

Проблемы безопасности

COMMON SECURITY: CAN IT BE REINVENTED IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTILATERALISM?¹

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The World in Crisis

In 2021 it is impossible to neglect the fact that our world is moving in a totally wrong direction. Differences between the United States and China are becoming one of the fundamental elements of major powers' competition. Some experts believe that confrontation between the US and China will result in a new edition of bipolarity. Others maintain that the rivalry between the world's two leading economies is a bilateral conflict and cannot evolve into a bipolar world order similar to that of the Cold War. In any case, US-China military tensions are a major risk. These tensions are a time bomb. There is a real risk of a dangerous escalation over Taiwan.

International mechanisms are working less and less effectively. Instead, nations tend to rely on regional projects, regional cooperation, localisation. We observe not only strategic decoupling between the United States and its European allies. In addition, Washington now wants to decouple itself economically and technologically from China.

Multilateral institutions are stagnant or in crisis. Having just marked 75 years since its creation, the United Nations, this universally recognised

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organisation, is struggling with all the negative effects of confrontation among its members.

The entire architecture of international security is almost destroyed.

Environmental issues and climate change deserve massive attention and action. But the threats of militarisation, a new arms race, risks of an unintentional military conflict between nuclear powers are disproportionately neglected.

Many expectations, connected to the end of the Cold War, were dashed. The bitter fact is that the world since then has not become a safer place. There is a widespread impression that now the world is a more dangerous place than in the 70s and 80s. The following paragraph is a case study of such a regrettable state of affairs.

Geopolitics and the Military Planning in NATO

The NATO Brussels Summit Communiqué², conducted on 14 June 2021, is a document, which manifests the undercurrent shifts in the military planning of the Alliance. The document reveals deep concern about the current security environment, which is assessed as “increasingly complex”, as “pervasive instability” and in general threatening to NATO. In this regard, a knowledgeable observer can easily draw a parallel with similar documents in Russia, which are also full of alarmistic assessments. Of course, in each case a view is that this is the opposite side, which is a source of instability and risks. The approach of the Alliance is embodied in a manichaeian statement: “While NATO stands by its international commitments, Russia continue to breach the values, principles, trust...”

While being a document, which clearly includes different proposals of different countries (leading sometimes to duplication and repetitions), the Communiqué is consistent in labelling the “other” — Russia — as an aggressor, irresponsible and provocative player, which wants to undermine the “rules-based international order”. According to paragraph 3, Russia constitutes a primarily threat to Euro-Atlantic security. Russia is depicted not only as one of leading challenges to NATO but as a threat, which is more dangerous than international terrorism.

² https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

For the first time in NATO's Communique (and apparently as a derivative — in the next NATO's strategic concept) China is mentioned several times. It is characterized as a potential, not immediate challenge. Interestingly, the policy of China is called “assertive”, an adjective, which in the past for a long time was reserved for Russia (see paragraph 55).

Still China is mentioned in the document 10 times and Russia — 61 times. Clearly, NATO has made steps, but only some steps, towards the US in incorporating in its security perceptions China as a looming challenge, keeping the “Russian threat” as its dominant rallying cry. It remains to be seen if in the next strategic concept, which will be published next year, the status of the “Chinese threat” increases or stays measured as in the present Communique. The other question is if in the future China's factor in NATO's eyes will be coming to the fore replacing Russia or the “division of labour” will stay the same: the strategic mission of the US will be a competition with and constraining of China and NATO's mission will be defending from and deterring Russia.

Besides repeated references to the “rules-based order”, the Communique is steadfast in its “no return to business as usual” thesis, which in fact is not what Russia itself is looking and asking for. Rare encouraging lines, which are mixed with hard talk and submerged in harsh rhetoric, can be found in paragraph 9 about NATO's openness to political dialogue, its unwillingness to seek confrontation and about its commitment to the NATO-Russia Founding Act. However, the latter point is phrased in such a way that it can be interpreted as the Alliance's refusal to discuss Russia's concerns about the principle of rotation deployments, which in the eyes of Moscow in the past years de facto has become barely distinguishable from additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.

Additional concerns about NATO's posture may arise from paragraph 11 and 14 about “provocative activities, including near NATO borders... the continued military build-up in Crimea...”, “illegal annexation of Crimea”, “restricting navigation in parts of the Black Sea”, etc. Against the backdrop of the HMS Defender deliberate provocation in the territorial waters of Russia off the coast of Crimea on 24 June 2021, the wording of the Communique may be interpreted as an encouragement of such activities by NATO member-states in the future, which next time may lead to a direct military conflict between Russia and NATO.

For the first time in NATO Communique Belarus is mentioned as an object of NATO attention and Russia's military integration with Belarus — as

a source of threat per se (paragraph 11). “Zapad-2021” exercise is pointed out in paragraph 54.

A novelty is an accusation of Russia, besides “malicious cyber activities”, of its “turning a blind eye to cyber criminals operating from its territory” (paragraph 12). Now Russia is kept responsible not only for ostensible state or state-supported cyber activities but also for any cyber-criminal acts targeting NATO countries, emanating from the territory of Russia, and all such acts are treated as supported by the Russian state or being connived by it. Interestingly, the same paragraph says about “illegal activities by Russian Intelligence Service” raising a question if Russia and NATO countries should make all activities of their intelligence services “legal”.

A harsh language is applied to the nuclear posture of Russia (aggressive, irresponsible, intimidation, etc.) without a hint of the Alliance’s openness to a dialogue with Moscow on nuclear doctrines (paragraph 15). Instead, the Communique suggests such a dialogue between NATO and China. Such an approach contradicts the Geneva summit decisions to launch consultations between Russia and the US on the future of strategic stability. Also, this approach contradicts the views of Paris and Berlin on a necessity to launch a dialogue with Moscow in the aftermath of Geneva. Paragraph 15 also contradicts paragraph 45, where NATO welcomes the extension of the New Start, a dialogue on strategic stability and new talks on future arms control measures. Judging from these inconsistencies, one may conclude that the Alliance has no appetite for a tangible role in shaping the future of strategic stability, not to mention the participation in the dialogue.

Paragraph 15 could become a silver lining; however, its wording again is frustrating. It says about NATO readiness for the next meeting of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) — an intention, which is immediately neutralized by a precondition designed to be rejected by Moscow — the first topic on the agenda should be the conflict in Ukraine. As to the “military lines” of communication, “NATO remains committed” (with the adjective) “existing” military lines, which shows NATO’s unwillingness to consider even modest and purely practical expansion of mil-to-mil contacts. The further potential for a dialogue with Russia is also preconditioned by something that is difficult to understand — “when its actions make that possible”.

In spite of the fact that the Communique mimics the US formulations about the withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan (paragraph 18–19), it says nothing about possible cooperation with Russia — the topic discussed in Geneva.

There is only a vague point on a dialogue with “relevant international and regional partners”. At the same time, it should be noted that due to the fact that the US has stopped expressing allegations about Russia paying Taliban for killing American soldiers, the Communique does not mention it either.

One more contentious topic, raised in the Communique, evolves from the demise of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty (INF), initiated by the US. Paragraph 26 gives some hope: “We have no intention to deploy land-based nuclear missiles in Europe”. However, Russia’s proposal for a moratorium is described as not credible and not acceptable (paragraph 46). At the same time, it seems that the Russia’s proposal (in fact several of them) is so serious that right after refuting it, the Communique says that NATO is open to arms control discussions and dialogue on transparency and confidence-building measures (in fact a part of the Russia’s proposal). Also, it should be noted that the INF treaty covered intermediate missiles both nuclear and non-nuclear whereas the citation above covers only nuclear missiles. At last, paragraph 48 makes matters even more confusing by stating that “to address the collapse of the INF due to Russia’s actions”, NATO is “committed to maintain appropriate consultations among Allies on these issues”. It can be interpreted as NATO’s readiness to change its view on the non-deployment if necessary.

The Communique continues to expand the remit of Article 5 (paragraphs 31–33). Now not just cases of cyber-attacks and attacks to, from or within space can leave to invocation of Article 5 but also cases of hybrid warfare can do the same. Moreover, attribution is proclaimed a “sovereign national prerogative”, giving *carte blanche* to individual member-states to name a perpetrator.

Another topic with mixed signals is a NATO Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), which the Alliance is committed to develop (paragraph 42–44, 52). At first it is restated that BMD is purely defensive, is not directed against Russia, and Moscow is welcome to discuss BMD with NATO. At the same time, it says about the “increasing threat posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles” and about “the latest common threat assessments”, which may imply NATO’s allegations toward 9M729. Moreover, besides the traditional call on Iran to stop ballistic missile activities, the Communique keeps expanding the reasoning for BMD raising a question of the ballistic missile threat from Syria.

Conspicuous is the accusation of Russia’s “failure” to comply with its obligations under the Treaty on Open Skies (OST, paragraph 50) implying

that it is Russia who is responsible for the treaty's demise, and in spite of the fact that J. Biden during the presidential campaign called against the US withdrawal. Also, it is difficult to explain the point that "it is essential that all State Parties [of the OST] fully implement its provisions", as if the US has not left it and Russia has not taken a final decision to do the same. A guess can be that this wording reflects views of some of the Allies who still believe that it is possible to somehow save the OST. The same paragraph includes a strange phrase about Russia's "long-standing failure to implement" the Conventional Forces in Europe Treat (CFE) as if the treaty still exists.

At last, the Communique promotes strong irritants in its relations with Russia, which are NATO's open-door policy, its growing security cooperation with neutral states and its activities in Central Asia. In cases of both Georgia and Ukraine it is stated in affirmative that these states "will become" members of NATO. At the same time, Russia has made it clear that the membership of Georgia and especially Ukraine in NATO is a "red line", which Russia will not permit the Alliance to cross.

All in all, the document sadly contains few tangibles on NATO-Russia military risk reduction even on practical issues of obvious mutual interest. At the same time, it has incorporated a new dose of harsh rhetoric against Russia, which in some instances runs counter to the results of the Geneva summit. Some parts of the documents contradict each other. There is an impression that as far as Russia is concerned the task of the document was to strengthen even further its "hard talk" on Russia while keeping a minimal set of formal references about selective engagement. The Communique tilts further in the direction of raising stakes and showing no interest of NATO in playing its own or at least supportive role in military de-escalation in Europe. It seems that in this regard the Alliance's intention is to wait and see what will happen next in Russia — US relations.

The Concept of Multilateralism

Still there are elements to build upon a modernized security structure. The United Nations has survived the fall of the Soviet Union and the later period of escalating tensions. Although, the climate change and green agenda are reverberating across the planet, there are more and more people

realising that arms control and disarmament are not less important. In fact, it is more urgent because it deals with immediate existential threats.

In these circumstances it is of tantamount significance to think about what big ideas can help to mitigate this situation. One of them is a concept of Multilateralism and the other one is a concept of Common Security.

Both Russia and the EU identify multilateralism, understood in general terms, as a key prerequisite for a stable and resilient global order. The confusion starts when we turn to concrete meanings of Multilateralism and its interpretations. Multilateralism is very much a runaway word, which is not easy to pin down. Multilateralism is multilevel and multifaceted and has a long history.

The Global Strategy of the European Union is permeated with the notion of Multilateralism as a key principle of what is called a rules-based order. The term Multilateralism is used 4 times in the Strategy and the terms “multilateral rules-based order”, or “multilateral order” are used 3 times. Judging from this, they are considered to be synonyms.

The Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2016³, which soon will be replaced by a new one, uses another expressions: collective approaches, supremacy of international law, etc. But also in Chapter 1, article 3, paragraph 7 it says that the Russian state shall “promote, within bilateral and multilateral relations, mutually beneficial and equal partnerships with foreign countries...”.

In Russian language the noun «многосторонность» is used. But quite often people here do not translate “multilateralism” into Russian and instead they apply transliteration, which is quite awkward for the Russian ear and tongue — «мультилатерализм». What in Russian language is traditional is the adjective «многосторонний» — “multilateral”. For example, multilateral approach, multilateral policy, etc. You will not find the noun “multilateralism” or adjective “multilateral” in the UN Charter. It uses once the expression “collective measures” and once the expression “collective defence”. As to the notion of “rules” it is used in the Charter only in the expression “rules of procedure”.

Sometimes Multilateralism is meant to imply a better order to replace ostensibly outdated mechanisms of international law rooted in 1945 and

³ https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248

embodied in the UN. There are constant attempts to demonstrate different “obsolete” sides of the postwar international order and to persuade general public that a rules-based order is able to redress it or even to replace it. So, a rules-based order starts to emerge as something like the UN Charter-plus or the postwar international order-plus.

Another fashionable idea is that Moscow criticises the Western part of the multilateral system because it is dominated by the US and therefore, Moscow supports alternative multilateral structures at both regional and global levels (such as the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, or BRICS). But the structures mentioned are themselves multilateral and they are not alternative to the postwar international order. It is difficult to see what is alternative in the Eurasian economic union or in BRICS to the UN system.

However, the concept of the international law-based system and a rules-based order are indeed quite different. International law is what any legal system is — a competitive and inclusive environment with no all-embarassing answers to all possible questions. For example, it acknowledges the famous dialectics between the right to self-determination and sovereignty of states. It also acknowledges the presumption of innocence in international relations as in any court. The post-war international law-based system was meant to be driven by realism and pragmatism but a rules-based order looks very much ideology-driven.

Various forms of Multilateralism existed before in a bipolar world and in the world before that. But of course, a desirable Multilateralism is the situation when most actors in international relations incline to act collectively. In the past we had the theory and practice of Internationalism. But it was based on the class ideology. There is a question of delimitation of Multilateralism and the notion of “collective”. For example, up to now we say “collective security”, not “multilateral security”. Perhaps, any form of Multilateralism is a version of “collective”. But modern Multilateralism goes further than traditional collectivism in international relations.

Usually problems appear when “multilateral” transforms into “multilateralism”. The EU Global Strategy is clear that a rules-based order is something bigger than commitments to the conventional international order. On the one hand it says: “Guided by the values on which it is founded, the EU is committed to a global order based on international law, including the principles of the UN Charter...”. On the other hand, it says: “This commitment

translates into an aspiration to transform rather than simply preserve the existing system.” Here we have a clear statement that Multilateralism, which the EU has in mind, is a tool to change the present system of global governance, not to refine it. But at the same time there are no explanations how the existing system is going to look like when it is transformed. It seems that the EU, not to mention the US, insists on developing new forms of Multilateralism not within existing multilateral structures of the international law-based order but over its head or in place of it.

Preliminary, three observations can be made. Firstly, Multilateralism is a concept, which still is not well elaborated, and in the West on the political level it is usually used to identify “us” and “them”, especially when Multilateralism is equated to a rules-based order. Secondly, Multilateralism does not have a clear and internationally recognised meaning; Multilateralism is treated differently in Russia, the EU or the US. Finally, Multilateralism is in danger. In the current period of history, the world goes through a certain process of de-globalisation, and it makes it to de-collectivise and to de-multilateralise.

The concept of Common Security

Common Security in the best traditions of the Pugwash movement⁴. Initially it was elaborated in the Olof Palme Commission Report back in 1982. Nowadays the task is to preserve the essence of the Palme commission Report on Common Security and to build upon it⁵. The core of its philosophy should be kept intact while a range of recommendations should be modernised to carry forward the Commission’s mission⁶.

Common Security is a comprehensive phenomenon which embraces in equal manner the spheres of economy, social life and security as such. Security should be treated as equal and indivisible common good. Security at the expense of others is not achievable. Common security is one of the most important strategies, responsible for the well-being of humankind. The basis of Common Security rests on the fundamental right to life. Therefore, it

⁴ URL: <https://pugwash.org> (дата обращения: 10.10.2021).

⁵ URL: <https://www.equaltimes.org/why-common-security-is-back-on-the> (дата обращения: 10.10.2021).

⁶ URL: <https://commonsecurity.org/> (дата обращения: 10.10.2021).

should be treated as a responsibility not a privilege of governments to act in the interests of Common Security.

International and interstate relations will never be free from competition and even rivalry. Therefore, Common Security should be underpinned by strong and viable international mechanisms, in the centre of which should stay the United Nations. Any enforcement in international relations, including military enforcement, should be strictly guided by Chapter VII of the UN Charter⁷.

Arms control and disarmament policy are crucial components of Common Security. Robust support should be given to the Gorbachev-Reagan statement of 1985 and the Putin-Biden statement of 2021 that a nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought⁸. To fight a nuclear war is suicidal. One day, nuclear deterrence should be replaced by the concept of Common Security.

The politics of nuclear deterrence will last for quite a while. Nevertheless, Common Security to a large extent can be achieved already in the age of nuclear deterrence. The concept and practice of Common Security will play a substantial role in phasing out the policy of nuclear deterrence. Meanwhile the extension of New Start Treaty for 5 years, as well as negotiations of all P5 states on the future of strategic stability, should be fully supported. A multilateral and verifiable moratorium, proposed by Russia, on the deployment of Intermediate Nuclear Forces in Europe should also be supported.

Common Security means enhancing stability by increasing transparency, avoiding dangerous military activities, and providing dedicated political and military-to-military communication channels that would avoid escalation of incidents that might occur. Goodwill and confidence-building measures are indispensable elements of Common Security.

All nations should exert their efforts to achieve ratification of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to make it judicially enforceable. The development and deployment of weapons in outer space or weapons directed against objects in outer space should be prohibited. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is further jeopardised by the intention of the US and the UK to transfer nuclear technologies to Australia for military purposes⁹.

⁷ URL: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text> (дата обращения: 10.10.2021).

⁸ URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5658> (дата обращения: 10.10.2021).

⁹ URL: <https://www.cpdcs.org/peace-movements-perspectives-on-the-aucus-military-pact/> (дата обращения 10.10.2021).

Russian scientists continue to exert efforts to re-establish arms control agenda and to stop brinkmanship in Europe. For more than a year now the Institute of Europe and the Institute for the US and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences have been working with the European Leadership Network and many other colleagues from Europe and the United States on de-escalation of relations between Russia and NATO. Last December a report on Military Risk Reduction in Europe was published¹⁰. Since then, the project has been kept forward in spite of deteriorating security environment.

¹⁰ URL: <http://en.instituteofeurope.ru/images/stories/structura/gromyko/publications/rden.pdf> (дата обращения: 10.10.2021).