

CONFRONTATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND THE WEST AND PROSPECTS OF THE 'NEW COLD WAR'

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Abstract

The exacerbation of tensions between Russia and the West resembles the cold war period in that it encompasses all spheres: politics, economy, and information. The confrontation was not inevitable but the result of political mistakes and does not serve anyone's interests all the while augmenting politico-military and economic risks for all. The resolution of the stand-off should be sought through negotiations and engagement, not sanctions, saber-rattling or information war. Russia's operation in Syria – which had among its goals to change the agenda and build bridges with the West – has managed to make western political and military leaders speak to their Russian counterparts. Yet their interaction on Syria, though definitely needed if only to prevent getting unnecessarily in each other's way in that country, will not be sufficient as a game changer unless Russia succeeds in changing the perception of itself as an expansionist country. The resolution of the Ukrainian crisis remains a key prerequisite in overcoming the cold confrontation with the West. The settlement of the Ukrainian crisis must be based on a rigorous implementation of the Minsk Agreements, irreversible discontinuation of military activities in Eastern Ukraine, and guarantees of the country's territorial integrity and non-aligned status. The confrontation and information war in Russia's relations with the West should give way to a coordinated effort to prevent the economic collapse in Ukraine and foster its future development. Moreover, both Russia and the West need to develop a comprehensive long-term strategy of mutual engagement focused on joint efforts to overcome international challenges and together seek resolution of global problems whether it is ending the Ukrainian crisis, finding a way out of the civil war in Syria or more broadly, upholding international institutions and international law, building an inclusive security environment in the Euro-Atlantic region and cooperating in Asia-Pacific, overcoming global terrorism and cyber-threats, preventing nuclear proliferation and the weaponization of space, effectively dealing with global climate change, disease and hunger, and ensuring sustainable development of the world's poorest regions.

Keywords:

Cold War; U.S.-Russia relations; information war; sanctions; Ukrainian crisis; Minsk agreements; Syria.

Both domestic and foreign experts compare the current situation in Russia's relations with Western countries with the Cold War. At the official level, representatives of Russian and American leadership mostly refrain from such wording. However, at Parliament hearings at

the end of 2014¹, the overwhelming majority of speakers (with the exception of one participant) agreed with the timeliness of this definition. A month later, former USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev made a statement, according to which America had already dragged

¹ Parliament hearings "Russia – USA: Temporary Aggravation or Another Cold War?" State Duma of the Russian Federation, December 8, 2015. (Парламентские слушания «Россия – США: Временное обострение или новая 'холодная война'?", Государственная дума РФ, 8 декабря 2015).

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Russia into another Cold War, “trying to openly implement its general idea of a triumphalism”². He did not exclude the possibility that the conflict could develop into a hot war.

In their publications, the Director of the Institute of US and Canadian Studies, Academician Sergey Rogov³, the Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy Sergey Karaganov⁴, and the Head of the Chair of International Relations at the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Boris Shmelev⁵ wrote about a “new edition of the Cold War”. At the presentation of the Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Head of the IMEMO Center for Security Issues, Academician Alexei Arbatov pointed out that it had started in some segments of the international system: between Russia, the US and its allies, but not with all other countries⁶. In his other publication, he wrote that “today, the situation is worse than the Cold War”⁷. At the 2015 Munich Security Conference, where Russia’s

foreign policy was the main subject, there was the “atmosphere of a Cold War”, according to Fyodor Lukyanov.

Some leading American researchers such as Robert Legvold [Legvold 2014], Stephen Cohen⁸, Katrina vanden Heuvel⁹, agree with such a description of the current state of relations between Russia and the USA. The same idea was expressed by OSCE General Secretary Lamberto Zannier¹⁰ who visited Moscow in the middle of October 2015 to attend a meeting of the Permanent Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on Eurasian security.

At the same time, other foreign and domestic experts including Rose Gottemoeller, James Collins, Thomas Graham, Dmitri Trenin, Sam Green, Andranik Migranyan and Nikolai Zlobin, disagree with this definition, some of them with its essence, and others – with its terminology. Back in 2007, Thomas Friedman, in his book *The World Is Flat* stated that the world had been transformed by globalization and is too interrelated for the Cold War to become a reality once again [Friedman 2007]. NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg,

² Gorbachev cannot exclude the possibility of development of the Cold War into a hot one. Interfax. Quote from Vedomosti Newspaper, January 29, 2015 (Горбачев уже не может исключить превращения холодной войны в «горячую» // Интерфакс. Цитируется по Ведомости. 29 января 2015.) URL: <http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/38797841/gorbachev-uzhe-ne-mozhet-isklyuchit-prevrascheniya-holodnoj>

³ The expert interprets Russian-Western relations as another phase of the Cold War. Interfax. October 12, 2015. (Эксперт усмотрел в отношениях России и Запада новый этап 'холодной войны' // Интерфакс, 12 октября 2015.) URL: <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/472824>

⁴ Crimea May Turn into Another Chechnya. // Ura.ru, March 11, 2014. (Крым может стать новой Чечней. Это так // Ura.ru, 11 марта 2014.) URL: <http://ura.ru/articles/1036261534>

⁵ Worse than Cold War // Russkaya Pravda, October 12, 2015. (Хуже, чем холодная война // Русская правда, 12 октября 2015.) URL: <http://ruspravda.info/Huzhe-chem-holodnaya-voyna-15824.html>

⁶ Presentation of the SIPRI Yearbook 2014 “Armaments, Disarmament and International Security” (Russian edition), Institute of World Economy and International Relations, September 24, 2015. (Презентация Ежегодника СИПРИ 2014 «Вооружения, разоружение и международная безопасность» (русское издание), Институт мировой экономики и международных отношений, 24 сентября 2015.) URL: http://www.imemo.ru/index.php?page_id=502&id=1873

⁷ Arbatov A. Worse than Cold War // Eurasia Outlook, Carnegie Moscow Center, September 16, 2014. URL: <http://carnegie.ru/eurasiaoutlook/?fa=56629>

⁸ Cohen St. New Cold War Now Waged on Three Fronts: Ukraine, Europe, Syria // The Nation, October 7, 2015. URL: <http://www.thenation.com/article/the-new-cold-war-is-now-being-waged-on-three-fronts-ukraine-europe-and-syria/>

⁹ Cohen St.F., vanden Heuvel K. Coalition or Cold War with Russia? // The Nation, December 21–28, 2015. URL: <http://www.thenation.com/article/coalition-or-cold-war-with-russia-2/>

¹⁰ We're back to Cold War relations & geopolitics in security in Europe – OSCE Sec-Gen. Submitted by IWB, December 4, 2015

who had been Norway's Prime Minister for two terms in succession, also expressed confidence in the fact that such a phenomenon was a thing of the past¹¹. Former Polish Foreign Minister and former Director of the Stockholm Institute of Peace Research Issues (SIPRI) Adam Daniel Rotfeld, who spoke in Moscow in September 2015, does not believe that Europe is moving towards another Cold War either. 'We are hostages of terminology'¹², he said.

Is there any sense in trying to agree on terminology? The phrase "Cold War" is not a term in the direct sense of the word. It is rather a figure of speech, a phraseological unit. Meanwhile, many notions (such as democracy, nation, socialism, terrorism, intervention) are differently interpreted in the Russian and the English languages, and such lingvo-political differences are inevitable. Nonetheless, as far as the word combination "Cold War" is concerned, the need to come to agreement is especially relevant, considering the acuteness of the current crisis in Russian-Western relations. An authoritative American researcher Robert Legvold notes in this connection that, if we do not call a spade a spade, it is impossible to become fully aware of the risks the current situation is fraught with¹³.

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Regretfully, many features typical of the Cold War of the second half of the 20th century are present today. There is direct evidence of political confrontation, mutual economic sanctions, large-scale information confrontation and real armed conflicts (first and foremost, in Southeastern Ukraine and Syria). Russia and the West are not involved in those "hot points" directly, but their interests clash in the same way as they did in Korea, Nicaragua

or Angola at the time of bipolarity.

Confrontation in the bipolar world was dominated by an ideological component [Bogaturov, Averkov 2010: 17; Magstadt, Schotten 1996: 529]. During the current phase of the Russian-Western confrontation, the ideological dimension can also be discerned as opposition between democracy and authoritarianism. There are also differences in the vision of the world order: justification of American leadership against striving towards polio-centricity; liberal moralism and humanitarian interventionism against the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the affairs of other states. However, authoritarian orientation has never been a principled position of the Russian leadership. On the contrary (at least in words), Russian public officials have always insisted on the democratic nature of the country. Therefore, at the ideological level the antimony "democracy against authoritarianism" is not the nerve of the current phase of confrontation.

Possibly, the main point of ideological disagreement is the US striving for monocentric domination and Russia's declared intention to oppose it. Meanwhile, Barack Obama, before he was elected President, had promised to change the earlier paradigm of American policy and declared that he would transform the national strategy radically (although that declaration was not fully translated into practice) and renounce the use of force, America's supremacy, the idea of its infallibility and striving for military superiority [Obama 2008: 46, 326–327, 345–346].

What makes the current situation different from the second half of the 20th century is the lack of total confrontation rather than low importance of the ideological component in the differences. It is not present in all regions;

¹¹ Craven P. Stoltenberg: "We are not in a new Cold War". July 5, 2015 URL: <http://www.dw.com/en/stoltenberg-we-are-not-in-a-new-cold-war/a-18562267>

¹² European Security Architecture in the Light of the Ukrainian Crisis. Workshop attended by Adam Rotfeld, Carnegie Moscow Center, September 2, 2015. (Архитектура европейской безопасности в свете украинского кризиса. Семинар с участием Адама Ротфельда, Московский Центр Карнеги, 2 сентября 2015.) URL: <http://carnegie.ru/2015/09/02/архитектура-европейской-безопасности-в-свете-украинского-кризиса/ih6u>

¹³ Conversation with Robert Legvold about American-Russian relations, Carnegie Moscow Center, October 22, 2015. (Беседа с Робертом Легволдом об американско-российских отношениях, Московский Центр Карнеги, 22 сентября 2015.)

moreover, it is not even in the center of world politics (although it may seem so, in Russia's perception). It is illustrative that at the event "Dialogue for the Sake of Future" arranged by the scientific and educational program of the Gorchakov Fund, the report of the author of the present article entitled "Another Cold War? Ways of Overcoming It" was discussed within the framework of the section devoted to regional security issues¹⁴.

Contemporary Russia cannot compare with the United States in terms of economic power and aggregate capacity. Many people in the US think of it as of a country of little significance, which, nonetheless, poses serious problems, and in respect of which one can speak only of "its own, local, small Cold War". However, back in the 1990s, when the author taught in the US, and later, during her work for the Carnegie Moscow Center, she had repeatedly expressed her opinion that Russia, even if it became weak, would never surrender to diktat and would not agree to adjust itself to an undivided authority of Pax Americana. In any case, it will act unexpectedly for the USA and Western countries and in the way it considers fit [Shaklein 2015].

Nonetheless, the observed confrontation was not inevitable. Many Russian politicians and experts conclude that the conflict connected with Ukraine is not a cause but an inevitable consequence, or even a pretext for the current confrontation, but in reality that contradictions have been caused by a restructuring of international relations. However, this hypothesis should be subject to critical analysis. Although it seems logical, could it be that it has simply been adjusted to the logic of developments post factum? Similarly, in the late 1970s, following the "official line", it was "customary" to say that Russian military involvement in Afghanistan was not the cause but a pretext for the Carter Administration to decide against ratifying the SALT II Treaty and freeze relations with the USSR. After all, the depth of the

current "crack-up" in Russia's relations with the West was unexpected to observers.

From the point of view of Western countries, Russia violated international law by taking away part of the territory of a neighboring country in a rough time for the latter, and continues to interfere in the events in Ukraine. Moreover, a number of foreign experts maintain that Russia's and Western visions of the future macroregional development were diametrically different from the start, and that Russia allegedly considered the European and the Eurasian integration spaces incompatible [Kovalchuk 2014: 89, 90]. "Russia has invaded Ukraine in order to prevent one more post-Soviet country from succeeding in ways that Russia has not".

'The war in Ukraine was thus never about Ukraine alone. It was always about destruction of the European project as such,' maintains Yale Professor Timothy Snyder, bringing his position ad absurdum. 'If the European Union fails, then there is no danger that Russians see Europe as an alternative. If Europe fragments into nation-states, Russia becomes a much stronger player. Thus Russia seeks to destroy the European Union by supporting radicals and populists who oppose European integration and seek a return to the nation-state.'¹⁵ Certainly, double standards, a share of hypocrisy, arrogance, and historical prejudices can be traced in such statements. At the same time, they testify to the fact that the West perceives Russia as an aggressive and unpredictable country that cannot be trusted.

From the point of view of the Russian leadership, it is Western countries that deceived Russia at first (by starting to expand NATO contrary to agreements), then betrayed it by organizing the Maidan, and eventually supported the coup d'état in Ukraine in violation of the February 21 agreement, signed by French, German and Polish Foreign Ministers.

Advocates of the "conspiracy theory" believe that there are good reasons why, in the

¹⁴ "Dialogue for the Sake of Future" Program, A.M. Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund, December 9, 2014. (Программа «Диалог во имя будущего», Фонд поддержки публичной политики им. А.М. Горчакова, 9 декабря 2014.) URL: <http://gorchakovfund.ru/news/13310/>

¹⁵ Snyder T. The Real Reason Russia Is 'Helping' Syria // Time, September 30, 2015. URL: <http://time.com/4054941/putin-russia-syria/>

forerun to the Maidan, dozens of American NGOs¹⁶ were active in Ukraine, the US Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland repeatedly stated that 'We have invested more than 5 billion dollars... to help Ukraine... to achieve these goals that will secure a prosperous and democratic Ukraine'¹⁷, and the President of the American National Endowment for Democracy Carl Gershman called Ukraine "the biggest prize".¹⁸ US President Barack Obama himself confessed that America helped to reach agreement on the transfer of power in Ukraine in February 2014¹⁹, although negotiations were conducted without US participation and the American side denied its involvement in them throughout the subsequent year. Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, leading as a Democratic presidential candidate, asserts in her book *Hard Choices* that, considering the "expansionist ambitions" of the Russian leadership, many years before that the Obama administration and its European allies had started working step by step to reduce the possibilities of Putin's influence and oppose his "machinations" [Clinton 2014: 239].

Russian expert Sergey Karaganov believes that the US and European countries aggravated relations wittingly, and deliberately created a situation of confrontation. One can hear in Russian political quarters that the West intends to change the regime in Russia. Although such logic seems doubtful, the Russian leadership

blames the West (and the US, first and foremost) not only for the events in Ukraine but also for the Middle East chaos including internal conflicts in Libya, Syria and Iraq²⁰.

For a long time it seemed that Russian government quarters thought that the Western response to joining Crimea and the events in Ukraine as well as the cooling of relations with Western countries were a temporary phenomena²¹. There existed a view that, the same as in case of the Georgian crisis, the US and its European allies would quickly become reconciled with the joining of Crimea to Russia and its position on Ukraine, and return to *business as usual*. Those who thought so were mistaken. The Western response and the crisis in relations with it are serious and long-lasting, since the question concerns fundamental contradictions.

Those who thought that the EU acted under the US pressure and that it was possible to separate it or some European countries, one by one, from the United States, as it had happened before, were mistaken or partially mistaken. In this case, the European Union had been consistently displaying its fidelity to political principles, even to the detriment of its economic interests, being no less tough than the United States. At least, such consistency was observed until the threat of aggravation of the conflict in Ukraine and prospects of supply of American weapons to Ukrainian troops became obvious [Bogaturov 2014].

¹⁶ Western Funding of NCO Gains Momentum. Pravda-TV, April 12, 2015. (Финансирование НКО Западом с каждым годом набирает обороты. Правда-TV.ru, 12 апреля 2015.) URL: <http://www.pravda-tv.ru/2015/04/15/139094/finansirovanie-nko-zapadom-s-kazhdym-godom-nabiraet-oboroty>.

¹⁷ Nuland V. Remarks at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation Conference. U.S. Department of State, December 13, 2013. URL: <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2013/dec/218804.htm>

¹⁸ Gershman C. Former Soviet states stand up to Russia. Will the U.S.? // Washington Post, September 26, 2013. URL: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/former-soviet-states-stand-up-to-russia-will-the-us/2013/09/26/b5ad2be4-246a-11e3-b75d-5b7f66349852_story.html

¹⁹ Zakaria F. Interview with President Barack Obama, CNN, February 1, 2015. URL: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1502/01/fzgps.01.html>

²⁰ V.V. Putin's address at the plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly on September 28, 2015, The Russian President official website (Выступление В.В. Путина на пленарном заседании 70 сессии Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН 28 сентября 2015, Официальный сайт Президента России) <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50385>; Vladimir Putin's press conference, December 17, 2015, The Russian President official website (Большая пресс-конференция Владимира Путина, 17 декабря 2015, Официальный сайт Президента России) URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50971>

²¹ Bogdanov K. "Hardware" of Russia's New Fleet. Russian International Affairs Council, July 21, 2014. (Богданов К. 'Железо' нового флота России. Российский совет по международным делам, 21 июля 2014.) URL: http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=4094#top-content

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In their addresses at the opening of the General Assembly session dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, Barack Obama²² and Vladimir Putin²³ actually accused each other of the same things. Paradoxically as it may seem, this gives some hope of a future rapprochement between the two sides (although not in the nearest future). In its striving to counter negative global trends, the American leadership could find an ally in Russia, if it had a consistent and constructive strategy. Timothy Snyder writes that Vladimir Putin, 'when he sought words to define just what he opposed, gave an eerily acute description of Russia's intervention in Ukraine. He denounced 'zones of anarchy, which is what Russia created in Donbass. He decried the "belief in one's exceptionality", though it was precisely the idea that Russia, as big brother can decide whether Ukraine exists was given as the reason for war. He spoke of the "tragic consequences" of exporting one's own social model and the dangers of creating "protectorates". That is indeed the lesson of Ukrainians killed and displaced by policies known as the "Russian spring" and "New Russia"'²⁴.

It was actually Russia that Barack Obama, in his turn, criticized in his address to the General Assembly, without mentioning, with a few exceptions, the countries and the names. However, someone who did not know what the American leader implied could think that he was indulging in self-criticism. The US President said that, from the first years of the United Nation's existence, the United States had worked jointly with the Organization in order to ensure governments' responsibility to the people and not to external powers, and that it advocated an international system that forced to pay those who preferred conflict to

cooperation, ensured dignity and equality of all people, and guaranteed a system of better and more consistent international rules and standards. He criticized those, who wanted to practice sabre-rattling, tried to steamroll others and imposed their will on weaker states, while violating international law. All these accusations could be held against the United States itself.

Under these circumstances, the goal of Russia's operation in Syria could be not only to help Bashar Assad's regime, but to change the agenda in its relations with the West – to substitute the topic of the Ukrainian crisis with the topic of the settlement of the situation in the Middle East. Nonetheless, Russia will hardly succeed in reversing the situation of "cold confrontation" in its relations with the USA by intensifying actions in that region. The reason lies not only in the fact that Moscow considers the regime of its long-time ally Bashar Assad as a stronghold of resistance to the Islamic State whereas Washington is confident that the regime is responsible for numerous victims and must go (although it no longer insists that this take place immediately). The main obstacle is that the United States does not intend to give up its perception of Russia as an aggressive and unpredictable country and is not ready for a closer collaboration with it.

The United States and other Western countries have taken a course toward Russia's "isolation". The country has actually been expelled from the G8, and negotiations on its accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have been suspended. Russia has been deprived of its voice at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and of the right to participate in the Organization's observer missions and decision-making structures²⁵. In response, Russia

²² The President Addresses the 70th United Nations General Assembly, September 28, 2015, The White House President Barack Obama official website. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/photos-and-video/video/2015/09/28/president-addresses-70th-united-nations-general-assembly>

²³ V.V. Putin's address at the plenary meeting of the 70th session of the UN General Assembly (Выступление В.В. Путина на пленарном заседании 70 сессии Генеральной Ассамблеи ООН), Op. cit.

²⁴ Snyder T. The Real Reason Russia Is 'Helping' Syria' // Op. cit.

²⁵ Resolution 2034 (2015) Final version. Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the delegation of the Russian Federation. EU Parliamentary Assembly website, Origin – Assembly debate on 28 January 2015 URL: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=21538&lang=en>

has suspended its PACE membership, and the domestic political establishment has begun to discuss the revision of relationship with the Council of Europe. A decision has been taken to terminate the activity of the Civil Society Working Group of the US-Russia Presidential Commission, and in 2014 – of the Presidential Commission itself, at Washington's initiative.

The Ukraine Freedom Support Act²⁶ adopted by Congress in March 2014 and later signed by the US President, blocked the assets and property of the Russian President's inner circle abroad. It also established punishment for companies providing financing or otherwise helping Russian power-engineering companies to mine hydrocarbons in the shelf and stipulated for measures of "strengthening democratic institutions" in the former Soviet countries and intensifying "information activity", including in the Russian language, in Russia's neighboring countries. Resolution 758²⁷ approved by the US Congress on December 4, 2014, by the overwhelming majority of its members (411 votes in favor and 11 votes against) contained a set of additional political ultimatums to Russia.

The United States and its European allies acted according to the *Realpolitik* logic (despite their statements to the contrary), which is based on the "reward – punishment" dichotomy. These principles do not always work even at the interpersonal level, let alone in relations between countries. Among other things, the gut sense of justice has historically been important to Russians. In 2014-2015, the political leadership succeeded in convincing the greater

part of the country's population that truth is on its side, thereby obtaining a *carte blanche*. Of no small importance was the fact that Russian citizens perceived the Western attitude to them as disdainful, degrading and oppressive, because most Western leaders posed as winners of the Cold War.

The course towards Russia's isolation is erroneous. The lack of a clear-cut strategy in respect to Russia in the course of two decades was a big miscalculation on the part of the West. However, the line towards confrontation with it that has been taking shape over the last two years testifies to the fact that the emerging strategy is much worse than the earlier lack of any strategy. Shortly before the start of the Syrian operation and during its first weeks, the Russian leadership succeeded in compelling Washington to a dialogue on the Syrian developments, at first on the armaments based in the country and the servicing contingent, and later – in connection with the commencing bombing. However, the US rejected the proposal to receive a Russian delegation headed by Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev and send a counterpart group to Moscow to discuss interaction on Syria²⁸. Even if coordination of action is achieved, it will not bring about a radical improvement in Russian-American relations.

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The American and EU sanctions imposed after the start of the Ukrainian crisis were prolonged and expanded several times²⁹. At the end of January and in July 2015, American

²⁶ Ukraine Support Act, March 17, 2014. URL: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/113/hr4278/text>

²⁷ H.Res.758 – Strongly condemning the actions of the Russian Federation, under President Vladimir Putin, which has carried out a policy of aggression against neighboring countries aimed at political and economic domination. 113th Congress (2013–2014), Congress.Gov, November 18, 2014. URL: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-resolution/758/text>

²⁸ The US refused to receive the delegation headed by Medvedev to discuss Syria. Interfax, October 14, 2015. (США отказались принять делегацию во главе с Медведевым для обсуждения Сирии. Интерфакс, 14 октября 2015.) URL: <http://www.interfax.ru/world/473318>

²⁹ Executive Order 13660 – Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, March 6, 2014. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/06/executive-order-blocking-property-certain-persons-contributing-situation>; Executive Order 13661 – Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, March 17, 2014. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/20/executive-order-blocking-property-additional-persons-contributing-situat>; Executive Order -- Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing

sanctions were applied to new sectors of Russia's economy as well as to individuals in Russia and the unrecognized newly-formed entities in Ukraine. In June 2015, EU countries and the USA announced a prolongation of sanctions until the end of 2015, and later on, in December, for another six months³⁰. Moreover, the issue of blocking Russia's access to the interbank payment system SWIFT has been repeatedly raised.

Undoubtedly, sanctions are detrimental to the Russian economy since the EU is the country's main trade partner (almost half of Russia's trade turnover before the sanctions). Before 2014, 75% of direct investment in Russia came from the European Union. According to the UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) report, in 2014 the volume of funds invested in Russia as FDI decreased by 70%³¹, and enterprises the sanctions were imposed on were deprived of significant sources of funding. They

were also denied access to the latest technologies. As for import substitution possibilities, those who lived in the Soviet Union know what kind of goods substitute imported ones and what gaps in supply and queueing can be created by the resulting shortages. Such risks are especially relevant in conditions of increasing governmentalization of Russian economy and price regulation. *Judging by everything, economic consequences were not taken into consideration in the decision-making on Crimea and Ukraine at large.*

However, the European Union will also suffer from the sanctions considerably. According to 2012 data, the EU countries exported \$170 billion worth of goods and foodstuffs to Russia. 84% of Russian oil and 76% of Russian gas were supplied to the EU³², and such countries as Finland, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Hungary, and the Baltic countries received 100% of their gas from Russia³³. Russian exporters were clev-

to the Situation in Ukraine, March 20, 2014. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/20/executive-order-blocking-property-additional-persons-contributing-situat>; Treasury Sanctions Russian Officials, Members Of The Russian Leadership's Inner Circle, And An Entity For Involvement In The Situation In Ukraine, U.S. Department of Treasury, March 20, 2014. URL: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl23331.aspx>; Announcement Of Additional Treasury Sanctions On Russian Government Officials And Entities, U.S. Department of Treasury, April 28, 2014. URL: <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2369.aspx>; Announcement of Treasury Sanctions on Entities Within the Financial Services and Energy Sectors of Russia, Against Arms or Related Material Entities, and those Undermining Ukraine's Sovereignty, U.S. Department of Treasury, July 16, 2014. URL: www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2572.aspx; Ukraine-related Sanctions; Publication of Executive Order 13662 Sectoral Sanctions Identifications List, U.S. Department of Treasury, July 16, 2014. URL: <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20140716.aspx>

³⁰ Russia: EU prolongs economic sanctions by six months. European Council, Council of the European Union official site, December 21, 2015. URL: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/12/21-russia-sanctions/>

³¹ Ivanov S. In 2014, foreign direct investment in Russia fell by 70 percent. *Birzhevoi lider* newspaper, January 30, 2015. (Иванов С. Прямые иностранные инвестиции в Россию в 2014 г. упали на 70 процентов. *Биржевой лидер*, 30 января 2015.) <http://www.profi-forex.org/novosti-mira/entry/1008243693.html>

³² \$200 for a barrel of petroleum is the price of anti-Russian sanctions. *Vesti ekonomiki*, July 24, 2014. (\$200 за баррель нефти – цена санкций против России. *Вести экономика*, 24 июля 2014.) URL: <http://www.vestifinance.ru/articles/45252>

Kontorovich A.E., Korzhubaev A.G., Eder L.V. Russia's role in stabilizing world petroleum and gas markets considering international trends in the area of energy supply. February 2007. (Конторович А.Э., Коржубаев А.Г., Эдер Л.В. Роль России в стабилизации мировых рынков нефти и газа с учетом международных тенденций в сфере энергообеспечения. февраль 2007.) URL: <http://www.vipstd.ru/gim/content/view/388/>

³³ «Europe will Spend Winter without Ukrainian Transit. *Rambler Finance*, July 18, 2014. (Европа будет зимовать без украинского транзита, *Rambler Finance*, 18 июля 2014.)

URL: <http://finance.rambler.ru/news/analytics/148364299.html>; Raibman Natalia, Romania Stated Undersupply of 5% of Russian Gas, *Vedomosti*, September 12, 2014. (Райбман Наталья «Румыния заявила о недополучении 5% российского газа», *Ведомости*, 12 сентября 2014.)

er enough to announce that oil and gas supply to Europe would continue. Only the Southern Stream suffered, and after the conflict with Turkey over the downing of the Russian jet fighter over Syria, plans of an alternative pipeline supposed to replace it were also abandoned. The sanctions and deterioration of the economic situation in Russia were also detrimental to the long-suffering Ukraine, Moscow's closest neighbor interconnected with it economically, which is on the verge of a collapse. *Judging by everything, the West did not take into consideration such externalities either.*

The deterioration of the economic situation affects Russia citizens. When the living standards drop in the country, it does not mean that people blame the authorities. In a country where democracy is absent, the cause-and-effect relationship is viewed differently than in the EU, due to a different mentality (Why common people have been chosen as a target? Why is it their fault?), as if citizens were not responsible for the policy of their State and could not influence the politicians they have elected.

The population blames the West, and not the Russian authorities, for the sanctions. Characteristically, Russian citizens associate a drop in petroleum prices with an US-inspired conspiracy. According to a public opinion poll, a considerable part of the population is inclined to accuse Western countries of the sanctions on foodstuffs (imposed by the Russian government) under the influence of mobilization consciousness and government propaganda³⁴.

Russians are quite capable of enduring what may be extremely bad for an EU inhabitant. In a country with a difficult historical past not spoiled by prosperity, people have more stamina. During the last crisis, a 7% drop in the living standards in West European states was per-

ceived as a disaster. In Russia where, according to different estimates, there was a 50–70% drop in economy in the 1990s, people survived; and many people thought of that period as of a period of bright hopes despite privations. *Although, in any case, economic losses from sanctions – imposed by others or one's own – will be considerable, they are unpredictable from the point of view of their political impact as well as short- and long-term consequences.*

In May 2014, the US Congress approved, in two readings simultaneously, the Russian Aggression Prevention Act 2014³⁵ permitting to grant the status of “key allies outside the framework of NATO” to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. It stipulates for military assistance, access to American intelligence data, and expanded training of security forces of the countries that are not members of the North Atlantic Alliance. It also stipulates for broader military support of Poland and the Baltic countries, and accelerated implementation of the anti-missile defense system program in Europe [Bubnova 2015: 5–17].

At the NATO summit in Wales on September 4 and 5, 2015, Russia was officially recognized as a threat to the alliance and to “North Atlantic security” for the first time since the end of the Cold War³⁶. New military facilities were created in Poland, Romania and the Baltic countries where NATO troops will be stationed on a rotational basis [Arbatov, Bubnova 2014: 74–98, 112–121]. US units in Eastern Europe were provided with infantry combat vehicles, self-propelled howitzers and tanks (in 2013 American tanks were withdrawn from Europe); the number of aircraft patrolling the airspace over Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia was tripled; American ships entered the Baltic and the Black seas over twenty times; and a limited number of F-22 fifth-generation

³⁴ «Russians Blame US Sanctions for Increase in Goods and Foodstuffs Prices, Pravda.Ru, September 23, 2014. (Россияне назвали санкции США причиной подорожания товаров и продуктов», Правда.Ру, 23 сентября 2014.) URL: <http://www.pravda.ru/news/economics/23-09-2014/1227655-tovar-O/>

³⁵ S.2277 – Russian Aggression Prevention Act of 2014. 113 Congress (2013–2014), U.S Congress official website. URL: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/2277>

³⁶ Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, September 5, 2014, NATO official website, URL: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en

multipurpose fighters was repositioned in Eastern Europe.

American Marines and *Osprey* convertiplanes were deployed at the Mikhail Kogelnichanu military base not far from the port of Constanța on the Black Sea coast, and on board of NATO warships in the Mediterranean Sea. The Rapid Response Plan approved at the NATO summit stipulated for the formation of a new task force intended for a rapid deployment of troops 4,000 to 10,000 strong. The Alliance conducted military exercises near the Russian border, in the western part of Ukraine and in Georgia. The Alliance assisted Ukraine in carrying out military planning and military reform.

Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014, approved by the Congress in May 2014 and signed by President Obama in December³⁷, allows supply of "defensive" arms (anti-tank and armor-piercing weapons, tactical drones, and fire detection and control systems) to Kiev, questions the allocation of funds for cutting US armaments under the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, stipulates for a possible termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and contemplates the allocation of additional funds for accelerated development of the anti-missile defense system in Eastern Europe. Resolution 758 approved by the US Congress on December 4, 2014, along with the other measures, stipulates, in case of the President's appropriate decision, for the supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine.

Although both documents were not binding, they could be viewed as instruments of

pressure on the US President, impelling him to tighten his policy. The military budget for the following year, signed by B. Obama at the end of November 2015, permitted the American executive authorities to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine, having included \$200 million into the budget for military assistance to that country, with the indication of specific systems to be delivered such as anti-tank weapons, mortars, large-caliber artillery, ammunition, grenade launchers, shells, small-caliber guns, and rifles.

Despite all the measures taken and planned, confrontation between Russia and the USA over the Ukraine issue has been and will be mostly of a political nature, with a few military overtones. The ceasefire observed by the parties to the Ukrainian conflict since the start of September 2015 promoted de-escalation of the confrontation. In mid-October, there began the withdrawal of military hardware equipped with weapons with a caliber below 100 mm from the contact zone³⁸. Nonetheless, there is still a danger of ceasefire violation, especially since not all of the Minsk Agreements are observed by the parties to the conflict.

At the same time, since the start of Russian bombing in Syria, the risk of a direct clash between Russian and American troops has considerably increased. Danger warnings became especially alarming after Russian jets were found in the Turkish airspace³⁹, and the Russian SU-24 bomber was shot down by a Turkish fighter. According to reports of Western mass media⁴⁰, trajectories of Russian cruise missiles lay just several miles away from American

³⁷ Ukraine Freedom Support Act for 2014 URL: http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/UFSFA_SectionBySection4.pdf

³⁸ Ukraine withdraws armaments with a caliber below 100 mm from the line of contact in the ATO zone. Independent news bulletin, October 3, 2015. (Украина отводит вооружения калибром менее 100 мм от линий соприкосновения в зоне АТО. Сводка независимых новостей, 3 октября 2015.) URL: <http://korrespondent.eu/ekonomika/obschestvo-ekonomika/21618>

³⁹ List of Close Military Encounters Between Russia and the West, March 2014 – March 2015, Compiled by ELN Researcher Thomas Frear, European Leadership Network, 2015. URL: <http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/medialibrary/2015/03/11/4264a5a6/ELN%20Russia%20-%20West%20Full%20List%20of%20Incidents.pdf>; Syria conflict: Turkey summons Russian ambassador a second time. BBC, October 6, 2015. URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34450827>

⁴⁰ Rogoway T. Russia Intercepts U.S. Drones Over Syria, Launches Cruise Missiles From Caspian. Foxtrot Alpha, October 10, 2015. URL: <http://foxtrotalpha.jalopnik.com/russia-intercepts-u-s-drones-over-syria-launches-cruise-1735207541>; Russia launches cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea, intercepts US predator drones over Syria. Osnet Daily, October. 2015. URL: <http://osnetdaily.com/2015/10/russia-launches-cruise-missiles-from-the-caspian-sea-intercepts-us-predator-drones-over-syria/>

drones in a number of cases, and information appeared in the British press (later, nonetheless, officially disproved) that the Royal Air Force involved in the military operation in Iraq and Syria had been allegedly given the green light to shoot down Russian jets, "if the latter threatened their lives"⁴¹.

An increased threat is associated with the availability of nuclear weapons on both sides. In contrast to the Cold War period, there are currently no agreed rules of conduct for military units in case of aggravation of tension, nor any confrontation experience.

Additional threats also arise in connection with the nature of modern warfare, which is growing into a hybrid one. "It makes everything more dangerous", said former American senator Sam Nunn. "It makes tactical nuclear weapons more dangerous, and it makes weapons material more dangerous"⁴². American diplomat Richard Burt who participated in the START II negotiations also states that a hybrid warfare increases a possibility of use of nuclear weapons: "Both American and Russian nuclear arms are essentially on a kind of hair-trigger alert. Both sides have a nuclear posture where land-based missiles could be authorized for use in less than 15 minutes. In the situation of hybrid warfare, that is a dangerous state of play"⁴³.

4

In a period of aggravation of the international situation, the mass media of an "authoritarian state" is expected to reckon with the government's opinion. According to the *Freedom House* rating, the Russian press has been qualified as "not free" for a number of years⁴⁴. Although the trustworthiness of ratings

is often questioned, and there are a lot of Russian mass media that disagree with the official position [Bubnova 2016: 99, 103, 113–116], domestic governmental mass media have really found themselves drawn into the conflict. Representatives of Russian government and expert quarters openly speak of an "information warfare", whereas misinformation mills flap their wings on both sides. Starting with the story of a "crucified boy", frame-ups⁴⁵ and photoshopped images published by unscrupulous journalists ("propagandists" will be more correct) are regularly exposed in social networks.

Public opinion in Russia has changed. Generations of the second half of the 20th century usually perceived war as a tragedy, a catastrophe. In the early 1990s, Russia was one of the most pacifist countries in the world, and it seemed that, due to its historical experience, things would always be like that. Now the perception of war as a tragedy has been lost to a considerable extent. According to the SIPRI 2014 Yearbook, Russia ranks 155th in the level of peacefulness among the 162 countries [SIPRI 2015 Yearbook: 99]. Although its place at the top of the list of "warmongers" is questionable, the extent of aggressiveness has undoubtedly increased in society.

At the same time, during the flaming up of the conflict in Ukraine, Western mass media turned out to be no less one-sided and biased than Russian media. This raised even more questions, since American and European journalists, throughout their career, are taught to present information in a balanced way, be honest as an indispensable professional prerequisite, and present facts and events from the point of view of both sides

⁴¹ Romil P. UK government denies reports that RAF pilots have been given the green light to shoot down hostile Russian jets in Syria. Business Insider, October 12, 2015. URL: <http://www3.businessinsider.com/a-step-closer-to-war-uk-pilots-given-green-light-to-shoot-down-hostile-russian-jets-in-syria-2015-10>

⁴² Becker M. Nuclear Specter Returns. Threat of War is Higher than in the Cold War. Spiegel, February 13, 2015.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Freedom of the Press, Country Report, Russia, Freedom House. URL: <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2013/russia>

⁴⁵ Kichanova V. NTV television passed a Ukrainian homeless child for a drugged prisoner of the National Guard. Slon, November 5, 2014. [Кичанова В. НТВ выдало украинского беспризорника за накачанного наркотиками пленника Нацгвардии. Slon, 5 ноября 2014.]

involved in a conflict. However, the enduring Cold War, still present in history books, lectures and textbooks of Western universities seems to have influenced the current generation as well, causing negative perception stereotypes. There are a lot of examples of unfair presentation of information by the American and the European press. When covering the Georgia – South Ossetia conflict, Western mass media presented the events in such a way as if it were Russia that had attacked its neighbor, and not the Georgian Armed Forces, which bombed Tskhinvali at night and killed Russian peacekeepers⁴⁶. Some time later, the European mass media “came to their senses”, some of them as soon as a week later, and others – after the publication of findings of the international Tagliavini Commission, which stated that Saakashvili’s armed forces were the first to start operations, but the American mass media are still under misapprehension. However, now, under the impact of Ukrainian developments, the European press again writes about the Georgia – South Ossetia conflict blaming Moscow for having provoked it.

The Western mass media barely showed the aggressive actions of the Maidan protesters. It is indicative that after the Berkut special police members were showered with incendiary mixture and there were numerous victims in the law enforcement forces, Barack Obama described the events in the Maidan as a “peaceful protest”⁴⁷. The Western mass media never questioned legitimacy of the seizure of power in Kiev and never asked who the snipers who killed over one hundred protest-

ers and representatives of the law enforcement forces were.

Possibly, this is simply a matter of lack of knowledge of the issue. In the first half of the 1990s, for example, American experts expressed a supposition that one of the causes of the US anti-Serbian position in the course of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia was that the only US reporter happened to be in the area of operation of Bosnian Muslims. As a single source of information about Bosnia and Herzegovina for the American mass media, she provided a one-sided view of the events. That journalist was Samantha Powers, who is currently the US representative to the United Nations.

The Western mass media gave little coverage to protests against the Kiev authorities in Eastern and Southeastern Ukraine. For more than half a year after, they did not show how Ukrainian troops used force in the east of the country and the ensuing destruction and human tragedies, or showed very little of it. Their screens showed everything else – Islamic State’s operations in Iraq and Syria, terrorist acts in Iraq, events in the Israeli-Palestine conflict, but not the war in the very heart of Europe.

After the fire in the trade union building in Odessa, a CNN host Candy Crowley, while interviewing American Ambassador to Kiev Geoffrey Pyatt on May 4, asked whether Russia was behind it all⁴⁸. After the crash of the Malaysian Boeing, the Western mass media did not write about the versions of the tragedy but only about it being Russia’s fault. The anti-aircraft defense systems that were allegedly

⁴⁶ Kagan R. Putin Makes His Move // Washington Post, August 11, 2008 URL: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/10/AR2008081001871.html>; Krastev N. Heated Words But No Action On UN Security Council. Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, August 11, 2008. URL: http://www.rferl.org/content/Heated_Words_But_no_Action_on_UN_Security_Council/1189975.html; Stack M.K., Spiegel P. Russia widens Georgia assault. As troops launch a second front, U.S. demands that Moscow pull back // Los Angeles Times, August 12, 2008. URL: <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/12/world/fg-ossetia12>

⁴⁷ Keane Angela Greiling, Neuger James G. "Obama Warns Ukraine Against Military Action on Protesters" Bloomberg February 20, 2014. URL: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-02-19/obama-warns-ukraine-against-military-action-on-protesters>; Ukraine riots according to Obama: 'Peaceful protests'. RT. February 20, 2014. URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbHwKmfTful>

⁴⁸ Interview with Geoffrey Pyatt, State of the Union with Candy Crowley, CNN May 4, 2014 URL: <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1405/04/sotu.O1.html>

used to shoot down the aircraft were called "Russian missiles"⁴⁹, while in respect of Syria it was stated that the Islamic State used "American-made" and not "American" missiles⁵⁰. In an article about the defense of the Donetsk airport, those fighting in the Ukrainian army were called "Ukrainians", while their opponents were called "separatists"⁵¹. There are a great many examples of such misrepresentations [Bubnova, 2015: 89–91].

The afore-mentioned Resolution 758 laid special emphasis on the information component of anti-Russian activity. Surprisingly, how the European and the American public fails to notice or ignores facts of abuse of the human right to objective and many-sided information. Freedom of the press is a fundamental value, but it is especially important in a period of confrontation, so that both sides were heard – all Ukrainians, including the suffering people in Donetsk and Lugansk.

5

No matter how the current confrontation is described, it is necessary to find ways of overcoming it. It will be a long and difficult process. All the previously used metaphors to denote an improvement in relations, such as "détente" and "perezagruzka" (restart) are no longer valid. "Overload" was the word inscribed on a symbolic souvenir Hillary Clinton presented to Sergey Lavrov in 2009. It seemed a mistake, but turned out to be prescience. Meanwhile, all positive wording has been compromised (in the USA, even the word "détente" is perceived by many people with a

negative connotation), since periods of warming in relations were promptly curtailed in an unfriendly way. However, the Cold War experience also teaches that aggravations are of a cyclic nature, and if one of the sides makes attempts at rapprochement, this stimulates reciprocal steps.

US Undersecretary of State for arms control Rose Gottemoeller said that she saw no reasons preventing them from further cooperation with Russia in addressing international issues, even if they were anxious about the serious crisis in Ukraine, they would continue their efforts to cooperate with Russia⁵². According to an American diplomat, there are a lot of examples proving that this is possible, and one of them is the process of liquidating Syrian chemical weapons. However, there are few supporters of such a position in the US Administration, while the opinion about Russia's aggressiveness, which is to be "restrained", prevails. Therefore, even if cooperation is achieved in certain areas, it will not lead to a cumulative effect⁵³, nor will it change the overall negative background of the relationship. This is what makes the current situation different from the one connected with the signing of the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, which led to an improvement in Soviet-American relations on a wider range of issues [Bogaturov 2003: 352–357].

It is impossible to overcome confrontation with the West without achieving a settlement in Ukraine. The actual "freezing" of the conflict that continued throughout 2015 seems a palliative solution without any prospects.

⁴⁹ Russia led missile attack on Malaysia Plane // New York Post. URL: [http://nypost.com/2014/.../how-the-russians-led-the-;](http://nypost.com/2014/.../how-the-russians-led-the-) Animation shows Russian Buk missile hit Malaysia Airlines MH17 – video. The Guardian. October 13, 2015. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2015/oct/13/mh17-crash-animation-russian-buk-missile-hit-plane-video>; Roth. MH17 was shot down by Russian Buk missile, Dutch report concludes. France 24, October 13, 2015. URL: <http://www.france24.com/en/20151013-mh17-was-shot-down-russian-buk-missile-dutch-report-concludes>

⁵⁰ Why are US-made anti-tank missiles showing up in Syria? PRI's The World, April 17, 2014. URL: <http://www.pri.org/stories/2014-04-17/why-are-us-made-anti-tank-missiles-showing-syria>; Apps Peter "Rebel videos show first U.S.-made rockets in Syria," Reuters, April 15, 2014. URL: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-arms-usa-idUSBREA3E0RZ20140415>

⁵¹ BBC News Europe, October 31, 2014. URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29793696>

⁵² The US Denied Movement Towards Another Cold War. Vzgl'yad, February 9, 2015. [США опровергли движение к новой холодной войне. Взгляд, 9 февраля 2015.] URL: <http://vz.ru/news/2015/2/9/728733.html>

⁵³ Conversation with Robert Legvold about American–Russian Relations. (Беседа с Робертом Легвольдом об американо–российских отношениях.) Op. cit.

The matter should be dealt with by restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity (taking Crimea out of the context) along with ensuring its non-aligned status and broad autonomy for the Donetsk and Lugansk regions based on a constitutional reform agreed with the residents of those regions, which is in keeping with the Minsk Agreements. Ukraine's economic revival with the assistance of both Russia and the European Union may become a significant international project leading to normalization of spoilt relations between Russia and the West. It is highly important that Minsk II Agreements⁵⁴ stipulate for tripartite talks between Russia, the EU and Ukraine about ways of integrating Ukraine into the European economic space, with due consideration for the opinion of the Russian side.

In the military sphere, which requires serious attention, Russia should observe "reasonable sufficiency". Armed forces should be maintained at an adequate level corresponding to the actual and possible threats, while abstaining from threats of use of force and particularly hints at a possibility of using nuclear weapons, which is especially inadmissible in conditions of a close approach of Russia's and NATO's forces in Europe and simultaneous involvement of the air force of the US-headed coalition, on one side, and Russia, on the other side, in the bombing in Syria. It is necessary to consolidate the SNW, IRNF and other treaties on arms limitation and disarmament and elaborate, at the expert level, new steps in this area, which will be demanded when the confrontation ends.

Contrary to the opinion that America won the Cold War, which prevails in the US, Barack Obama stated in Moscow at the dawn of his Presidency that this was not so: 'This change did not come from any one nation. The Cold War reached a conclusion because of the actions of many nations over many years, and because the people of Russia and Eastern

Europe stood up and decided its end would be peaceful'⁵⁵. However, those changes were not duly institutionalized in the mechanism of Russia's integration into a new system based on a long-term consideration of its interests. That gap will have to be closed in the future.

The United States should give up its perception of Russia as "Evil Empire" but treat it as an equal partner [Stent 2014: x, 36–37, 135–176, 211–234, 255–256]. It was a mistake on the part of the US to view Moscow as a minor player, who must follow in the wake of the American policy. More risks will ensue from ignoring Russia today and postponing interaction with it until "better days". Moscow should not be isolated, but integrated into the long-term strategy of international development.

Russia should no longer proceed from the conspiracy theory and should stop seeking "Washington's hand" in everything that happens in the world. It should demonstrate by its words and deeds that it has no territorial claims and does not strive to recreate an empire, but is interested, first and foremost, in partnering with Western countries on equal terms, achieving political solutions to global problems, and ensuring safe environment and, as far as possible, friendly regimes in neighboring countries. It is necessary to strengthen international institutions and international law, participate in the work of the Council of Europe, and restore the dialogue with the EU and the OSCE. While the field of official interaction has narrowed as it happened in the past, it is highly important to arrange meetings of experts and seek ways out of the crisis in academic institutions and "think tanks", informal contacts and contacts at the level of civil society organization.

Both sides should stop waging information warfare in the mass media and accusing each other groundlessly, although it is difficult to change the existing paradigm in conditions of continuing confrontation. Russia mass media

⁵⁴ The text of the set of measures on implementing the Minsk Agreements has been published. Interfax, February 12, 2015. (Опубликован текст Комплекса мер по выполнению Минских соглашений. Интерфакс, 12 февраля 2015.) URL: <http://www.interfax.ru/world/423654>

⁵⁵ Barack Obama. Remarks by the President at the New Economic School Graduation, July 7, 2009. White House President Barack Obama official website. URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-new-economic-school-graduation>

have much to do in bridging the gap between the real United States and Western countries and the way they are presented by the domestic press and the central TV channels. Russia is a European country, and pursuing the thesis that Russia and the West have “different values” prevents it from “returning to Europe”, which is bound to take place sooner or later, and work on it should start now. Russia will also have to change the world’s perception of itself, which was considerably marred, according to authoritative international opinion polls, during the Ukrainian crisis [Pew Research Center 2015: 2, 3, 5; Country Brand Index 2014–15: 36, 45, 53].

* * *

It is time to realize the seriousness of the situation as well as the fact that confrontation does no good to anyone and is fraught with the most serious risks. Under the current conditions, the focus should be on actual impera-

tives of restoring relations and repairing the losses caused by confrontation rather than on political games, even if they are connected with such important events as the forthcoming presidential election in the US. Russia and the West should consistently seek ways of joining efforts focused on overcoming confrontation and achieving a peaceful solution of global problems, whether it is ending the Ukrainian crisis, finding a way out of the civil war in Syria and countering the threat of terrorism, preventing the global climate change, ensuring peaceful exploration of the Arctic and sustainable development of the world’s poorest regions, building inclusive security environment in the Euro-Atlantic region and cooperating in Asia-Pacific, overcoming cyber-threats, preventing nuclear proliferation, weaponization of space and conflicts [Bubnova 2011: 19, 278–279]. The main lesson learned from overcoming the Cold War is that “the impossible is possible”.

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