia,” a policy of gradually transferring foreign policy resources to the Asia—Pacific (Indo—Pacific) region while reducing the American presence in the Middle East and Europe. This course was continued by D. Trump (O.I. Rebro and M.A. Suchkov, 2021, p. 23).

In the collective monograph of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations staff, the coauthors of which are prominent orientalist such as V.V. Naumkin, V.A. Kuznetsov, and I.D. Zvyagelskaya, it is noted that the trend towards the democratization of the “Greater Middle East” following the American model has largely become marginalized. In the wake of the growth of anti-American sentiment in the region and the identification of US policy with the catastrophic military campaign in Iraq, “democracy promotion” is becoming less and less noticeable in the strategic planning of official Washington (Middle East: Politics and Identity, 2020, p. 287).

American and Russian experts agree that the US position in the Middle East is gradually weakening, and this is a long-term trend. At the same time, the

[#] Vladimir Igirevich Batyuk, Dr. Sci. (Hist.) is Chief Researcher at the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Yuri Vasilyevich Morozov, Cand. Sci. (Military) is a Leading Researcher at the Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

positions of the Russian Federation and China have been strengthening in the region in recent years. Russian researcher V.I. Bartenev states that in the 2010s, the Russian Federation made a swift and rather effective return to the Middle East, although so far it has been using international aid instruments on an incomparably smaller scale than the United States, the EU countries, Turkey, or the monarchies of the Persian Gulf (V.I. Bartenev, 2020, p. 106). According to R. Mamedov, senior researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, the reduction of the American presence in the Middle East coincided with the increasing involvement of Russia and China in the processes taking place in the region there. In this regard, R. Mamedov draws attention to the fact that, in recent years, China has become the main investor for the countries of the region, surpassing the United States in this indicator (R. Mamedov, 2018).

AMERICAN POLITICAL STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST REGION

Both Russian and foreign experts on the Middle East have drawn an unambiguous conclusion about the decline in the political commitments of the United States here in recent years. The successive administrations of B. Obama, D. Trump, and J. Biden, with all the party-political differences and personal hostility of these US presidents, are nevertheless forced to pursue a Middle East policy that is characterized by a fairly high degree of continuity in the issue about the need to limit the American military presence in the Middle East. For example, over the past 12 years, the United States has withdrawn its armed forces from Afghanistan and minimized its presence in Iraq and Syria. Washington also rejected the idea of direct American armed intervention in the Syrian and Yemeni conflicts.

More importantly, the American leadership has recently made attempts to provide an ideological justification for reducing the American presence in the Middle East region and in the world as a whole. D. Trump's idea to "make America great again" and J. Biden's concept of "foreign policy for the middle class" provide for the cessation or, in any case, the reduction to a minimum of American armed interference in the affairs of the Middle East (J. Mounk, 2021). Speaking in connection with the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, J. Biden said that the United States was renouncing endless wars in the name of "nation-building" and "expanding democracy." Instead, according to the American president, the United States should focus on confronting its "true strategic competitors," China and Russia [6].

Now that the task of bringing freedom to the peoples of the Middle East through "humanitarian interventions" no longer seems relevant, Washington can pay more attention to other problems and challenges

that the United States faces in the region. And here it is also appropriate to pay attention to the continuity of the American Middle East policy: even in the directive documents of the D. Trump administration, Russia and China were named the main opponents of America, including in the Middle East. For all the criticism of the policies of its predecessor, the Biden administration adheres to the same approaches. Thus, the National Security Strategy, approved by President D. Trump in December 2017 (NSC-2017), stated the following: "China and Russia want to shape a world antithetical to U.S. values and interests. China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor. Russia seeks to restore its great power status and establish spheres of influence near its borders" [5, p. 25]. In principle, the same is stated in the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance signed by President Biden in early March 2021: "China <...> has rapidly become more assertive. It is the only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system. Russia remains determined to enhance its global influence and play a disruptive role on the world stage. Both Beijing and Moscow have invested heavily in efforts meant to <...> prevent us from defending our interests and allies around the world" [4, p. 8].

The American military is also expressing its concern about the active penetration of China and Russia into the Middle East region. Thus, speaking before the Senate Committee on Armed Forces Affairs, the commander of the Central Command (CENTCOM) of the US Armed Forces, General C. McKenzie, drew attention to the active economic penetration of the PRC into the region of the Near and Middle East, including within the framework of the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative. The general was particularly alarmed by the recent Iranian-Chinese agreement on economic cooperation for a period of 25 years, under which China will invest in the economy and infrastructure of Iran in exchange for discounts on Iranian oil. The agreement provides for cooperation between these two countries in the military sphere, which cannot but undermine the American positions in the Iranian direction.

The direct challenge to the United States, according to the General, is the presence of Russia in Syria, which seeks to undermine the US military and political positions in the region. In close proximity to the US military, he said, Moscow received not only an ice-free base in Tartus for its navy, but also a testing ground for new fifth-generation capabilities, technologies and equipment used for electronic warfare, ABM, UAV and information operations. Moreover, Russia will continue to position itself as an alternative to the West, offering its mediation and military experience in regional conflicts, selling weapons without

end-use restrictions, and participating in regional and multilateral organizations and military exercises. At the same time, in some regions of the CENTCOM area of responsibility (for example, in Central Asia), Russia and China, according to General McKenzie, already have stronger economic and military–political positions than the United States. The CENTCOM Commander recommends that the United States intensify its competition with Moscow and Beijing for influence in Central Asia by offering American assistance to the countries of the subregion in securing borders, combating drugs, combating terrorism, and building defense institutions [7, pp. 15–16].

However, these optimistic calculations to undermine the influence of the Russian Federation and China were made even before the start of the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. In the spring of 2021, Washington expected that the regime of Afghan President A. Ghani would last 1–2 years after the US military left the country [9].

Everything, however, went completely wrong. The Afghan catastrophe has already affected the positions of the United States of America in the Middle East region and in the world. One of the immediate consequences of this catastrophe was the decision of the SCO summit (Dushanbe, September 2021) to start the procedure for admitting Iran to this organization. This is the strongest blow to the American policy of isolating Iran in the international arena.

Simultaneously with the decline in the military and political influence of the United States in the Middle East region, there is also an economic “undocking” of the United States and the Middle Eastern states. The “Shale Revolution” allowed the United States to become the world leader in oil production, thereby dramatically reducing its dependence on oil supplies from the Middle East. Having increased its own oil production, the United States has significantly reduced oil imports from the Middle East. If in 2000 the share of Middle Eastern oil in American oil imports was 22.7%, in 2020 it was 9.8% [10].

At present, the dependence of the American economy on the situation with oil production in the countries of the Middle East is not at all the same as it was two decades ago, and this cannot but affect American policy in the region. In the NSC-2017, in the section devoted to the Middle East, a lot was said about the threat from radical Islamism and about the Iranian threat, but nothing was said about the prospects for US economic cooperation with the countries of the region (at the same time, “economic stagnation” and the need for reforms in the Middle Eastern states was noted) [5, pp. 48–50].

Accordingly, the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance of the Biden administration indicated both the “cast-iron” American support for Israel, and the opposition to “Iranian aggression,” and the desire to “resolve armed conflicts” in the region, but not a

word about economic cooperation with countries of the Middle East. It is obvious that both the American ruling circles and the American business community currently have other foreign economic priorities.

Thus, at present, the United States has ceded its status as a major trading partner to China and, apparently, in the political and business communities of the country, this circumstance is not considered as a serious challenge to national interests. At the same time, they cannot afford to forget about the existence of the Middle East: the terrorist threat continues to emanate from the region.

According to General McKenzie, Iran is considered as the main threat to American interests and the interests of partners and allies of the United States in the Middle East region. The second direction of CENTCOM’s efforts is terrorist groups operating in the region (such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, etc.). In third place among the challenges to US security in the Middle East is, according to American estimates, long-term strategic competition with China, combined with opposition from Russia: “These states, each of which pursues its own specific goals, use different approaches. Russia plays the role of a hindrance to the US, using military means, influence operations, and activities in the gray zone <...>. China uses mainly economic means to <...> ensure vital energy supply and trade routes” [7, pp. 4–5].

RUSSIA’S POLICY AND STRATEGY IN THE REGION

Thanks to Russia’s active foreign policy in the Middle East, it managed to return to the global arena in the shortest historical period as one of the leading players here and win the authority of the Middle Eastern states. For this, Moscow actively used a set of diplomatic, military, and other methods.

The doctrinal documents of the Russian Federation note the importance of the Middle East region for its foreign policy. Thus, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, approved by the President on November 30, 2016, states that “Russia will continue to make a significant contribution to stabilizing the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, support collective efforts aimed at neutralizing threats emanating from international terrorist groups, to pursue a consistent policy of political and diplomatic settlement of conflicts in the states of this region on the basis of respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity and the right to determine their own destiny without outside interference. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a member of the Middle East Quartet of international mediators, Russia will continue to make efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive, just, and long-term settlement of the Arab–Israeli conflict in all its aspects on an international legal basis” [2].

In accordance with these guidelines, at the end of January 2020, Russian Foreign Minister S. Lavrov, at a meeting of the UN Security Council, proposed holding a ministerial meeting on a Middle East settlement with the participation of Israel and Palestine. At the same time, he noted that Saudi Arabia should also be invited to this meeting as the author of the Arab peace initiative. In other words, Moscow's main goal in the Middle East in the near future is to secure for Russia the role of a significant external force in one of the most unstable regions of the world.

Deputy Director of the Department for the Middle East and North Africa of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation A. Skosyrev, speaking at the Valdai Club in February 2021, noted that "Russia proceeds from the need to promote the settlement of all conflicts in the Middle East space exclusively by political diplomatic methods through a constructive dialogue without discrimination against individual parties, also under the auspices of the UN and with the involvement of key regional organizations, primarily the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Russia's second task is to prevent the emergence of new dangerous military crises in the Middle East. The third task is to turn the Middle East into a region of peace, good neighborliness, and mutually beneficial cooperation" [1].

In addition, Russia is vigorously developing multifaceted cooperation with the states of the region in the economic and humanitarian spheres, in military-technical cooperation, and in other areas of interaction on the principles of mutual consideration of interests, respect, and trust. Fighting terrorist groups active in the Middle East remains an important task.

As for trade and economic cooperation with the countries of the Middle East, the Russian Federation is faced with the task of expanding its presence in the regional markets for weapons, nuclear fuel, oil and gas, and food, attracting investments from the Persian Gulf countries and maintaining energy prices by coordinating actions with key suppliers of oil and gas in these OPEC countries.

It is already the case that Russia is the main exporter of grain to Egypt and one of the largest suppliers of defense products to the region. Thus, according to SIPRI, Russia accounted for 11% of all weapons imported by the countries of the Middle East from 2015 to 2019 [11, pp. 355–356].

In addition, Rosatom is building the Akkuyu nuclear power plant for Turkey, and it has projects in Jordan as well. The Russian oil company Lukoil is actively working in Iraq. Consequently, Moscow's policy and strategy in the Middle East is based on taking into account the geopolitical and economic interests of Russia and on incentives that contribute to their implementation, which is eloquently evidenced by illustrative data (see Fig. 1).

In the context of the events taking place in the region, the factor of Russia's internal stability is also important for Moscow, given that 12% of the country's population professes Islam (mainly residents of Chechnya, Dagestan, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan). At the same time, the Russian Federation has a significant number of labor migrants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan [D. Trenin, 2016]. It should be added to this that if the Taliban fighters, who seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021, invade the territory of the Central Asian countries, then a wave of refugees from there may overwhelm Russia, and therefore the number of Muslims in its regions with predominantly non-Islamic population will gradually increase. That is why Russia's Middle East policy must also be viewed through Moscow's relationship with the Islamic community.

During the Second Chechen campaign (1999–2009), Russia's first period of rapprochement with the Islamic world took place. It is to this period that the speech of V.V. Putin at the summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the receipt by the Russian Federation of the observer status in this structure refer. The second phase of this rapprochement is taking place today. Its most important intermediate result was the strengthening of Russia's positions in the Syrian Arab Republic. This allowed Moscow to launch the format of negotiations in Astana with Iran and Turkey and bring its relations with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, which are interested in stabilizing the situation in the region, to a new stage of interaction [12].

At the same time, Moscow's military policy in Syria significantly increased Russia's military-strategic weight in the Middle East, because it directly intervened in the conflict when there was a threat of overthrowing Bashar al-Assad and the fall of Damascus under the control of the Islamic State (ISIS). The victory of Islamic extremists in this country could lead to a serious increase in their support throughout the Islamic world, including in the Central Asian region and among the Muslim population of Russia. Therefore, Moscow has adopted a sensible, but at the same time risky strategy in Syria. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation conducted military operations abroad, mainly from the sea and from the air, and together with Turkey and Iran helped Damascus to cope with the separatists, thereby turning Syria into a geopolitical stronghold of the Russian Federation in the region. Moscow managed to agree with Ankara and Tehran on their joint actions in this country. Evidence of this is the negotiations in 2020 in Sochi between V. Putin, R. Erdogan, and H. Rouhani. There, the leaders of the three states discussed the situation in the Middle East, as a result of which the President of the Russian Federation declared that the war in Syria can be considered actually completed [13]. At first glance, it seemed that unanimity reigned

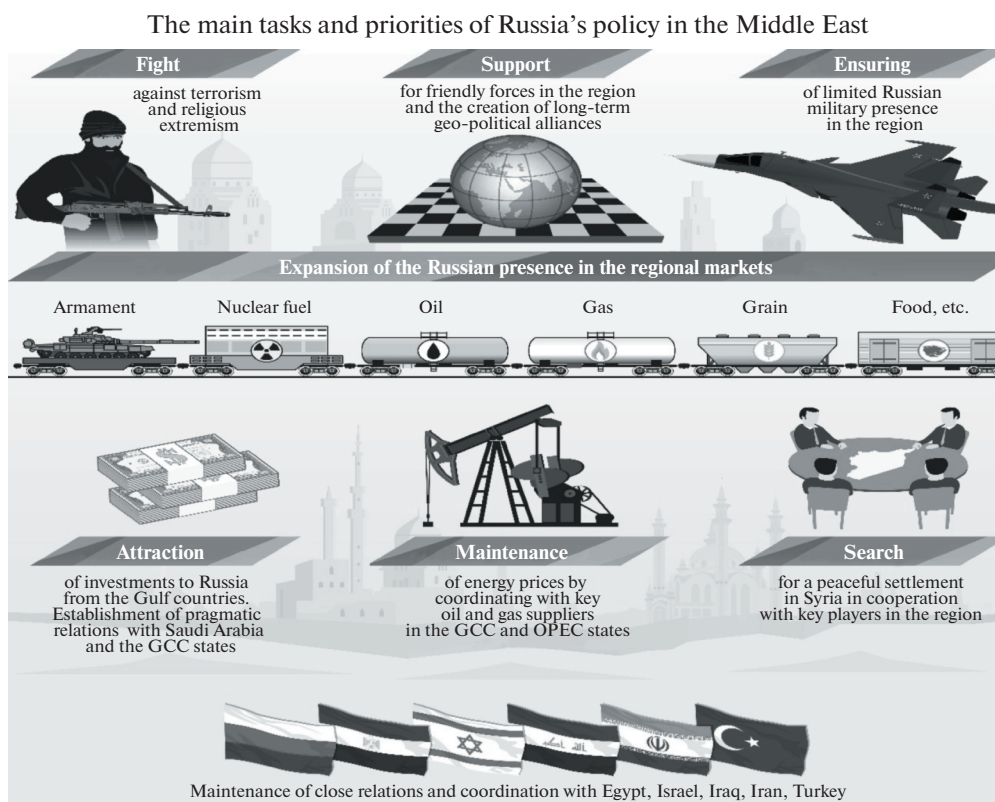


Fig. 1. Valdai International Discussion Club. The main tasks and priorities of Russia's policy in the Middle East. February 19, 2018. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/multimedia/infographics/politiki-rossii-blizhniy-vostok/>. Cited August 15, 2021.

at the Sochi talks, but in fact, each of the participants played his own "Middle East card." For example, the Russian president defended the interests of the Russian Federation in two directions: two Russian military bases will be created in Syria and Russian companies will receive privileges in this country, in connection with which Russia will actively continue to support the Syrian government. The President of the Russian Federation also believes that the final settlement of the situation in Syria should be found within the framework of the Geneva process in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which means holding a constitutional reform and free elections in the country under the auspices of the UN while maintaining the territorial integrity and secular nature of the state.

A huge role in the further strengthening of Russian–Syrian ties should be played by the development of trade and economic ties between the two countries. So, as a result of the visit of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Yu.I. Borisov and Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov to Syria in September 2020, Russia opened a new page in relations with Syria. The economy comes to the fore in these relations. Both Russian guests noted that it would be difficult to establish effective economic cooperation due to Western sanctions, but, as emphasized by Yu.I. Bor-

isov, Moscow and Damascus will try to break the blockade of Syria by joint efforts [14].

The indisputable success of Russian diplomacy is the establishment of cooperation with Turkey and Iran on the Syrian issue. Initially, Turkey took the opposite position to Russia in the Syrian conflict. Ankara supported one of the largest armed groups in Syria, the Syrian Free Army, and only after significant successes of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in their conduct of warfare did it cooperate with Moscow (currently, successful joint Russian–Turkish military patrols are being conducted in northern Syria on the demarcation line of the conflicting sides). At the same time, Turkish President R. Erdogan categorically opposes the creation of any Kurdish autonomy in Syria, because the success of the Syrian Kurds could give additional impetus to the struggle of this ethnic minority in Turkey. Therefore, the main goal of Ankara in Syria is the formation of a buffer zone in its north in order to prevent the implementation of the Kurdish project there. This will allow Ankara to break the ties between the Kurds of Syria and Turkey and to ensure the settlement of Syrian refugees, mainly Sunni Arabs, in the territory created in the border strip of the "security zone."

As for the Iranian leadership, from the very beginning of the Syrian conflict it strongly supported the

government of B. Assad. This support includes not only the delivery of weapons and military equipment (WME) to Syria, but also the training of Syrian military personnel, and the exchange of intelligence data between the military departments of both countries, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran carried the main burden in conducting ground operations in Syria. In addition, Tehran coordinates its policy on Syria with Moscow within the framework of the Astana process.

Both Russia and Iran are aware that their emerging military–political rapprochement must be supplemented by economic cooperation. The visit of Iranian President E. Raisi to Moscow in January 2022 was evidence of the readiness of the parties to open a new page in Russian–Iranian relations. In 2021, bilateral trade reached a record 3.3 billion dollars and, according to the Iranian president, Russian–Iranian trade could reach 10 billion dollars in the coming years [15].

Therefore, it is by no means accidental that in September 2021, with the assistance of Russia, at the 20th SCO summit, a decision was made to admit Iran to the membership of the organization. In this regard, many experts express the opinion that in the future Iran will focus more on the eastern direction. First of all, it is a case of changing the accents of Tehran in its geopolitics in the Middle East and the emergence of new facets of cooperation with the countries of the region in the trade and economic sphere; in the field of energy, transport, banking; and in the field of regional security. It is also important that Iran's permanent membership in the SCO will be a serious protection in the event of military intervention by the United States, because membership in the SCO increases the geopolitical weight of Iran at the expense of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the Russian Federation and China.

At the SCO summit in September 2021, the President of the Russian Federation welcomed the granting of the status of “SCO dialogue partners” to the leading states of the Middle East—Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia [16]. If Moscow pursues a flexible policy and strategy towards these countries, in the future they can form a “belt of Middle Eastern allies” of Russia, provided that it does not repeat its mistakes about the attitude of “old friends,” in particular Iraq, which was previously part of orbit of Soviet influence, and is now under the influence of the United States.

In connection with these circumstances, it would be expedient for Moscow in the near future to clarify certain elements of Russian Middle East policy and strategy. At the same time, the Russian authorities need to be vigilant about Washington's attempts to drive a wedge into the successful development of Russian relations with the states of the region.

CHINA'S GROWING INFLUENCE IN THE REGION: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

The PRC's Middle East policy is guided by the Chinese concept outlined in the document “China's International Development Cooperation in the New Era” published by the PRC State Council Information Office in January 2021. Despite the tremendous economic success of the past 70 years, China remains an emerging economy and its cooperation for development is a form of mutual assistance between developing countries. This interaction with the Middle Eastern countries is carried out within the framework of the One Belt, One Road concept [3].

As for the Chinese strategy of “dual circulation,” it is unlikely that it will affect the implementation of the One Belt, One Road concept in the Middle East. The fact is that this strategy should be considered in the context of China's global plans to reduce the trade, economic, and technological dependence on Western countries and the global production chains [Yu. Kulintsev, 2021], but it is not technologically dependent on Middle Eastern states, and therefore the “double circulation” is unlikely to affect the nature of trade and economic ties between China and the countries of the region.

Unlike Russia, China prefers not to intervene directly with its military force in existing regional conflicts, which corresponds to its approach to the problems of the Middle East, based on the postulate of a “soft” foreign policy. Thanks to this, China's influence in the region is growing rapidly in comparison with the United States, whose effectiveness in resolving the Middle East crises is increasingly being questioned by their regional allies. Beijing has established good partnerships with almost all Gulf countries except Bahrain and is the largest foreign investor in the region. Today, the total volume of Chinese investments in the countries of the Middle East is 177 billion dollars, including 70 billion in the economies of the countries that are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council [17]. At the same time, most of the investments are directed to the traditional allies of the United States, many of which are active buyers of Chinese weapons and military equipment. The PRC is also investing heavily in commercial ports that can easily be turned into naval facilities at other strategic locations in the region, including Pakistan's Gwadar and the Omani port of Duqm in the Strait of Oman. In addition, China considers the Straits of Malacca and Bab el-Mandeb critical to its economic survival, since most of China's energy imports are delivered through these straits. As Sino–US relations deteriorate, Beijing is looking to increase control over these waterways and reduce the US Navy's ability to block them. This is the main reason why China is improving its navy, and a Chinese military base has been established in Djibouti [D. Anderlini, 2020].

In addition, since 2010, there has been a positive shift in Israeli–Chinese relations towards cooperation: Israel was allowed to establish its own pavilion at Expo 2010 in Shanghai, then deals between these countries followed, which allowed Chinese companies to implement a number of infrastructure development projects in Israel, including railways to Eilat, Ashdod, Akko, and the development of the port of Ashdod, while increasing the flow of Chinese investment in the Israeli technology sector. As a result, in 2017, the Israeli government approved an agreement to bring 20 000 workers from China to Israel, and the Chinese *Shanghai International Port Group* won a tender to operate the Haifa port for 25 years. This caused serious concerns in Washington regarding the security of the forces of the 6th Fleet of the US Navy, which is based in this port. At the same time, Tel Aviv rejected Washington's proposal to conduct a comprehensive inspection of the port of Haifa in connection with the participation of Chinese companies in its expansion [China and the Arab World... 2021].

China is also the largest trading and investment partner of Egypt, the largest country in the Arab world. From January to September 2020, the volume of bilateral trade amounted to 10.2 billion dollars, which is 6.6% more than in 2019. At the same time, Chinese direct investment in Egypt increased by 19%, and the volume of Chinese investment by the Egyptian domestic market exceeded seven billion dollars. In the near future, according to the Egyptian Minister for Investment and International Cooperation, Cairo will receive about 30 billion dollars of new Chinese investment, of which 20 billion dollars will go to the construction of the “New Administrative Capital” in the Chinese industrial zone in the Suez Canal area and for the continuation of the construction of a high-speed railway that will connect this capital with all Egyptian cities. In addition, China completed the construction of the first high-voltage power line in Egypt and a joint Egyptian laboratory with the Chinese Institute of Applied Technology [China and the Arab World... 2021].

Along with the development of cooperation with Israel and Egypt, the Chinese side is interested in cooperation with other countries in the region on the principle of mutual benefit, especially through their participation in the implementation of the One Belt, One Road project. This project will play a significant role in expanding China's cooperation with the Arab states in the field of infrastructure and in promoting trade and investment, in addition to nuclear energy, space, new energy sources, agriculture, and other areas [18].

There are many other areas connecting China and the Middle East world—a wide network of economic and trade relations, the Suez Canal, other sea routes, etc. At the same time, China is the largest importer of Middle Eastern oil in the world, in connection with

which China has increased its investment in oil-producing countries and has become their main trading partner. Added to this is the fact that, as a result of the development of Sino–Arab relations, there has been a significant increase in the number of airlines connecting these countries (their figures exceeded 200 flights per month), carrying more than one million passengers annually, which contributes to the cooperation of Arab countries with China and the influx of Arab tourists to China [19].

In addition, Beijing's good relations with the ruling regimes of Muslim countries preclude their moral and material support of the Chinese Muslim Uyghur minority. In joint letters to the UN, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates praised Beijing for its position and welcomed the suppression of Islamic separatists in the XUAR by the Chinese authorities [20].

Nevertheless, with all the successes of its policy in the Middle East, China is facing a number of serious problems in this region. Thus, the conflict potential of the Middle East objectively complicates the implementation of Chinese policy there, taking into account the fact that the influence of the “American factor” on events in the region continues to remain significant. And sanctions imposed by the US and the EU on Iran over the nuclear dispute have limited China's energy policy in the region (even though Iran had previously been China's third-largest supplier of crude oil). In order to maintain economic relations with the United States and the European Union, China was forced to reduce imports from Iran. In addition, due to ongoing military conflicts in the region, Chinese investments in the Middle East are under constant latent threat. Evidence of this is the ISIS forces operating in the region, which not only threaten Chinese oil tankers and transport channels to destabilize China's efforts to establish relations between East and West, but also declared the Chinese province of Xinjiang part of their caliphate. These threats from ISIS in Iraq have forced many Chinese enterprises to suspend their business there. Added to this are some non-economic factors, especially the problems of corruption in those Arab countries, which are detrimental to Chinese investors.

The existence of these problems is partly facilitated by Beijing's Middle East policy, which is based on the principles of non-intervention and neutrality. In this regard, a number of international experts believe that it is expedient for Beijing to change this too “soft” line of behavior in the region, since the situation in the Middle East does not imply such a passive political position and does not fully correspond to the status of the leading world power, which is China. But, despite these problems, cooperation between China and the countries of the Middle East continues to be based on a solid foundation, and China remains the largest consumer of Middle Eastern energy resources, the

demand for which continues to grow. Chinese energy companies have experience of participating in energy development projects in the Middle East, especially in the petrochemical sector. In turn, the businessmen of the region are striving to expand their market shares in China. Aware of these interrelations, Beijing actively interacts with the states of the Middle East through traditional methods of cooperation, such as the Sino–Arab States Cooperation Forum. In parallel, it seeks to create alternative international organizations, as happened with the creation of the BRICS and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (founded in 2016), in which seven Arab countries participated as founding members.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the foregoing, the following conclusions can be drawn.

First, the United States is gradually losing its once-dominant military–political positions in the Middle East region. They were forced to abandon violent “regime change.” The American Middle East strategy is currently in a state of gradual transformation, and the United States is increasingly forced to engage in such regional adversaries as the PRC, the Russian Federation, and Iran, while at the same time abandoning plans to “democratize” the Middle East. Due to a combination of reasons, the interest of American business circles in economic cooperation with the countries of the region is also decreasing.

Second, Russia, defending its interests in the Middle East, has firmly taken the place of one of the most significant players in this region, which was lost in the era of the collapse of the USSR. At the same time, Russia’s modern Middle East policy is determined by the understanding that the problems faced by the states of the region pose a serious threat to it. In this regard, Moscow takes an active part in resolving regional crises, thus becoming a strong extra-regional player capable of influencing regional problems not only by force, as in Syria, but also by diplomatic methods. And its economic ties with all significant forces in the region, as well as the growth of confidence among the leaders of the Middle Eastern states in the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin testify to the strengthening of the positive image of Russia in the Middle East. This was also facilitated by the successfully conducted military operation in Syria by the armed forces of the Russian Federation, which significantly increased their military-strategic weight in the world.

Third, China is consistently expanding its influence in the Middle East, using its economy, investments, and diplomacy for this purpose, preferring not to interfere in existing regional conflicts. At the same time, China has serious advantages in the Middle East, acting as a preferred partner for the states of the

region, given Beijing’s ability to provide them with loans and develop economic cooperation. Beijing considers the Middle East region as an important component of the implementation of the global One Belt, One Road project, in which China managed to establish good relations with all the Middle Eastern countries, in connection with which many Arab countries consider China not only as a reliable partner, but also as a force capable of balancing the American presence in the Middle East. However, despite China’s huge efforts to expand its presence in the region, in the short term, the Chinese side will not be able to replace the United States fully as a key ally for the Gulf states, which still need an American “security umbrella” that protects them against foreign and internal dangers and threats. In addition, the expansion of the Chinese presence in the region is facing problems associated with unresolved military conflicts here, which negatively affect the national interests of the PRC in the Middle East.

Fourth, despite the existence of major disagreements among Washington, Moscow, and Beijing, their constructive interaction could contribute to the solution of a number of serious security problems in the Middle East region [21]. Thus, the United States is a military ally of Saudi Arabia, Russia maintains intensive military–technical ties with Iran, and China is a key partner of these two Gulf countries, on which the security and stability of the zone of this region depends.

As for Chinese–Russian cooperation in the Middle East, the BRICS and SCO platforms can become a promising area for developing contacts between Moscow and Beijing with the countries of the region, which will help China and the Russian Federation to implement joint initiatives in the region. In addition, according to Russian experts, taking into account cooperation along the China–Iran–Russia axis, Moscow and Beijing could define their areas of responsibility both in regards to the restoration of Syria (in September 2021, China expressed its intention to participate in the restoration of this country) and the Middle East as a whole. Another element of Russian–Chinese cooperation could be the connection of the International North–South Transport Corridor, which is being formed along the Russia–Azerbaijan–Iran route with access to India, with the Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative.

It seems that these three great powers—the United States, Russia, and China—could use their traditional ties in the region to strengthen the security of the Middle East.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Transregional Processes

The End of the War in Afghanistan: The Defeat of the United States and the Consequences for Regional Security

N. N. Bobkin[#] (ORCID: 0000-0002-0009-8699)

Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 121069 Russia

e-mail: nnbobkin@rambler.ru

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Abstract—The studies that have generated the present article have been sparked by a timely question: how does the waning of Western military presence in Afghanistan impact the wider region around this country? The implications of this process go far beyond the immediate effects of the reduction of forces by the U.S. and its allies in the coalition led by NATO. The states in close geographic proximity to Afghanistan, as well as other external powers, notably Russia, have interests in how the transformation of the regional security environment occurs. This article provides background information for understanding the Biden administration's decision to complete the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, assesses the reaction of neighboring countries to the rise of the Taliban, and examines the political and military consequences of regime change in Afghanistan and their impact on regional security. Some additional lines of research are considered as needed. The article ends with considerations and conclusions regarding the possible impact of the current situation in Afghanistan on the subsequent US policy in the region.

Keywords: President Biden, Taliban, Russia, China, terrorist threat, regional security

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INTRODUCTION

On August 15, 2021, the Taliban entered Kabul, taking over Afghanistan at a speed that surprised many Afghans and Americans. The final withdrawal of the US military and diplomats, as well as the operation to evacuate American citizens, ended on August 30, 2021. The US withdrawal from the country was predetermined by the February 2020 agreement between the United States and the Taliban.

The Taliban have declared Afghanistan a “free country” and say they want good relations with the United States. Many doubt the accuracy of this statement, as they recall the previous rule of the Taliban in the country from 1996 to 2001. The situation in Afghanistan remains tense and causes serious concern. The country is run by a government of 33 mullahs, many of whom are under UN sanctions and wanted for terrorist activities.

Secretary of State Anthony Blinken warned [1] that Afghanistan would become a “rogue state” unless a peace agreement was achieved between the government and the Taliban. This may be true for the United States, but Afghanistan is not where the map ends

for Russia and the Central Asian states. They cannot do without operational interaction with the de facto government of the Taliban movement. It is not a question of the political recognition of the new leadership of Afghanistan; each country may have its own urgent goals in the current relations with the Taliban. Russia proceeds from the fact that what happened is a reality.

The pragmatism of the Russian position does not please Washington, which believes that the Kremlin is seeking to increase its influence both inside and around Afghanistan. Many American experts speak about it. For example, Foreign Affairs magazine [2] claims that Russia and China, after the Americans left, are trying to undermine any remaining leverage that the United States could use to build a new Afghanistan. At the same time, it omits that the reasons for such a rapid collapse of the state built by the Americans are completely different.

Critical shortcomings in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and self-serving governance focused on corruption and politicking rather than the country's core interests have been defining characteristics of Afghanistan during the two decades of foreign military presence in the country.

The rise to power of the Taliban and the collapse of the former Afghan government raise important ques-

[#] Nikolai Nikolaevich Bobkin, Cand. Sci. (Military) is an Assoc. Professor and Senior Researcher at the Center for Military-Political Studies, Institute for the U.S. and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences (ISKRAN).

tions about the present and future security of neighboring countries and regional stability in general.

THE US WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN CONFLICTS WITH BIDEN'S COMPETENCE NARRATIVE

In the structural explanations of the American withdrawal from Afghanistan, politicians and experts point out many reasons, but none of them is connected with the arrival of President J. Biden to the White House. The prevailing view is that the troop withdrawal is the result of a bipartisan consensus in the United States. The leaders of both political parties decided it was time to leave Afghanistan, even after losing a 20-year war with the Taliban.

In giving the order to withdraw troops, J. Biden acted within the framework of the policy of his predecessor. It was President D. Trump who decided to negotiate with the Taliban. He gave political recognition to the armed group by negotiating directly with its leadership, completely pushing the Afghan government aside. His administration signed a peace agreement with the Taliban in February 2020 [3], in accordance with which the United States committed to a phased withdrawal of all US troops and NATO units from Afghanistan within 14 months from the date of signing on certain conditions. In turn, the Taliban pledged not to allow any group or individual to use Afghan territory to threaten the US and its allies. The Taliban also promised to cut ties with terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda, which carried out the attack on September 11, 2001, while under the auspices of the Taliban.

The February pact also provided, in particular, for the exchange of prisoners, the start of intra-Afghan negotiations, and the lifting of sanctions. It was about the departure of the Americans and the return of the Taliban to power, and not about the establishment of peace.

The American leadership hastened to wishful thinking. It was a big mistake to believe that the Taliban could be interested in a lasting peace.

The agreement reached in Doha was largely oriented towards the Taliban movement, undermined the position of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, and contributed to the release of 5000 Taliban prisoners without concessions from their side. It is fundamentally important that the Afghan government was not a party to the February agreement and did not give its consent to the implementation of its terms. At the same time, the behavior of the Taliban remained contrary to their obligations under the February agreement.

The United States Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, drew the attention of the Trump administration to the fact that the Taliban continue to consider the government in Kabul the result of military occupation and is not

ready to negotiate with it [4]. In fact, the peace process to end the civil war after the agreement with the Taliban was not launched. The Taliban have made no secret of their plans to abolish the country's current constitution, remove the existing government, and gain key influence in the next one.

The United States has come to a consensus that the war in Afghanistan cannot have a military solution. The Taliban, on the contrary, benefited from the war and its continuation in order to return to the leadership of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the Biden administration fulfilled the US agreement with the Taliban. Perhaps the only point of contention that now remains is whether the Trump administration, which had committed itself to withdrawing from Afghanistan, could have provided more competent management of the retreat than J. Biden.

Indeed, the "orderly exit" promised by the 46th president has turned into chaos. In mid-July, he assured that the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan would not be a hasty rout. His administration believed that the prospect of the Taliban taking over the entire country was very unlikely. Today it is obvious that the American leadership underestimated the speed with which the Afghan structures would collapse and the country would again be under the control of the Taliban.

This was a mistake that the Biden administration was warned about. For example, David Petraeus, former director of the CIA and former commander of US forces in Afghanistan, speaking at the Aspen Institute on the eve of the withdrawal, defended his opinion that the United States, before the final withdrawal, certainly had a lot to do to help Afghanistan stabilize the security situation [5]. To do this, the general proposed to reconsider the political decision on the conditions for withdrawing from Afghanistan: to ensure reconnaissance and monitoring of the situation in the country in order to obtain the information necessary for the combat use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and the implementation of direct air support.

President Biden's [6] speech after the withdrawal of US troops from Kabul was intended to close a painful chapter in history of the United States. In it, he attributed the fiasco in Afghanistan to the misguided desire of the American leadership for "state building" in a country that was not ready for it. J. Biden noted that the focus of the United States should have been the fight against terrorism, and not state building. This concise explanation seemed to resonate with his audience. In the public discourse of influential American media, Biden's explanation also did not raise significant objections.

However, the problem in Afghanistan does not appear to be that the United States had embarked on a nation-building campaign. If only that were the case. In fact, there was no visible campaign, but instead there was a scattered effort of the entire coalition and

various US government departments and agencies. The lack of clear goals, the inability to use leverage to advance political reforms, and over-reliance on military efforts created conditions that allowed the Taliban not only to maintain their influence, but also to strengthen the militant potential of the movement significantly.

It seems that the prospect of achieving such an understanding in the United States seems far off. Weeks of congressional hearings on the war failed to produce such a consensus. Instead of making a determined effort to identify root causes, the Department of Defense and the State Department tried to avoid blame. And only Ryan Crocker, who served as the US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Kuwait, and Lebanon, stated in his speech [7] that President J. Biden was responsible for the consequences of his decision to leave. According to R. Crocker, the decision to implement D. Trump's plan to withdraw from Afghanistan was wrong. On the part of the Biden administration, this was a concession to the long-standing demand of the Taliban: they were ready to talk with the Americans, but not with the puppet regime in Kabul. As R. Crocker noted, the White House by this step delegitimized the Afghan government and its security forces, initiating a process that ended with their collapse and the return of the Taliban.

Biden's decision to end the 20-year mission in Afghanistan led by the United States resulted in chaos and provoked a new large-scale humanitarian crisis when the Taliban took control of the country [8]. Neither the United States, nor NATO, nor any of the coalition countries have established an effective military presence or strong administration since their departure.

Assessing the first year of President Biden's foreign policy, experts noted that his first mistake was that he was unable to revise or completely abandon the Trump administration's erroneous agreement with the Taliban. Washington had made too many concessions to the Taliban at the expense of the Afghan government and security forces.

Biden's second mistake is cited by many as his refusal to leave a small American counterterrorism presence in the country, supplemented by several thousand NATO troops, which would have provided the United States with leverage in peace talks with the Taliban.

Thirdly, according to experts, the Biden administration mismanaged the process, abruptly withdrawing all American troops and 16000 contractors at once, without having a plan for the safe evacuation of Americans and Afghan allies. The President refused any discussions about the ability of the Afghan army to defend the country after the withdrawal of American military support.

Let us agree that the hasty departure and chaotic evacuation left a stain on the global image of the United States and the foreign policy track record of J. Biden. If not for his administration's decision to continue sending humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, President Biden would have earned a failing grade.

RETURN OF THE TALIBAN TO POWER AND SECURITY ISSUES

The rapid return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan has given a strong signal to neighboring countries in the region that their security is once again under threat. For more than 20 years, the Afghan Taliban waged war against the United States and foreign forces, but now they need to transform from a handful of insurgents into a group that runs the country. Can the Taliban achieve sustainable peace?

Much depends on how the Taliban will behave in the future and how they will be able to fulfill their promises. Some factions of the Taliban are now trying to design a modified version of the group based on this new awareness of the realities of the world. However, extremist groups within the Taliban want a return to a policy similar to that pursued by the regime in the 1990s [9].

By early 2022, there was little indication that the Taliban in power could prove to be more effective and more stabilizing than the foreign-backed, mixed governments of the past 20 years. If we turn to history, we can hardly expect the appearance in Kabul of a stable government capable of controlling the whole of Afghanistan. The struggle between different ethnic and religious communities, the rivalry of leaders and clans within the victorious Pashtuns, the de facto autonomy of the country's regions, and periodic armed clashes seem inevitable.

As for terrorist threats from Afghanistan, there are fears that their growth is quite possible [10]. At the time of the decision to finally leave the country, J. Biden argued that the threat of terrorism from Afghanistan was low and would be manageable in the foreseeable future. Many experts disagree with this assessment. In the author's opinion, this assessment was erroneous, and with the return of the Taliban to power, the threat increases. The Taliban are deeply factionalized, and divisions within them are likely to escalate over power struggles in which the various factions of the Taliban may cooperate with terrorist forces operating from Afghanistan [11].

Taliban-backed groups include al-Qaeda and its local affiliates, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), various Central Asian jihadists, as well as anti-Indian and anti-Chinese jihadists such as the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP). There is also a significant foreign fighter force in various groups, including al-Qaeda. In addition, the Islamic State (IS) affiliate

in Afghanistan, a rival to the Taliban, appears to be recovering from military casualties.

Most of these groups face restrictions, but they retain important strengths despite years of counterterrorism pressure by the United States [12]. This general landscape makes it impossible to interpret the major terrorist degradation that the J. Biden's administration suggests.

There is another equally dangerous aspect. The defeat of the United States and the victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan have become significant milestones for global jihadism and are likely to enhance their morale and strength significantly. There are fears that ISIS, which has lost control of territories in Iraq and Syria, may return to its insurgent roots and focus on organizing terrorist attacks. Various terrorist groups gleefully celebrated the Taliban's conquest of Kabul on chat rooms and other online platforms, promising to resume global jihad.

The Biden administration points to the anti-terrorism guarantees that the Taliban provided as part of the agreement signed in February 2020 between the United States and the Taliban. Indeed, it contains a number of detailed commitments regarding the actions the Taliban must take to prevent the use of Afghan territory by terrorist groups. But will the Taliban comply with them? So far, it is clear that the Taliban has ruled out cooperation with Washington to contain extremist groups in Afghanistan, having taken an uncompromising position on this issue at talks with US representatives in Doha in October 2021 [13].

Another argument of the Biden administration is that the Taliban have allegedly learned the lesson taught by the United States in 2001 in connection with providing asylum to Al-Qaeda and supporting terrorist groups, and that now, for fear of a new armed clash with the United States, they will not allow these groups to operate from Afghanistan. These expectations appear to be devoid of common sense. Get out of a war to menace a new one?

The traditional threat to Afghanistan associated with the ethnic conflict between the Pashtuns (the Taliban is predominantly a Pashtun movement) and Afghan Tajiks also remains. The tough stance of non-recognition of the Taliban, already formulated by the government in Dushanbe, suggests that this country may also be drawn into the conflict.

Tajikistan feels a strong connection with the Tajiks in Afghanistan, who are not much outnumbered by the Pashtuns. In such a pronounced form, this does not apply to other neighboring countries of Central Asia. Of course, the leadership of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan also cannot ignore the interests of ethnic Turkmens and Uzbeks living in Afghanistan. But their numbers are much smaller. As with other communities, previous estimates, though disputed, have suggested that Uzbeks (9%) and Turkmens (3%) make up about 12% of the Afghan population in total.

There is another important factor in Dushanbe's relations with the Taliban. There are many Tajik militants from the Jamaat Ansarullah organization, banned by the government of Tajikistan, in the ranks of the Taliban. This grouping, founded in 2009–2010 in order to overthrow the legitimate government in Dushanbe, actually ensured the victory of the Taliban in Badakhshan and controls large territories there today [14].

One cannot exclude the possibility that the conflict between Iran and a number of Arab countries in the Middle East, primarily Saudi Arabia, could be transferred to Afghanistan, often taking the form of a Shiite–Sunni clash. The penetration of IS into Afghanistan and Pakistan is one of the manifestations of this trend at the present time, as are the recent terrorist attacks against the Shiites in Afghanistan. Not only IS, but also a number of militants associated with other Sunni groups from Central Asia and other countries are actively migrating from the Middle East to Afghanistan [15].

However, by early 2022, the Taliban controlled most of Afghanistan, and there was no organized resistance to Taliban rule. The exception is the armed struggle against Kabul, waged by the Afghan branch of ISIS, known as IS-Khorasan.

This indicates that the new Taliban government, even if desired, cannot guarantee the cessation of terrorist activities in the country, that is, the terrorist threat from Afghanistan remains.

This also applies to al-Qaeda. A significant part of its leadership continues to be based in Afghanistan, and its ties with the Taliban are still close, based on ideological similarities [16]. The Taliban cooperated with al-Qaeda, often through the Haqqani network, the leader of which Khalil Haqqani became Minister of the Interior in the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which was re-established after the Americans left.

There is a risk that the extremists will not stop there and will try to draw neighboring states into the orbit of their influence, including the republics of Central Asia, Russia's allies in the CSTO. If one of them is attacked by terrorists, Moscow, based on treaty obligations, will be obliged to intervene.

For the countries of Central Asia, the first months after the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan were relatively calm. The situation on the border is under control, crowds of refugees did not flood into the region, and radical groups inspired by the successes of the Taliban, ready to overthrow local regimes, did not immediately appear inside the countries. This, however, does not mean that there are no threats from Afghanistan to the countries of Central Asia; much will depend on what course the Taliban will choose and where the Afghan crisis will turn in general.

With the Taliban having come to power, Russia has no plans to increase its military presence in Kyrgyzstan

or Tajikistan, and so far there are no signs that it is seeking to open new bases in other countries of Central Asia.

On the pages of even serious publications on international issues (for example, in *Foreign Policy* magazine), one can come across statements such that, allegedly, after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Russia and China will try to undermine any remaining leverage that Washington could use to build a new Afghanistan [2]. This is at a time when Washington has no alternative peace plan for Afghanistan.

However, the key words describing Moscow's immediate reaction to the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 are pragmatism, relative calm, restraint, and recognition of the reality of Taliban control over the country. The Russian embassy in Kabul expressed in advance its readiness to cooperate with the new *de facto* authorities. But Russia, like most other states, is in no hurry to officially recognize the Taliban, or even to remove them from its list of terrorist organizations. Moscow has conditioned these moves on the behavior of the Taliban in order to maintain a few direct, diplomatic sources of influence on the new Afghan authorities who seek international legitimacy.

As far as China is concerned, the US withdrawal makes direct sense to Beijing from a strategic perspective, as the Sino–US rivalry is likely to become the dominant theme of international politics in the coming decades. President Biden has made China a major focus of Washington's foreign policy. His administration has been quick to demonstrate that US military power enables the United States to fulfill its global obligations. As troops withdraw from Afghanistan, they have staged the largest military exercise since the Cold War of the 1940s and 1980s, which analysts say was intended to send a signal to Russia and China that the United States can fight wars on several fronts at the same time. The *Washington Wall Street Journal*, assessing this show of military force unprecedented since the 1980s, concluded: "U.S. tightens focus on China after Afghanistan withdrawal" [17].

Beijing was neither surprised nor frightened. The Chinese newspaper "Global Times," which covers international issues from the point of view of Beijing, stated that China is no longer the same country that it was a century ago, and advised Washington, which considered it as its main strategic competitor, to follow the rules of the game of great powers and not test China on strength [18].

The signing by Washington of a new Treaty on Security with Australia and Great Britain and the establishment of the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) union is rightly considered as a step aimed at countering China. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin explained that the Biden administration had decided to move closer to Australia in the face of China's belligerent behavior and that

even before the announcement of its creation, he had discussed "China's destabilizing activities" with Australian ministers [19].

When considering China's relations with the new regime in Afghanistan, it is obvious that their nature depends to a decisive extent on whether or not each side interferes in the internal affairs of the other. For Beijing, this means that the Taliban cannot export extremism to China's troubled region of Xinjiang. China fears that Uyghur militants may step up their terrorist activities in Xinjiang through Afghanistan after the victory of the Taliban. It is important for the Taliban that the Chinese authorities turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in Afghanistan in exchange for withdrawing support for Muslims in Xinjiang. According to Beijing, such an exchange is possible, because China's participation in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan may show some other countries how Beijing supports regimes against which the United States pursues a policy of sanctions and international isolation. "China will be our main partner and represents a great opportunity for us because it is ready to invest in our country and support reconstruction efforts," said a Taliban spokesman [20].

As for economic interests, they are of considerable importance, but they are not decisive. In 2019, China was the fifth largest export destination for Afghan goods after the UAE, Pakistan, India, and the United States [21]. For Beijing, it is more important to gain access to minerals and strategically important transport routes.

Pakistan has a long history of cooperation with the Taliban. Pakistan was one of only three countries to recognize the Taliban government in the 1990s, and the last to break official relations with it in 2001. Islamabad helped rebuild the group after it was overthrown by US forces later that year. For nearly two decades, Pakistan has provided Taliban leaders with shelter and medical care for wounded militants. This assistance helped the Taliban survive. It is hard to argue that the solution to the Afghan problem largely depended on the policies of Islamabad, but such influence is unlikely to continue now that the Taliban are in full control of Afghanistan.

Taliban leaders no longer need safe haven in neighboring Pakistan, and the military arsenal they inherited from the Afghan army and departing US troops eliminates the dire need for Pakistani weapons. Pakistan is losing leverage at a time when it itself may become dependent on Kabul for security [22].

The rise of the Taliban in Kabul will inevitably further inspire Pakistani insurgent or terrorist groups with the same ideological roots and the same goals as the Taliban. The most dangerous group of this kind is the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) [23]. While the Pakistani security forces have succeeded in largely limiting the terrorist potential of the group, possible orderly contact between the two movements on both

sides of the border and the resumption of TTP terrorist activities in Pakistan remain a major concern for Islamabad.

The Taliban's victory represents a huge loss of influence for India, which was a major development partner in Afghanistan during the American presence but had not previously entered into a serious relationship with the Taliban. Meanwhile, Pakistan has made a determined effort to end India's presence in Afghanistan, with the support of longtime allies of the Taliban and the Haqqani network. The prospect of expanding Chinese influence may well lead to a further decline in Indian influence both in Afghanistan and in the region.

India has serious concerns that Afghanistan could be used as a springboard for terrorist attacks on its interests. Anti-India terrorist groups, including the Pakistani-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohamed, are present in Afghanistan and have reportedly taken active part in the Taliban military campaign [24].

For now, the Indian government is trying to clarify the intentions and actions of the new Taliban-dominated government in Kabul before making tough political decisions. Decades of investment in infrastructure and capacity building, and the resulting soft power, are not eroded. India's support for the Afghan people and efforts to stabilize Afghanistan on the basis of a regional consensus will undoubtedly continue.

It is rightly stated that in the peaceful development of events in Afghanistan, perhaps one of the most interested parties is neighboring Iran [25]. In the years leading up to the 2001 US invasion, the Taliban had a tense relationship with Tehran. The confrontation between the two sides escalated to such an extent that the Iranian government and the forces of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) actually helped American troops occupy Afghanistan then. This was partly due to the enmity between Iran and the Taliban, and to a greater extent, to Tehran's fears that Washington could perceive its refusal to cooperate with the international coalition as a hostile act and thereby aggravate relations with the United States. Over time, the Iranian strategy gradually changed [26]. Iran has not stopped the Taliban from creating security problems in Afghanistan and increasing pressure on US troops, even though Shiite Iran and the Sunni Taliban are not natural partners. With the appearance of an ISIS branch in Afghanistan in 2015, Tehran found another area for cooperation with the Taliban—detering the jihadists of this group, whom Iran considered a threat to its borders.

Following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, several Iranian officials hailed the collapse of the US-backed government and showed a positive attitude towards the Taliban. At the moment, Iran does not seem to rule out a peaceful outcome of events in Afghanistan and the formation of a post-American government in

Kabul, with which it can have normal good neighborly relations [27]. Tehran's main priority is the internal stability of Afghanistan, which, in turn, is dictated by political pragmatism, generated by the interests of Iran's national security.

In Iran, where three million Afghans already live, a possible new wave of migration is expected. The Iranian authorities intend to exercise caution when accepting immigrants and have introduced a special regime on a number of sections of the Iran-Afghan border. Many Afghans living in Iran, both registered refugees and economic migrants, fear for relatives and friends, especially women who have fallen under Taliban rule. Let us not forget that Iran, as a Shiite-dominated country, has special ties to the Shiite population of Afghanistan and a moral obligation to protect them from any possible sectarian violence. For now, the Taliban have promised not to infringe on the rights of the Shiites, and Tehran hopes that this will remain so when the Taliban's power is consolidated.

CONCLUSIONS

The US war in Afghanistan is a complete failure. It is also a failure of NATO and the European Union. The chaotic and swift collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan marks an ignominious end to American intervention in that country, with dangerous consequences for the region. The Biden administration handled the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan surprisingly poorly. The hasty, ill-planned, and ill-executed US withdrawal was based on an erroneous agreement signed by the Trump administration, which the Taliban openly disregarded.

Comparison of the current situation with the situation after the first arrival of the Taliban government in Kabul in 1996 shows that their current position is much stronger. Before the start of the military intervention of the United States, the Taliban was almost completely isolated in the world. With the exception of a few countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, no other countries have recognized the Taliban regime. And although Afghanistan is still in transition, it can be concluded that terrorist groups pose a serious threat to the Taliban, but not to the point of overthrowing their regime. The government of Afghanistan will be dominated by the Taliban, and other political forces or ethnic groups will play secondary roles.

The Taliban has promised to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a base for terrorist organizations to act against other countries and to fight them to prevent threats to their neighbors. If the Taliban regime does not control Afghanistan well, then the country may again become a safe haven and base camp for international terrorists. The problems of drugs, refugees, and the possible spread of political and social instability in

Afghanistan will also continue to be of serious concern to neighboring countries.

The Biden administration, which believed that Kabul would not be captured by the Taliban after the Americans left, is now asserting that neither ISIS nor al-Qaeda will pose a global threat anytime soon. It is almost certainly wrong.

Washington does not have a peace plan for Afghanistan. Contrary to the American strategy of the last 20 years, the Taliban have become the leading political force there, and external influence on the situation in the country is moving from the United States and NATO to neighboring countries, including China and Russia. The Biden administration pushed away the new Afghan regime led by the Taliban. The policy of Afghanistan has changed radically, and the development of the country is on a completely different trajectory. Moscow and Beijing are more willing to help the new Afghanistan achieve stability and establish normal relations with the international community.

The United States is left with limited leverage, consisting of conditional economic aid, recognition of the Taliban government, lifting sanctions on the movement's leadership, and granting the new government access to international financial systems and international institutions. The Biden administration does not intend to take steps to ease the toughness of its policy towards Afghanistan, led by the Taliban. There is no doubt that the collective punishment of the Afghan people through the country's economy is a backward geopolitical strategy. If the country becomes a "failed" (to use Washington's terminology) state, it will become vulnerable to takeover by terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State of Khorasan.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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Translated by S. Avodkova

Economic Problems

Current Challenges for German Business in the Russian Market

A. V. Kotov[#]

Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

e-mail: alexandr-kotov@yandex.ru

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Abstract—The reaction of leading German companies in the Russian market after the start of the special military operation on the territory of Ukraine is considered. Companies interested in resolving the situation as soon as possible decided whether to leave the Russian market or not. The author analyzed the decisions of firms in the general context of winding down German business activities after 2014. After the acute phase of the pandemic ended, trade and economic cooperation between Russia and Germany showed a tendency to recover. However, since February 24, 2022, German companies with a small number of exceptions have generally supported anti-Russian sanctions. The conceptual typology of firms' decisions, i.e., exit, activity compression, stabilization, and continuation of work in a difficult environment, is explored. It is concluded that the long-term trajectory of the real actions of German companies has fundamentally changed. The analysis made it possible to establish that the foundation of pragmatic market relations towards Russia is being eroded in the German foreign economic policy. This explains why German companies declare their willingness to pay. If during the annexation of Crimea to Russia groups of lobbyists for the interests of the German economy fought to maintain contacts, now such efforts are coming to naught.

Keywords: Russia, Germany, European Union, sanctions, trade and economic cooperation, decision strategy, German business, external administration

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THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIAN–GERMAN ECONOMIC RELATIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF 2022

After the start of Russia's special military operation on the territory of Ukraine, German companies began to decide on the further strategy for their presence in the Russian market. Their activities, even in nonsanctioned sectors, were under massive reputational pressure generated by the media. Most large German companies announced their withdrawal from the Russian market or radically reduced the scope of their activities, leaving the possibility of selective cooperation under previously concluded contracts.

The main sphere—energy cooperation between the two countries—has not become a safety device for maintaining the achieved level of economic relations. Over the past 50 years, it has played a positive role in promoting detente in international relations [Bros, Mitrova, and Westphal, 2017]. Its influence was also reflected in the inclusion of Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the world financial and economic structures, especially when Berlin in the 2000s set the

tone for Europe's relations with its "resurgent neighbor" [Rahr, 2007; Stelzenmueller, 2009]. N.P. Pavlov rightly noted that the very mechanism of "special relations" between countries in the economic sphere clearly went wrong [Pavlov, 2021]. Other researchers predicted that the process of geopolitical changes and the evolution of economic relations between Russia and Germany based on the consumption of Russia's energy resources could not proceed without conflict [Gutierrez del Cid, 2018].

Although tensions between the two countries have been steadily growing since December 2021, it seemed to experts that after the pandemic downturn in 2020, trade and economic relations were generally gaining a new chance for sustainable growth [Belov, 2020]. In this regard, we note that the coronavirus did not destroy several key areas of cooperation conceptualized by domestic researchers: in hydrogen energy [Belov, 2020a], in the mining industry [Sergeev and Lebedeva, 2016; Pavlov, 2019], in the digitalization of industry and innovation [Belov, 2020; Tarasova, 2020; Posselt and Rauch, 2011], and in the further localization of industrial projects [Belov, 2020b; Fedorov, 2013].

The countries approached the aggravation of the crisis in Ukraine with a trade turnover of about

[#] Aleksandr Vladimirovich Kotov, Cand. Sci. (Econ.), works in the Department of Country Studies, Center for German Studies, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences.

€59.8 billion in 2021, which was 34.1% more than in the previous year (exports and imports of Germany, €26.6 and €33.1 billion, respectively).¹ With a share of 2.3% in Germany's foreign trade, Russia has become one of the 15 most important trading partners.²

As for the landscape of German business in the Russian Federation, according to the latest data from the Bundesbank, in 2019 German investors controlled 472 companies in Russia. They employed almost 129000 people, and the annual sales amounted to €38.1 billion. This corresponds to a share of 1.5% of the global annual turnover that German investors' companies achieved abroad.³ Note that even before the aggravation of the crisis in Ukraine in 2021, the number of firms from Germany in Russia, recorded according to the methodology of the Russian–German Foreign Chamber of Commerce (AHK), had decreased by 8% (to 3651 from 6300 in 2011).⁴

FEATURES OF DECISION-MAKING BY GERMAN FIRMS IN LIGHT OF THE SANCTIONS POLICY

Germany, having taken the lead in formulating and promoting five packages of EU sanctions, unlike in 2014, did not actively try to combine the sanctions policy with a diplomatic approach to resolving the Ukrainian crisis. Previously, it had looked for ways to engage Moscow in broader security issues [Siddi, 2016] to promote democracy and construct a new “Ostpolitik” [Doctorow, 2016] and to deal pragmatically with the consequences of disagreements for the EU economy [Kholodilin and Netsunajev, 2018; Gröschl and Teti, 2021]. As part of the first EU sanctions against the Russian Federation (February 2022), export bans were imposed on a number of essential goods and technologies. Sanctions and other measures to restrict exports are primarily a demonstration of the position of Germany and the EU [Basov, 2016]. Statistics will show in the next few months how they will

affect Germany's foreign trade with the Russian Federation.⁵

As a result of the sanctions decisions, the choice of a further strategy for the presence of German companies in the Russian market clearly fits into the general Western reaction. According to *Yale Researchers*, as of mid-April 2022, about 600 large international companies had left Russia, and about 130 remained.⁶ The list is constantly updated by the staff of the Yale School of Management to reflect the latest changes.⁷

There is every reason to believe that the preservation of relations is not an attempt to take into account Moscow's policy but rather the conservation of activities and the hope for gradual changes in Russia [Handl, 2019]. At the same time, there is an intention to gain a foothold in the Russian market in conditions when the situation with the business climate within the country needs to be seriously improved [Zaritskiy, 2020].

Russia is working out, within the framework of the draft law On External Administration for Managing an Organization,⁸ three possible scenarios for the development of events in connection with the statements of working foreign manufacturers about leaving Russia or suspending their activities on Russian territory: first, the company continues its full-fledged work; second option, foreign owners transfer their shares under the management of Russian partners and subsequently will be able to return to the Russian market; third, the enterprise stops working, production is closed, and employees leave. The Eastern Committee of the German Economy (OstAusschuss, OA) noted in a statement that the new model threatens companies if they stop their activities in the Russian Federation.⁹

Public statements of leading German companies are presented in the materials of their press services or representative offices in Russia. By the nature of the announcements, the decisions made can be classified according to the following options: exit from the market, contraction of activity, stabilization—continuation of work in a nonsanctioned (at least at the moment) framework. Companies that chose to stay are under

¹ Trade between Russia and Germany grew by 34.1% in 2021—trade representative of the Russian Federation. <https://www.finam.ru/analysis/newsitem/tovaroobmen-mezhdurussiey-i-germaniey-v-2021-godu-vyros-na-34-1-torgpred-rf-20220214-204654/>. Cited March 25, 2022.

² Twelfth and 14th most important in terms of total imports and exports; 4th and 5th in imports and exports, respectively, among countries outside the EU.

³ Fakten zum Außenhandel mit Russland. https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2022/02/PD22_N010_51.html. Cited March 20, 2022.

⁴ The website of the German–Russian Chamber of Commerce at the time of writing the note was closed for reconstruction with the termination of access to all previously published expert materials and reviews. Only emergency contacts worked (anti-crisis hotline, communication with management, and representative office in Germany). <https://russland.ahk.de/ru/vvedutsjatekhnicheskije-raboty?ysclid=10zgf9jh9s&cHash=3d57a1daa016d33afbacab5cb813c506>. Cited March 20, 2022.

⁵ Außenhandel mit Russland im Januar 2022 gegenüber dem Vorjahresmonat gestiegen. https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2022/03/PD22_110_51.html. Cited March 20, 2022.

⁶ Not everyone leaves. The world's largest chains that remain in Russia. <https://www.malls.ru/rus/news/krupneyshie-mirovye-seti-kotorye-ostayutsya-v-rossii.shtml>. Cited March 20, 2022.

⁷ Over 600 companies have withdrawn from Russia, but some remain. <https://som.yale.edu/story/2022/over-600-companies-have-withdrawn-russia-some-remain>. Cited April 14, 2022.

⁸ Submitted to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on April 12, 2022.

⁹ Verantwortung für die Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter. <https://www.ost-ausschuss.de/de/verantwortung-fuer-die-mitarbeiterinnen-und-mitarbeiter>. Cited March 20, 2022.

increasing pressure, including from the German business community itself.

Exit from the Market

Representatives of the first, most massive exit strategy are most of the large German companies representing the IT sector, automotive and machine tool building, financial and insurance sectors, and the aviation industry. Thus, the German developer of ERP systems SAP stopped sales in Russia and “paused” further negotiations. The company for five years has gone down from 49% of a share of the Russian ERP market to 11%.¹⁰

In the automotive sector, the *BMW Group* has suspended deliveries to the Russian market and local production of cars due to the current geopolitical situation. Service maintenance of customer cars is not limited yet in compliance with all company standards.¹¹ *Volkswagen*, one of the anchor residents of the Kaluga automotive cluster, has also put its business on pause. The cessation of production of the concern will take place in Nizhny Novgorod at the site of the GAZ group.¹² *Audi*, as part of the *VW* group, due to the difficult situation “by all indicators,” stopped shipping cars to Russian dealerships from February 24, 2022.¹³ The German tire manufacturer *Continental* has stopped business and production in Russia. The company had, like Volkswagen, a plant in Kaluga.¹⁴ *Daimler Truck* stopped working with KamAZ. The company refused to produce trucks and supply components, although it had been cooperating with the Russian concern for 12 years. In addition, *Mercedes-Benz*, the subsidiary of which is *Daimler Truck*, is exploring the possibility of selling its stake in the Russian company (15%).¹⁵

In the banking sector, *Commerzbank* ceased operations in Russia. The same decision was made by one of the largest banks in Germany, *Deutsche Bank*, and it announced the closure of the remaining business. It does not intend to participate in new projects in the Russian Federation, the statement says.¹⁶ The Ger-

man airline *Lufthansa* refrained from flying in Russian airspace until May 27. The reason for this decision was the “current regulatory situation.” The service division of *Lufthansa Systems* refused to cooperate with Russian customers.¹⁷ *Allianz SE* insurance company has stopped insuring new businesses and will not make new investments.¹⁸

In the machine tool industry, at the end of February, *DMG MORI* ceased sales and service activities in Russia, as well as production in Ulyanovsk. This also includes the supply of machines, spare parts, components, and services. In total, about 200 employees of a modern production and assembly plant in Ulyanovsk, as well as three trading and service companies in Moscow, Ulyanovsk, and Yekaterinburg, were affected.¹⁹

Contraction of Activity

Almost a month after the start of the special military operation, not all major international concerns had announced a temporary withdrawal from the market. Companies in the electrical, chemical, pharmaceutical, medical, resource, consumer, and logistics sectors have continued to operate and do not plan to close, while significantly reducing the scale of their activities.

Siemens announced the suspension of product deliveries to Russia. At the same time, the company promised to carry out maintenance and repair of equipment “in strict accordance with the sanctions.” On March 15, it became known that the concern will continue maintenance of the *Lastochka* and *Sapsan* trains in the Russian Federation.²⁰ Agricultural products, medical equipment, and medicines were taken out of the scope of the sanctions. The medical division of *Siemens Healthineers*, one of the world’s largest manufacturers of medical equipment, remained in the market.²¹

The *Bosch* concern said it was studying the sanctions, including measures against individuals. The

¹⁰SAP stopped sales in Russia and “paused” negotiations. https://www.cnews.ru/news/top/2022-03-03_nemtsy_pokidayut_rossiyu_iz-za. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹¹BMW leaves Russia. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/auto/articles/2022/03/01/911583-bmw-uhodit-iz-rossii>. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹²VW-Konzern stellt Russland-Geschäft ein. <https://www.tagesschau.de/wirtschaft/vw-russland-101.html>. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹³Importers began to refuse deliveries of cars to Russia. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/business/articles/2022/02/24/910843-importeri-otkazivatsya-mashin>. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹⁴German tire manufacturer Continental suspends production and business in Russia. <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/14001907?>. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹⁵Daimler Truck suspends work with KamAZ. https://www.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/28/02/2022/621c99b59a79475a82032b79. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹⁶Deutsche Bank leaves Russia. <https://1prime.ru/banks/20220312/836350587.html>. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹⁷Friends among strangers: What will happen to the personnel of outgoing foreign companies in the Russian Federation. <https://www.buhgalteria.ru/article/svoi-sredi-chuzhikh-chtobudet-s-personalom-ukhodyashchikh-inostrannykh-kompaniy-v-rf>. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹⁸Allianz suspends new business and investment insurance in Russia. <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/general/813517.html>. Cited March 20, 2022.

¹⁹“About 200 employees were affected”: DMG MORI closed production in Ulyanovsk back in February,” *Ural-Pressa*, Mar. 15 (2022).

²⁰Plus ASUS and The North Face: List of companies that have stopped or suspended work in Russia. <https://biz.nv.ua/markets/kakie-kompanii-uhodyat-iz-rossii-spisok-poslednie-novosti-50222290.html>. Cited March 20, 2022.

²¹“Everything will be more expensive, more complicated, and slower”: Arkady Stolpner on what will happen to Russian medicine. <https://thebell.io/vse-budet-dorozhe-slozhnee-i-medlennee-arkadiy-stolpner-o-tom-chtobudet-s-rossiyskoy-meditsinoy>. Cited March 20, 2022.

company's customers have been warned about possible delays in deliveries from abroad. Supply disruptions are already being felt in the auto parts segment. *Bosch* experts are in close contact with Russian partners, but, as an international company headquartered in Germany, they are obliged to comply with the requirements of European law.²² The company has been forced to close its plant in St. Petersburg due to the EU ban on the import of components. *Bosch*, the main contractor of AvtoVAZ microelectronics, sent employees on vacation due to supply problems.²³

In a special statement, *Bayer* Chemical and Pharmaceutical Concern recalled that it supplies Russia with medicines for the treatment of cancer and cardiovascular diseases, pharmaceutical products to maintain the health of pregnant women and children, and seeds for growing food. At the same time, the company has suspended "insignificant types of business" in the Russian Federation and Belarus for an indefinite period (the concern included new investment projects, marketing events, and the placement of any advertising²⁴).

Fresenius, a manufacturer of medical equipment, has a similar argument: "Our responsibility as a healthcare company is also not to abandon our patients in Russia." Since 2005, the company has operated more than 90 dialysis centers in 36 regions of the Russian Federation. In addition, about 300 clinics and research institutions are equipped with its equipment. It should be noted that the revenue from business in Russia at the parent concern *Fresenius* in 2021 was significantly less than 1% of the total turnover of €37.5 billion.

The pharmaceutical company *Stada* found itself in a more difficult situation. For this manufacturer of generics and OTC drugs, Russia was the second largest sales market after Germany, where one in six of its employees (approximately 2100 people) work. The share of the local market in the global revenue of approximately €3 billion exceeded 14%. *Stada* has 20 production sites around the world, of which two plants are in Russia: Nizhpharm in Nizhny Novgorod and Hemofarm in Obninsk. The company offers over 170 types of drugs in the Russian Federation, and the level of localization of production (the use of raw materials, components, and equipment of Russian origin) for the industry exceeds 65%.²⁵

²²Which German companies remain in Russia? <https://aussiedlerbote.de/2022/03/kakie-nemeckie-kompanii-ostayutsya-v-rossii/>. Cited March 20, 2022.

²³List of companies that leave and stay in Russia. <https://roz-etked.me/cancellations/>. Cited March 20, 2022.

²⁴Bayer suspends advertising and investments in Russia and Belarus. <https://ria.ru/20220314/bayer-1778078942.html?>. Cited March 20, 2022.

²⁵For money or for Russians? Which firms from Germany continue their business in the Russian Federation. <https://www.facebook.com/news/2022/522028/>. Cited March 20, 2022.

In the chemical industry, *Henkel*, having fully supported "all sanctions against the country, its government, and the financial sector," suspended investments, and ceased advertising in state media and sponsored activities. At the same time, the concern announced that for the time being it intends to supply Russia with consumer goods but will carefully monitor the situation and make further decisions. About 2500 employees work at *Henkel* enterprises at 11 plants in Moscow, Leningrad, Saratov, Ulyanovsk, Chelyabinsk, and Novosibirsk oblasts, as well as in Stavropol' and Perm' krais. Until now, Russia has provided approximately 5% of the group's annual revenue, which in 2021 amounted to over €20 billion.²⁶

The restrictions will also affect the Arctic vector of cooperation between Russia and Germany [Kotov, 2020]. However, *Wintershall* will continue to participate in three gas projects with Gazprom. The company explained the preservation of its stake in existing projects in Russia by the fact that it is the production of natural gas for the energy supply of Europe.²⁷

The German sports shoes, apparel, and accessories group *Adidas AG* has suspended its own stores and online store but has continued to pay salaries to employees for the time being.²⁸ The transport company DHL has stopped accepting and delivering international parcels to Russia for an indefinite period; at the same time, the circulation of goods and documents in the domestic market is carried out in the normal mode.²⁹

Stabilization and Continuation of Work

In the category of those who announced the continuation of work in the Russian market in full, there are large companies in the consumer and construction sectors, using mainly domestic raw materials and goods. The decision to stay in Russia was made by two large German retail chains, *Metro* and *Globus*, which in the Russian Federation provided, respectively, almost 10 and 15% of global turnover. *Metro* Russia was going to continue to serve small and medium-sized businesses from the field of catering and retail trade. Over 10000 employees work at the concern's enterprises in Russia. *Globus* denied reports of leaving

²⁶*Henkel* continues operating and manufacturing activities in Russia. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5249206>. Cited March 20, 2022.

²⁷*Wintershall* Dea remains in Russian upstream projects but writes off investments in Nord Stream 2. <https://neftegaz.ru/news/companies/728245-wintershall-dea-ostaetsya-v-rossiyskikh-dobychnykh-proektakh-no-vlozheniya-v-severnnyy-potok-2-spisyv/>. Cited March 24, 2022.

²⁸*Adidas* will suspend the work of its stores in Russia. <https://www.rbc.ru/business/08/03/2022/62266b5d9a7947d348fb389f-https://www.rbc.ru/business/08/03/2022/62266b5d9a7947d348fb389f>. Cited March 20, 2022.

²⁹DHL: The company does not stop work in the Russian market. <https://www.bfm.ru/news/494233>. Cited March 20, 2022.

the Russian market.³⁰ The key shareholders of the concern—the *Meridian* fund and the *Beisheim* holding—supported the decision of the board to continue work.³¹

One of the leaders in the building materials market, *Knauf*, was not planning to stop its work in the Russian market. “We will stay as long as the political and commercial situation allows us to do so. We are clearly responsible for more than 4000 employees and their families, as well as customers and suppliers, with many of whom we have had excellent and long-standing relationships over the years,” the company assured. Since 1993, the manufacturer has invested more than 1.65 billion euros in the Russian economy. At the beginning of 2022, the group of companies included 20 factories, six sales organizations, six training centers, and 29 resource centers in the secondary vocational education system as part of the corporate academy.³²

FAINT HOPE FOR A NEW BEGINNING

German entrepreneurs express concern about the possible introduction of external management in German companies that have suspended their activities. The German business community as a whole supported the anti-Russian sanctions. The situation is different from 2014. Now we are talking not about adapting to sanctions, but about maintaining, no matter how significant, the nature of trade and economic relations between Russia and Germany. German firms that remain in the market make their continued presence directly dependent on the completion of the special military operation in Ukraine.

This is the first time that such a situation has arisen, indicating a significant revision by German business circles of their attitude to their prospects in the Russian market. The German foreign economic policy towards the Russian Federation is eroding the foundation of pragmatic and purely market relations. From spring 2014 to March 2022, the German business community declared its readiness to bear the costs associated with the events around Ukraine. This point of view is now a thing of the past.

In the current conditions, only individual platforms will remain, where episodic dialogue can be conducted on areas that are of most interest to German partners, taking into account the adjustment of the economic policy of Germany as a whole (for

example, in the energy sector). A small window of opportunity remains for companies that have decided to remain in the Russian market and operate under the restrictive measures imposed by the Russian government. Finding solutions for companies in the face of political pressure and the threat of losing the market will be difficult. At the same time, the economic authorities of the Russian Federation, apparently, will offer acceptable working conditions for those economic entities that will continue their activities and become a help for future Russian–German economic ties.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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³⁰Auchan and Globus say they do not plan to leave the Russian market. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5251119>. Cited March 20, 2022.

³¹For money or for Russians? Which firms from Germany continue their business in the Russian Federation. <https://www.facenews.ua/news/2022/522028/>. Cited March 20, 2022.

³²Knauf will continue to work in Russia. <https://realty.interfax.ru/ru/news/articles/134596/>. Cited March 20, 2022.

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Political Theory and Practice

Explaining Russia: The View from the Failed Future

E. O. Obichkina[#]

Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University),
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Moscow, Russia
e-mail: obichkina@mail.ru

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Abstract—Foreign publications by Russian historians specializing in country studies are a special genre of scientific research. They are designed to address pressing issues related to Russia that are in the focus of attention of foreign audiences. The complex of French publications by one of the best Russian specialists in French history and diplomat Yu.I. Rubinskii, written mostly from 1997 through the 2000s, is dedicated to the European future of Russia. The author employs a wide array of historical–political analysis methods to overcome prejudice and the stereotypical understanding of Russian foreign policy interests. He believes that the crisis in the trilateral relationship between Russia, Ukraine, and the West is rooted in clashing political and energy interests. The collapse of the Soviet Union is positioned as part of the global dissolution of colonial empires. Possible cooperation of Russia and the United States in Central Asia is considered in the logic of a “great game.” Rubinskii’s ideas are based on his understanding of the European perspective, which is rather close to the views of French scholars. Their core is the coexistence of the European Union (as opposed to the North Atlantic Alliance) and Russia in accordance with the pragmatic harmonization of economic and energy interests and the common security space.

Keywords: Russia and the West, concept of sovereignty, Russia’s foreign policy, Russia’s policy in Central Asia, conflict of energy interests of Russia, Ukraine, and the EU, Russia–Turkey–Europe

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To comprehend the present proceeding from lessons of the past and plans for the future is the essence of the craft of a historian who deals with the present. An international analyst integrated into the international (European) scientific community inevitably plays a dual role: for the domestic audience, he/she is a researcher and interpreter of foreign realities, while for a foreign audience, he/she is a repeater and interpreter of Russian politics, seeking to overcome the “difficulties of translation” by matching his/her judgments and arguments with a different, but not alien, narrative. Deep knowledge of another country is inseparable from an empathetic perception of it, which involves the search for mutual understanding as the optimal condition for cooperation between the two societies, which provides a favorable environment for his/her professional activities. Few specialists in country studies would refuse the opportunity to speak out provided by publications in foreign editions, especially since such a first-hand explanation is in great demand. A newsworthy occurrence, a topic, or the wording of the questions raised indicate the sore points that provoke interest among foreign observers and interested readers. Foreign publications of domestic experts in

country studies are special material for a comparative study of historical and political narratives, while bringing them together allows one not only to get a picture of both domestic and foreign political demands but also to determine the “nerve” of the interaction of the two societies in the decisive period of the formation of a new Russia and the development of the current paradigm of its relations with the West.

This study is focused on the collection of French publications by Yu.I. Rubinskii, the leading domestic specialist in French studies and a unique personality—a historian, diplomat, and foreign policy analyst [Obichkina, 2020, pp. 191–201]. Although the translation of the title (*The Signs of the Times*) may seem similar to the Russian three-volume book by the same author, published in Moscow in 2018 [Roubinski, 2020; Rubinskii, 2018] and also dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the author, the two editions contain completely different works, united by the period of their creation, 1997–2020, but dictated by different requests that meet two national agendas: Russian and French, and, in a broader sense, European. At the same time, they have a common central issue, which constitutes the essence of the “Russian question” in the eyes of Europeans and is the sore point of Russian self-identification—the problem of Russia’s belonging to Europe not in the geographical but in the organic

[#] Evgeniya Olegovna Obichkina, Dr. Sci. (Hist.), is a Professor at MGIMO University.

meaning of this concept. The texts addressed to the French reader saw the light of day at a time when a high degree of tension between Russia and the European Union made irrelevant the paradigm of the overall development of Europe in the logic of convergence, proposed by the OSCE Charter of Paris for a New, post-Yalta, Europe. Meanwhile, most of the publications included in the book were written in the 1990–2000s, when the movement seemed to be reciprocal, and the point of no return (2014) was still ahead. The general thrust is determined by the conviction of the Russian European in the ultimate commonality of the destinies of Russia and Europe. The author deliberately refused to edit the text in accordance with the current state of relations between Russia and Europe, and the reader is faced with the problem of already knowing the future resolution.

In France, for historical and geopolitical reasons, the perception of postcommunist Russia was associated with the hope for common development in a common “European Home.” The project of overcoming the split of Europe on the path of convergence, as applied to Russia, rested on the issue of compatibility. Before having finally established itself in the image of the “other,” alien, if not hostile to Western Europe, Russia was considered as a possible field for this grandiose experiment; however, as early as the 1990s, its success was highly questionable. In the Yeltsin years, it was necessary to explain the reasons for the slowdown of liberal reforms, while in the 2000s it was about their very possibility in Russian politics.

THE ABANDONMENT OF THE LIBERAL PARADIGM IN FAVOR OF SOVEREIGN CONSERVATISM

Reflections on Russian identity inevitably begin with history that constantly grows into the present, which is especially noticeable in a transition period. The first part of Rubinskii’s book is called “Russia, or the Past that Has Not Passed,” and Francophones will appreciate the accuracy and elegance of the communicated assessment (*le passé présent*). One of the painful issues of Russian politics, from which Soviet historians deliberately turned away and which cannot but interest observers of modern transformations, is the relative weakness of not only the liberal but also the social democratic trend of thought, close to the former in terms of its humanitarian thrust and reformism; the fragility of liberal reformism; and the standing return to conservatism: monarchical, communist, or otherwise, but invariably uniting the state, elites, and society.

The book begins with reflections on the sad fate of Russian Freemasonry, which since the 18th century has been uniting representatives of European elites into an international cross-border community of liberals in search of building a universal and rational world order. The symbiosis of power and ideology, be it

Orthodoxy or Leninism, according to the author, made the state both under the tsar and under the Bolsheviks intolerant of any spiritual search for a liberal alternative, especially if it came from a foreign source and claimed to be universal. Liberalism in Russia, in its constant clash with the state idea, both revolutionary and reactionary (conservative), was defeated, since the latter more closely coincided with Russian political traditions [Roubinski, 2020, p. 17].

A mirror reflection of the fate of the liberals is the fate of their antipodes—the communists, who were destined for an active “life after death” in the new Russia. The title of the corresponding chapter reflects one of the paradoxes on which the modern political system of Russia was built. The costs of “shock therapy” could have provided them with a wide protest electorate, but the leaders of the parties abandoned active opposition struggle, preferring to participate in power. Thus, the refusal of the new ruling class of Russia from convergence in the sense of incorporation into the ensemble of Western democracies was of a systemic nature. The Russian “greatpowerness” could have found understanding in France, which, despite the decline in potential, also followed a “politics of prestige,” but Eurocentrism made it difficult to sympathize with such self-assertion. The ideological confrontation with the West is a thing of the past, but the nature of the new differences raised questions among those who thought about a formula for relations between the two extremities of Europe.

The search for a Russian answer to these questions was considered in a work published (judging by the context) in the mid-2000s, when it was possible to sum up the 15-year history of the new state and the first presidential term of V.V. Putin. The continuity of purpose from Yeltsin to his successor was to secure great power status and freedom of maneuvering in the international arena. “‘Russian exceptionalism’ is gone forever” [Roubinski, 2020, p. 75], the author argued meaning that the break with the Soviet past was marked by the rejection of any ideological leadership, of a neo-imperial policy in favor of *Realpolitik*, which pursues national interests but proceeds from a sober assessment of the reduction of the economic, demographic, and military potential. The initial focus exclusively on the West led to deep disappointment since it was unwilling to pay generously for the self-destruction of the “Evil Empire.”

The difficult outcome of the Yeltsin period forced Putin, despite his initial “Westernism,” to open a new chapter in the history of Russia. The impressive economic recovery facilitated the strengthening of the “power vertical,” which is inseparable from the restoration of the country’s international weight. On this basis, Putin sought to reconcile the cooperative spirit of the early 1990s and rigor in defending Russian interests. The post-Soviet space came to the fore among the priorities, and the author considers active support

for the United States in its fight against the Taliban, joining the G7, the resumption of cooperation with NATO in a new format (20 instead of 19 + 1), and the adoption of a plan for the construction of four common spaces with the EU as achievements in its Western direction. The author explains the subsequent cooling by the reaction to the policy of the West, which affects the sensitive interests of Moscow: the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and NATO's movement to the east. At the same time, as the author notes, Moscow avoided a direct break with Washington. For example, its position in the Iraqi crisis of 2003 coincided with the opinion of Paris and Berlin: while condemning military intervention, none of them wanted the United States to lose.

Characteristically, although in the period from 2001 to 2003–2004, one can *post factum* discern a clear trend of increasing opposition to *Pax Americana* in Moscow's foreign policy, Rubinskii's text focuses on continuity from the original idea of solidarity with the West, corrected by the pragmatic desire to defend our own interests and development paths in all combinations. A clear rejection of the pro-Western paradigm was still ahead, but the question of its causes remains. Regarding the prospects for continuing Putin's course in his second presidential term, Rubinskii pointed out that "the answer depends not only on the president, not even on his country but also on their partners," since attempts to solve international problems affecting interests of Russia "without it or against it" would revive the atmosphere of mutual distrust and systemic confrontation that had previously marked the relations between Russia and the West [Roubinski, 2020, p. 93].

Four years later, at the beginning of the presidential cycle of D.A. Medvedev and after the famous Munich speech by Putin, the author returned to the topic of foreign policy choice. The Europeans were worried about the continuity of politics under the new president. Rubinskii's prediction was perfectly accurate. For him, the continuity of foreign policy during a change of president was determined by the absence of a real alternative to the chosen course since sovereignty and security remained absolute priorities [Roubinski, 2020, p. 72]. The outbreak of the global financial crisis brought to the fore the promotion of national interests in the economic sphere. The limited resources determined self-limitation in ambitions: the protection of national interests without confrontation, the rejection of futile attempts to catch up with the United States and be a counterbalance to the United States or the West, the proportionality of the costs of modernizing the army to economic opportunities, and the reasonable sufficiency of the nuclear deterrence arsenal. However, self-restraint turned out to be transient and corresponded to the time of joining the global market, where the rules of behavior were dictated by those who had stood at its cradle.

The economy, as a rule, is not a strong point of political analysts despite the proven role of economic factors in shaping the political course and diplomatic priorities of the modern state. Meanwhile, Rubinskii's book gives a significant place to the economic factor as the most important resource of the Russian government and at the same time as a source of problems, since the first and main trump card and simultaneously the stumbling block in Russia's relations with Europe was its transformation into an "energy hyperpower." By the mid-2000s, in direct connection with the "orange revolution" in Ukraine and the parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia, the energy interests of Russia and the EU were at the center of the discussion since the main financial and political levers of Russian power were concentrated in this area. At the same time, the role of oil rent in Russian society raised concerns about the country's transformation into a raw materials appendage of developed countries. The Europeans, in their characteristic manner of building energy partnerships, considered it natural to have complete control over the entire energy chain—from exploration and production to distribution to the end consumer. The Russian side sought to regain control not only over production but also over pipeline networks and ensure participation in the profits of Western distribution companies.

The growing energy interdependence between Russia and the EU was not only a benefit but also a source of tension. No less difficult was the cooperation—rivalry in energy projects linking Russia and the United States. The highest point of their development falls on the first years of the administration of George W. Bush, and the author directly points to the role of the strengthened Russian–American partnership against Islamic terrorism in the period of the acute crisis in American–Arab relations. Each of the three main directions of Russia's energy policy indicated by Rubinskii (strengthening state control over the industry, attracting foreign investment for the construction of pipelines both in the west and in the east, and the penetration of Russian capital into the energy sector of the post-Soviet states) caused a negative reaction from partners [Roubinski, 2020, p. 101]. Russian experts constantly had to defend themselves against the reproaches of their European colleagues for using "energy weapons" to put pressure on importers and transit states of Eastern Europe. At the same time, the deployment of Russian pipelines exclusively to the west created a binding dependence on the energy policy of the consumers, which made little secret of their desire to diversify suppliers and delivery routes bypassing Russia. In responding to these claims, it was necessary to show that Russia's intransigence was not politically but economically motivated since Russia has higher costs for the extraction and delivery of energy carriers compared to Middle Eastern suppliers, which requires huge investments for their development. In addition, note the high share of domestic

energy consumption. Thus, Russia cannot do without a constant increase in the production and sale of energy carriers, and its economic growth is directly related to the world market, which it does not control.

WHY IS RUSSIA UNABLE TO ABANDON ITS IMPERIAL POLICY?

The lion's share of the book is devoted to the fate of Russia's imperial heritage, its policy in the "near abroad"—in the vast area originally united within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Russia's behavior here raised two main questions. At the initial stage of its development as a post-Soviet state that shared the fate of the former republics of the collapsed Soviet Union, it was the question of the country's ability to fit into the new, European geopolitical combination. To integrate Russia, a huge and alien entity for centuries, on the basis of convergence with the West was possible only relying on "norms," i.e., on its rejection of great-power ambitions, which seemed reasonable because of the qualitative decline in the economic, military, and technological potential and the death of Bolshevism with its universal communist mission. The concept of *norm*, echoing this request, repeatedly pops up in the works of French analysts devoted to Russian foreign policy from Yeltsin to Putin [Obichkina, 2021, pp. 180–191]. For Europeans, it was obvious that a country the GDP of which in the late 1990s was equal to that of the Netherlands was bound to come to terms with the position of an ordinary player, guided by the solidary West. The other question, also posed within the framework of the Western paradigm, was about the ability of Russia to part with the imperial policy in its immediate environment. It concerns not only the existential choice of Russia but also affects the interests of its Western partners struggling for influence in the post-Soviet space.

Going by J.-B. Duroselle's formula "every empire will perish,"¹ known to every French humanities scholar, the Russian historian in his detailed analysis of the collapse of the Soviet Union adds in the spirit of Tolstoy, "but each dies in its own way." The explanation of the peculiarities of the Russian policy of accompanying this process is intended to overcome its simplified perception in the West. Domestic historiography for a long time postponed a comprehensive study of the history of this policy because of its extreme politicization, leaving the issue at the mercy of politicians and political scientists. This makes Rubinskii's historical work on understanding the recent past, built on the universal methodological principles of historical science, even more valuable; these principles make it possible to inscribe organically the collapse of the Soviet Union in global his-

tory—in the global process of decolonization, which runs counter to the opinion about the decisive role of the nationalist-minded elites of the former Soviet republics. The initial message of Rubinskii is that the main factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union was the collapse of the Soviet system itself, the low economic efficiency of which did not allow the regime to cope with the burden of internal problems and multiplying international obligations and to respond to the military–technological challenge of the West. I would also add that the Soviet "empire" rested on a unique model of the "party–state," and the decrepit ideological skeleton, which had cemented multinational unity for 70 years, crumbled, causing the death of the whole organism.

At the same time, very important is the author's suggestion about the organic origins of and long-term prerequisites for the nationalist explosion in the Soviet republics in the late 1980s. He points out that the movement for national self-determination of colonially dependent peoples, since the early 1950s actively supported and used by Moscow to weaken world capitalism, "could not stop at the borders of the Soviet Union" [Roubinski, 2020, p. 128], which is why, at the time of the collapse of the Soviet regime, the party nomenklatura in the national republics urgently needed to "change into national clothes" in order to stay in power. From the political point of view, a relatively painless change of power was ensured by the alliance of reformers from the Soviet nomenklatura and Russian liberals with moderate nationalists on the ground. At the initial stage (in the early 1990s), the collapse of the empire in Russia, the second in the 20th century, did not repeat the bloody history of the first one, primarily because the metropole itself became its main driving force. The creation of the CIS helped to avoid chaos and wars like those that accompanied the death of great empires of the past, including the French one. These circumstances determined the nature of the "divorce": voluntary on the part of Russia, since the liberal reformers of the first wave, in their rush to the West, saw the former Asian outskirts, less developed and inclined towards authoritarian rule, as the main obstacle to market reforms and democracy in Russia. The belief that the path of joint development would require huge funds, necessary for the modernization of Russia itself, to support the former peripheries, was accompanied by the conviction that there was no alternative to maintaining their connection with Moscow. These calculations turned out to be correct in the short term, mainly due to the initially weak interest of external players in the troublesome economies of the former Soviet republics of Asia and the Caucasus.

In the medium term, the centrifugal processes that accompanied the formation of the new independent states accelerated: the search for their own identity, sources of development, and external partners, which resulted, as one of the consequences, in discrimina-

¹ Reference to the classical book by J.-B. Duroselle (J.-B. Duroselle, *Tout Empire périt: Théorie des relations internationales* (Armand Collin, Paris, 1992)).

tion on the ground and the mass exodus of the Russian population. The history of relations between the newly independent states within the CIS and outside it, as well as their relations with Russia, is covered in the book in full detail. The lion's share of the text, the central part, entitled "After the USSR," is devoted to these subjects. Here I would like to consider two main issues related to Russia's policy in the post-Soviet space and determining the nature of its current relations with the West: the preservation of its "imperial" ambitions in the near abroad and the search for a formula for relations with the West that could ensure Russian interests in the context of the post-Soviet reorganization of the region.

Rubinskii shows that the promotion of the CIS to the fore among Moscow's foreign policy priorities had deep reasons, organic to the new Russian geopolitics, which accounted for changes in the international context, primarily in the field of security. Putin, the winner of the 2000 election, saw the CIS primarily as an expanded security space: in the east, in the face of a strong China; in the south, because of the growing Islamist threat; and in the west, because of NATO expansion. Equally important, according to the author, was the growth of mutual interest in enhanced cooperation with Russia on the part of a number of CIS countries that are most dependent on it in the financial, energy, and military fields. At the same time, the diversity of interests of the CIS members, the asymmetry of their relations with the former metropole, along with the lack of economic potential of Russia itself, prevented the development of the CIS as a viable integration matrix capable of increasing the potential of its members. Possible financial and technological "sponsors" of their modernization were beyond its borders. Hence, narrower formats of cooperation and, to an even greater extent, bilateral agreements aimed at maintaining the old ties and actualizing mutual interests were preferable compared to the unification of the twelve CIS countries.

RUSSIAN INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA: THE POSSIBILITY OF A POSITIVE-SUM GAME

The diversification of methodological approaches in the analysis of various geographic directions of Russian policy in the heterogeneous post-Soviet space also deserves special attention—first and foremost, the two most acute dossiers on relations with Ukraine and politics in Central Asia. I mean protecting the interests of Russia in the early 2000s in a region that had become the center of a "great game" on a planetary scale. In addition to Russia, China and the United States participated in it; in their geopolitics, it appears as the "Greater Middle East." The instability and variability of the balance of power in the region do not allow a static approach in the hardened categories of "eternal" interests and "historical rights"; hence, the

author adopts methods of analysis and forecasting that correspond to the dynamics of the game. He offered a horizontal cut, with a detailed analysis of interests and political combinations involving Russia and the United States at a time when relations between them approached a fork on the road, from which two paths departed: cooperative and confrontational. The former was dictated by a sound assessment of the correlation of forces. According to Rubinskii, "Russia is aware of the limitations of its capabilities, which are no longer the same as they were under the Soviet Union. Therefore, it prefers compromise to fruitless and ruinous confrontation, assuming that it can divide influence in its 'reserved zone'" [Roubinski, 2020, p. 410]. The reader can watch the initial stage of the game, knowing the result in advance. It is interesting to look into the calculations of the players. Using this metaphor, Rubinskii proposes to go beyond analysis in the usual logic of the zero-sum game, in which the gain of one means the loss of the other. The author sees other combinations in accordance with the prospects that opened as a result of the end of the Cold War and the September 11 terrorist attack. It was a time when the West expected a conflict of interests between Russia and China and considered the United States to be the main political player. At that time, Moscow did not decide on a priority strategic partner, but wanted the West to be it, provided that the partnership was equal.

The Kremlin hoped that the growing contradictions with China and "minor" players in the region were pressing the West into close partnership with Russia. Despite objections to NATO's eastward expansion, the absolute priority of security was the fight against international terrorism. Western countries assigned Russia a secondary role in the great game in Central Asia since their mirrored belief was that a potential conflict of interests with China in the Far East and Central Asia weakened Russia's position, which reduced the motivation to compromise, to respect Russian interests. Meanwhile, the outcome of the great game could be reduced to a positive sum [Roubinski, 2020, p. 404]. The new independent states bordering Afghanistan could not independently repel the armed offensive of Islamic extremists, and the United States itself did not want to divert resources from the priority direction—the Middle East. Under those conditions, the complete exclusion of Russia from Central Asia was not part of the plans of the United States, which preferred to find a way to coexist with Russia there. In turn, Moscow sought to demonstrate the inviolability of its interests by intensifying efforts for military (CSTO) and economic (Eurasian Economic Community) integration, timed, according to the author, to coincide with the official visit of George W. Bush to Moscow in May 2002. Moscow's implicit "message" eventually determined the further development of the game. Such a comparison of seemingly dissimilar events is the "hallmark" of the analyst Rubinskii: it allows one to create a complete

picture from particulars, which is not always obvious to an observer with a narrower horizon. On the one hand, relations between Russia and the United States in the region were not limited to a simple “winner–loser” balance. On the other hand, Russia became a key player in the security of the region, and the geographical boundaries within which it ensures its security on the southern flank are much wider than the post-Soviet space. Thus, the great game departed from the original rules, as predicted in one of the scenarios considered by Rubinskii. At the same time, the continuation of cooperation around Afghanistan did not cancel the main, divergent vector of Russia’s relations with the West, which in other directions increasingly gravitated toward a zero-sum game. In those years, it was already marked by active military cooperation between the United States and Georgia, and the intensified struggle for the post-Soviet space was determined not so much by the balance of power between Moscow and the solidary West but by the compatibility of the prospects for the development of new independent states with the choice of Russia itself.

GEOPOLITICS IN THE SERVICE OF GEOECONOMICS: THE “PIPELINE WAR” AS A SOURCE OF DIVORCE FROM UKRAINE

The acute European security crisis of 2021–2022, centered around the Russian–Ukrainian contradictions, makes us think about its origins because it would be a simplification to reduce it to the divergent vectors of the post-Soviet development of the two countries or to a more specific cause—the reunification of Crimea with Russia in 2014. From the political point of view, its origin fits into the clash of two divergent geopolitics: the Russian one, which is interested in joint development and strengthening of integration, and the Ukrainian one, which has chosen the Western path of development—a choice psychologically unacceptable for the Russian elite. However, this explanation cannot be exhaustive since it does not explain the extreme degree of involvement of the West in this dossier. Rubinskii sees the clue in geoeconomics.² He explores the energy interests at the heart of Russian–Ukrainian tensions over the first gas price conflict between Gazprom and Naftogaz in January 2006 through relations in the “triangle” with the EU as the third apex. Despite the quick resolution through compromise, that conflict was perceived in Brussels very painfully since it affected the energy security of the EU, and economic frictions in the gas sector became a constant irritant in Russia’s relations both with Ukraine and with other transit countries and, at the same time, with

consumers from Eastern Europe, as well as a source of concern in the EU countries, a third of their gas needs being satisfied by Russia. The author sees the motives for tightening Gazprom’s pricing policy in the economy. This is the need to modernize the worn-out pipeline system of Gazprom, the main artery that fed the Russian budget, which required investments many times exceeding the country’s capabilities. Rubinskii cites an astronomical amount equal to three times Russia’s GDP [Roubinski, 2020, p. 341], which could not afford preferential gas prices for Eastern European transit countries.

The main link in this chain was Ukraine, which was offered a choice: to accept the market price for gas, giving up its previous privileges, or to subordinate the national gas distribution networks to Gazprom and to join the Eurasian Economic Union. Since the strengthening of sovereignty in the eyes of Kyiv ruled out energy integration with Russia, especially after the “orange revolution,” Yushchenko’s team transferred the gas issue into a strategic plane, moreover, at the most sensitive point, linking the increase in the price of Russian gas with the price of renting Sevastopol. For the EU, the interest in its own energy security at the same time increased the desire to create a common energy space with Russia and required containment of Gazprom’s pressure on transit countries. The particular issue of the price of gas supplies thus went beyond bilateral economic disputes and threatened to poison the general climate of relations between Russia, the countries of the common neighborhood, and the EU.

At that time, the author saw a way out on the paths of harmonizing energy interests in the spirit of the historical formula of E. Faure “independence in interdependence,” which could permit avoiding a repetition of gas crises. Since this scenario failed, these crises have been repeated many times. The fact that it was Russia that turned off the gas valve in the dead of winter gave Europeans the idea that Russia used energy blackmail and led to an acceleration of Ukraine’s rapprochement with the EU and NATO, drawing a “red line” between Russia and the West. Ukraine will not become “a bridge between Russia and the West,” but, as the author predicted, “unfortunately, it will turn into a field of clashes between them” [Roubinski, 2020, p. 381]. What was written immediately after Yushchenko had come to power in 2004 came true in 2013. The Ukrainian issue became an indicator of the general deterioration in Russia’s relations with the West and a parallel change in the geopolitical orientations of Russia itself. In Rubinskii’s book, its reasons and content are considered in the special part “The Double-Headed Eagle.”

² Geoeconomics is understood as the economic strategy of the state put at the service of geopolitical interests (Luttwak E. “From geopolitics to geo-economics: Logics of conflict, grammar of commerce,” *National Interest*, No. 20, 17–23 (1990)).

GEOPOLITICAL BREAK IN THE NEW PARADIGM OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Two almost simultaneous events in the spring–summer of 1997—the signing of the NATO–Russia Founding Act and the decision of the Atlantic Council to invite the first three candidates from Eastern Europe to NATO—gave rise to reflections on the future of European security. Rubinskii notes that they opened a new stage in the creation of a system of collective security in Europe, which requires from the leaders of the United States, Russia, and European countries “responsibility, wisdom, and imagination” [Roubinski, 2020, p. 436]. The question arises as to why Russia reacted so painfully to the expansion. Rubinskii sees the stumbling block in Russia’s rejection of the limitation of state sovereignty, proposed by the West. By voluntarily agreeing to delegate its attributes to Brussels, the EU and NATO members secured the right to “humanitarian intervention” in third countries in case the latter grossly violated human rights. Against the backdrop of the start of a military operation in Chechnya, the approach of the Alliance to the borders of Russia unleashed the most serious crisis of confidence between Russia and NATO, all the more acute because Moscow did not have the means to counter it. The author predicted that this made the start of a new cold war inevitable. The status of a “privileged partner” of NATO for Russia could reduce the costs of the expansion, which would ensure close cooperation and transparency in the field of security. In parallel, Russia sought to strengthen the role of the OSCE and was interested in strengthening the European defense identity based on the Western European Union, outside of American tutelage. The author’s vast diplomatic experience did not allow him to be carried away by dreams, which did not prevent him from warning the European reader about the danger of building relations with Russia as a power defeated in the Cold War, since “winners and losers can, as happened many times in the 20th century, change places” [Roubinski, 2020, p. 457].

THE FAILURE OF THE “SHARED DREAM” IN THE RUSSIA–TURKEY–EU TRIANGLE

In the formation of a new world hierarchy, various combinations of centers of power are of particular importance. I already wrote about the methodological contribution of Rubinskii to the study of Franco–Russian relations in the historical European triangle Paris–Berlin (Bonn)–Moscow [Obichkina, 2020, pp. 191–201]. Along with this, the book examines in detail the centuries-long history of the large Eurasian triangle Russia–Turkey–Western Europe. Russia and Turkey are related by the border position between Europe and Asia, as well as the acuteness of the issue of choosing an identity between Westernization and autochthonous development and, consequently, the

unresolved issue of belonging to the European family. In both countries, the source of modernization was seen primarily in the West, and the “shared dream” of getting closer to the European development pole became the core of the essay. The reason for writing it was the inclusion of Turkey in the waiting list for EU accession in December 1999.

In this regard, the author is interested in the question of where the borders of Europe end. It worried both the “Westerners” in Russia and the Europeans—opponents of Turkey’s accession, primarily in France. The question immediately arose as to why not Russia or Ukraine, but Muslim Turkey was considered as a candidate. The author was skeptical about the possibility of integrating Turkey, as well as Russia or Ukraine, into the EU during the lifetime of the current generation but believed that Russia and Turkey could, each in its own way, become bridges between Europe and the regions of Asia through the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus if relations in these areas developed in the logic of cooperation, not rivalry. At the same time, he pointed to the possibility that the dialogue between the West and Russia from a position of strength could, as had happened many times in history, return Turkey to its former significance in the anti-Russian front. Subsequent experience showed that relations with the EU in Turkey and Russia developed in a different logic, in the outlined but not yet established paradigm of divergent geopolitical, if not civilizational, development. The double rejection of the “European dream” by the two Euro–Asian powers erased the inclusive lines of force in the triangle. The consequences were predicted by Rubinskii about twenty years ago: “any decision that leaves one country or another as marginal or pushes them out of Europe will mean the end of the ambitious aspirations of Europeans to turn their Union someday into a real center of power” [Roubinski, 2020, p. 634].

Every book, after publication, turns from a statement into a subject of study. At first glance, this edition lacks the dating of the publications included in it, but, apparently, this is not an omission but an intention. The statement in real time loses its transient character and, devoid of a touch of topicality, is brought to a higher level of relevance. The ability of an historian to establish causal relationships in two perspectives—a horizontal one, in which the reader can understand why events taking place in one part of the world resonate in others, and a retrospective one, which allows the reader to consider the process in dynamics, makes it possible to build scenarios for subsequent development in a new coordinate system, outlined in the book by a dotted line. The sharp aggravation of the discussion between Russia and the West on European security issues in connection with the Ukrainian problem since the fall of 2021, as well as the general trend of the diverging movement of Russia and NATO countries, are discordant with the general idea of a European community advocated by Rubinskii.

However, the fact that the message to contemporaries and future generations was not appreciated at the moment when the author had a need to formulate it does not mean that the effort was in vain.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest.

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