

COLD WAR AS PART OF AMERICAN GLOBAL STRATEGY

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Abstract

By 2016 relations between Russia and the United States reached a point that was defined by the majority of American scholars and politicians as “the new cold war”. This term, inherited from the period of bipolar world order, was not so willingly adopted by Russian political discourse, but was also admitted as the one which characterized the most precisely the current state of bilateral relations.

The question that the author highlights in the article is about the term itself and its real meaning for the United States, Russia and the rest of the world. It is very important to analyze the phenomenon relying not on the history of Soviet-American relations, but on the history and essence of American foreign policy thinking (more correctly, on American ideology).

The author assumes that the cold war strategy is one of the forms used to realize American global strategy, and can be aimed at any country whose policy does not agree with American plans, and/or is an obstacle to the America-centered world governance model. The cold war is not a phenomenon typical only of Russian-American relations. It can be compared with the concept of “semi-war” as the essence of US grand strategy and its historic roots.

Russia was defined by American politicians and experts “an obstacle” to the US policy of reconstruction of the world on the basis of American values and institutions. Russia is also opposed to American actions in various parts of the world which makes it difficult or impossible for the USA to fulfill its plans.

Key words:

Russia; the United States; Russian-American relations; cold war; semi-war; global strategy; world order.

Russian-American relations seem to be one of the central issues of international relations. Not only the United States but also many other countries, mostly American allies “quite happily” entered this path of cold war with Russia. Some of them bring back old offenses and ambitions, remember distant history of 18th and 19th centuries, others – 20th century events. We know that we cannot make history go back, so efforts to do this are dangerous. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union there was a lot of regret, despair, and disillusion, however the task of the restoration of the USSR was not on the Russian agenda. New forms of interaction and cooperation emerged which are viewed in the US and Europe as plans of restoration of a union similar to the

USSR. A lot has been done to prevent any kind of successful integration in the post-Soviet space where Russia remains the strongest player. Why is there so much opposition to Russia who demonstrates a strong will to fight global threats, and a desire to cooperate in solving many regional problems? The answer is not simple. Partially it can be explained by the fact that Russia did not disappear from global politics, and strengthened its great power status, and independence. Part of the explanation is in the “lost hopes” of some countries which hoped that they would never see Russia again as an obstacle to their plans and ambitions. Among those who were disappointed are the United States, where debates around the issue of a new cold war and the “emergence of ag-

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gressive Russia” have been so resentful and have taken on such a large scale.

American struggle for a unipolar world order

The international context of the 2010s is very very different from the one the one of the 1990s. At that time the polycentric nature of the world system was more a declared notion than a real one. The United States saw itself not only as a superpower but also as the only country able to regulate international development. This situation fully satisfied American global strategy. Its roots are historic, and its contemporary version was very well elaborated during the epoch of the Clinton administration. It seemed that the horizon was almost cloudless for America, and after the USSR collapsed, no country would be able to confront the superpower or to prevent it from successfully fulfilling its plans.

The international situation was comprehensively described and conceptually explained by American scholars who introduced notions of “unipolar world”, “tripolar world”, “hybrid world order”, “new American empire”, “benevolent empire”, “indispensible nation”, etc. In the Russian discourse A. Bogaturov introduced the category of “pluralistic unipolarity” which was a compromise between the unipolarity declared by Americans and multipolarity proclaimed by the majority of Russian scholars [Shakleina 2002; Shakleina 2012]. All these theories were introduced not only to explain international developments after the end of bipolar world order, but also to justify and legitimize the special status of the United States and its inherent right (and mission) to govern the world.

With the evolution of the international system, and emergence of multiple state and non-state players the concept of unipolarity did not disappear and remained the core of American strategy planning during the Bush and Obama administrations. The international behavior of the United States was based on global superiority and a global mission. Realists and liberals were not in any kind of opposition on the basic issues of American global behavior, but sometimes had different views and interpretations of tactics and methods.

In this conceptual and political situation Russia emerged as the only state that expressed a different view of the new century world order, and demonstrated an opposition to the American way of establishing a unipolar order based on the military preeminence of the United States and NATO. Growing great powers – China, India, Brazil – though criticized America, did not have the will and potential to oppose it seriously (and maybe did not want to do it).

By the 2000s, Russia returned to its great power behavior, and this strategic shift was noticed in the United States. During the Bush administration, bifurcation in Russian-American relations was growing. It was not the problem of democracy that seemed to be the biggest concern of the American political establishment. It was the emergence of a real and serious obstacle (and problem) to the realization of the American plan to establish a monocentric order. In the American understanding this global center could be a collective one – USA +NATO/EU; USA + G7, where the United States would be an unchallenged superpower keeping its domineering capabilities.

Russia saw the new order as a polycentric one, where old and new great powers would participate in organizing and structuring world and regional orders, would share the tasks of global governance, and would have a certain autonomy/independence in conducting foreign policy, especially in the regions and with countries close to their spheres of interest. Russia considered China, India, and Brazil as leading world powers though they were still on the way to getting this status in full (emerging, growing powers). They could constitute an informal institution similar to Group of Seven (G7), and this idea materialized later with the creation of the BRIC(S) institution .

Russia and the United States have different approaches to defining great powers. In the American approach, this status can be granted by the United States and the G7 to certain countries (for instance, India was granted it by the Bush administration in 2006). Russia suggests a comprehensive definition which excluded this subjective superpower right to grant this or that status. *A contemporary great power is a country that possesses traditional character-*

istics of a great power – territory, natural resources, population, intellectual resources, economic, military, technological potential, high cultural and educational potential. A great power today is a country that is to a great extent (or absolutely) independent in conducting its domestic and foreign policy aimed at safeguarding national interests, exerts visible influence on macro regional and world politics, policies of other countries (world regulation policy); has the will and potential for the realization of great power strategy. Besides the mentioned above parameters, a great power must have the historic tradition of thinking and acting globally, the tradition and culture of exerting influence on world politics, acting as a dominant or very active and influential player [Shakleina 2012: 22-23; Emerging Powers 2013: 163-188]

According to Russia's definition not all countries – members of G7 can be considered full contemporary great powers, for instance, Italy, Canada, Japan, even Germany and France do not have an independent foreign policy as they are strongly influenced by the United States, EU members and NATO. Russia and China follow independent international strategies subordinated to their national interests, and demonstrate the will and ability to defend them¹.

So, Russia and the United States have different views on each other's status, rights and obligations in world politics, see differently the present and future world order, differ in estimating the role of military force in global governance.

These differences are crucial. The Russian view is in contradiction with basic American ideological postulates and its goal to fulfill a special mission for mankind. At the end of the bipolar world order, the USSR (Russia) hoped that the military component in international relations would diminish, that the arms race would stop, however it did not happen. The 21st century version of American global strategy,

global leadership marked a new stage of international development when hard power methods became even more influential². Concepts and practices of humanitarian military interventions, regime change tactics (color revolutions and civil wars), the enlargement of NATO and growth of American and NATO military presence in the world (especially in Eurasia), ambitions to establish a desired order without wide great power consensus, the selective approach to the use of international norms, etc. put an end to hopes for peaceful international and regional development. The so called "American credo" and "semiwar" approach turned out to be a lasting part of American's strategy and behavior.

Not so many American scholars write critically about this historic tradition of "American national security" state but it is impossible to explain and understand US policy without having some knowledge of the history and evolution of American policy, especially after the 2nd world war [Bacevich 2010: 19-49; 109-145]. Strategic continuity characterizes the policies of the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations though there are many disagreements between Democrats and Republicans.

Relations with Russia were developing in the framework of American global strategy, and the more Russia "behaved differently from what was expected and willed in the US" the more confrontational rhetoric was heard and the more challenging declarations were made. It seemed that the familiar format of bilateral relations was a desired option, opening new "windows of opportunity" for the United States and its allies to follow "the path of war" with Russia.

What is this war the United States is waging in the 21st century with the Russian Federation? Can we say that the cold war never ended, but only subsided for a short period? Is this type of war characteristic only of Russian-American relations or it is something different?

¹Independence of foreign policy is an inherent part of great powers status though every country as a member of international community acting in the framework of existing order, its institutions, undergoes certain restrictions to its sovereignty and policy. Great powers are also the actors who often change the order, initiate changes in old rules of the game, and introduce new institutions and norms.

²Hard power manifests itself not only in the military form, but also in economic, informational, ideological, psychological campaigns in the behavior of the United States and many other countries following the global constructor (hegemon).

Cold War: past or still present?

A lot of books have been written on the end and aftermath of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. In Russia and the United States analysts and the public are divided: some think that Russia as a former part of the USSR and its successor state lost the cold war, while others state that there was no loser or victor in this war [Gaddis 1998]. The United States and its allies act as victors thinking that they have the right to reconstruct the world on the basis of this victory. Russia does not accept this and is playing the role of a great power able and willing to participate and influence the formation of the world order in the 21st century. So, two countries build their strategies based on different readings of the results of the cold war of the 20th century, and their contradictory approaches put them into the position of opponents.

Debates will continue, but it is more important to clarify what the cold war phenomenon is: is it typical only of relations between Russia and the United States, or it is part of American global strategy, and may be waged against any country that opposes the United States either preventing it from quick, successful and relatively cheap fulfillment of its global plans, or creating certain difficulties in regulating the situation at the regional level posing challenges and threats to its allies and business. Another question is: should we blame anybody if it is not over, and whom?

The cold war was the definition for the period in international relations characterized by ideological and political competition between two ideologies, two approaches to political and social organization of the society: Socialist – Soviet, and Capitalist – Western (American). We mention only ideological and political competition because *economic and military competition cannot be considered as an inherent part only of the cold war, though competition in these spheres developed under the strong influence of ideology and political systems.*

Economic and military competition is an inherent part of international development. In the 21st century some trends have become apparent such as the intensification of competition between old and new great powers, the growing contest for natural resources, markets,

territories of transit and economic benefits. This is a norm for a capitalist economic system, and it can continue without any competition of ideologies.

So, when we refer to the cold war, we need to answer the question: what happened to the ideological and political struggle between two ideological concepts and between two political systems. *The socialist political system* that existed in the USSR stopped to exist (though socialist political systems still continue to function in some countries). Socialism had a certain impact on the development of some capitalist countries who acquired some elements of the socialist state and introduced them into their economic systems (so called “Swedish socialism”, and in general, Northern European socialism; social guarantees (protection) of the population in the United States and other developed capitalist countries, etc.). Russia became part of the world capitalist system but keeps certain elements from the socialist system (social guarantees to the population). So, there is not dramatic opposition between the American and Russian social systems. Russia has also been acknowledged as a country with a market economy which is part of global financial and economic system.

There is a lot of criticism of the Russian political system which is defined as non-democratic and contradicting Western values. However it is not democracy that is real point of disagreement though it is constantly repeated in political and expert discourse in the United States and Europe. *The main point of discontent and contradiction is Russia's behavior in world politics where it does what it considers right for its national interests, and does not accept Western behavior.*

The cold war was the period when the USSR and the United States were two superpowers and two poles with their spheres of influence. *The cold war was a period of bipolar global regulation.* After the disappearance of one of the poles the United States proclaimed unipolarity, and planned to enjoy this unipolar moment to their full benefit [Wohlforth 1999]. The emergence of other big players did not disturb America very much as new players like India, China, Brazil were not going to challenge

American leadership (and could not). Though China reached an economic status similar to the United States in the 2010s, and it started to object to American actions on some issues (military interventions and American hegemony), no cold war started between the countries. The reason was very high level of economic interdependence between the two countries³. Russia was visible as the only great power that kept the historic tradition of actively participating in global politics and opposing the American model of global government.

However, bipolar structure is not a special characteristic only of the cold war; it can exist without ideological and/or political opposition. It is a structural phenomenon. Some scholars do not exclude the possibility that a new bipolar system may emerge, for instance, with America and China as its poles. Will it take the format of a cold war? Will economic interdependence make this bipolarity non-confrontational, or will the ideological factor prevail? It is an open question but the possibility that it can happen means that bipolarity cannot be attributed only to the cold war between the USSR and the US.

So, cold war relations include practically all spheres of activities of participants/opponents: global and regional governance, economy, military sphere, ideology/propaganda/information, culture, diplomacy, etc. In general it is an alternative to a hot war. It can have different degrees of intensity, different agendas, different set of means and techniques (“weapons”). So we should not attribute it only to Russian-American relations. *Cold war type relations can emerge when hot war is more costly or fatal to opponents, especially when we deal with nuclear powers. In the case of the United States it is part*

of its strategy because American global behavior is based on so called “American credo” and principle of “semiwar”⁴.

In 1966 senator J. William Fulbright wrote the book “Arrogance of power” where he wrote about the “crusading spirit” among policy makers in Washington who considered themselves “self-appointed emissaries of God who have wrought so much violence in the world” [Bacevich 2010: 112]. This book written at the time of the Vietnam war caused a lot of discussion in the United States and the Soviet Union. The author expressed doubt about the way American policy was realized. 50 years passed since the publication but the issue of war – hot or cold is still on the agenda of American politicians. One of the honest critics of American contemporary strategy Andrew Bacevich writes: “Now more than ever it became essential to protect Americas from thinking that the best way to avoid wars was to stay out of them” [Bacevich 2010: 139].

It was the invention of American politicians and strategists to define US strategy as “semiwar” (the first Secretary of Defense James Forrestal is considered to be the author). It means that “the American credo of global leadership and the sacred trinity of U.S. military practice – commit the United States to what is in effect a condition of permanent national security crisis”. A. Bacevich correctly writes: “Semiwarriors created the Washington rules. Semiwarriors uphold them. Semiwarriors benefit from their persistence” [Bacevich 2010: 27].

The idea of American strategy as a “crusade” is also mentioned not only by its critics but also by its supporters. Let’s look at American foreign policy concepts after 1991

³During the presidential election campaign in 2016 politicians and experts started to speak more openly about necessity to deter China (it was not a new statement, deterrence of China was already part of American strategy). Such declarations were can be explained by growing criticism coming from Americans who were dissatisfied with unemployment and low salaries. They blamed government and business for moving industries from the United States to China who became an economic giant due to American capital while American citizens could not find jobs in their own country.

⁴The American credo which is pursued by all presidents including Obama includes: 1) the world must be organized (or shaped); 2) only the United States possesses the capacity to prescribe and enforce a global order. No other nation has the vision, will, and wisdom required to lead. No other nation or group of nations can be entrusted with that role; 3) America’s writ includes the charge of articulating the principles that should define the international order. Those principle are necessarily American principles, which possess universal validity; 4) The world wants the United States to lead. A few rogues and recalcitrants aside, everyone understands and accepts this reality [Bacevich 2010: 21].

when the USSR – the “enemy № 1” disappeared. What concepts and methods of world regulation and transformation were introduced and implemented: humanitarian interventions, tough internationalism, unilateralism, axis of evil, regime change, hybrid wars, etc. The United States and NATO participated in local military campaigns, brought military bases and anti-missile systems on new territories, enlarged members, and strengthened the issue of military might and capability. What was more important – the language of formulating new threats. For Middle Eastern countries it was not only the language, it was a military operation, a real war. For Russia it meant a new period of cold war relations.

American strategy is a combination of military actions (real war) and political actions (cold war) which put the United States into the situation of being in semi-war with certain countries. It is the nature of American politics: constant search for enemies and threats that require a military or political answer. It means *that we can view the cold war as part of American global strategy, and it makes this type of war part of international relations as long as the United States remains the only superpower, and there is opposition of any kind to its policy and mission.*

Cold war in relations between the Russian state and the American state appears to have become a historic paradigm already, and it will continue as long as the Russian state exists and follows its own historic path of a great power. The dramatic change is possible especially in the situation when the world faces global threats coming from terrorism and extremism, economic crises...

Who are participants of the semiwar in the 21st century: are they nation states, organizations, non-state actors, etc. What ideologies and political systems confront each other now? Some American scholars declare that the opposing political systems are: West and liberal democracy states vs. non-West and states without democracy (dictatorship and authoritarianism); incompatible ideologies are: Western vs. non-Western, terrorism vs. freedom. Cold war is supposed to be the war without military means, while semiwar can include military actions in combination with non-military means.

With such an interpretation of the present international situation we shall find ourselves in constant war with anything: war on terror, war on poverty, war on dictatorship, war for freedom, war for democracy, war for human rights, etc. *War is a strong category, and its use in everyday life and our political lexicon frames our thinking, viewing of the world, and of other countries. Our mentality and concepts are not very peaceful, sometimes very militant. Political language is very important.*

In the semiwar or “cold war forever” thinking Russia is often defined as a threat and an obstacle to Western democratic strategy, and is blamed for the return of this type of relations between the Russian Federation and the United States. It is not true. War of any type is not part of Russian foreign policy conceptions while it is in American official documents and rhetoric. At the end of the 1980s the Soviet Union declared its strategy to be of the non-confrontational type: demilitarization of international relations, deideologization of relations between countries, readiness to become part of the West [Breakthrough/Прорыв 1989; Windows of Opportunity 1989]. It was M. Gorbachev who in 1989 asked nuclear powers, and first of all, the United States, to stop nuclear tests and to abolish nuclear weapons by 2000. Nobody supported him. Almost 20 years later President Obama suggested “nuclear zero”, and was praised for that. But this initiative has no chances of being implemented if other nuclear states do not join this program. India and Pakistan did not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, instead India turned to a bilateral agreement with the United States. Besides, in a world where the use of weapons is part of a superpower strategy, and crusade for regime change continues, we can hardly expect any country to give up weapons that guarantee its security and non-intervention from outside.

After 1991 Russia opened itself to the West and was eager to establish partnership relations. We know that this idea was not realized. The majority of American scholars and politicians declare that the main reason for that was that Russia “went in the wrong direction”. But the main reason for deterioration was not this one. As it was mentioned above – it was

Russia's choice to restore its great power status and realize this status regionally and globally. Ideology and real politics go arm in arm constituting the core of American strategy. Democrats in the Obama administration were not going to give up their policy of forceful regime change using humanitarian military interventions (like the one in Iraq). They were afraid that criticizing Bush too much would bring back realists, and they "could again rule the day, embracing order and stability over ideology and values" [The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy 2012:431].

They were not telling the whole truth: geopolitics never disappeared from American foreign policy. They said: "We are not going to preside over America's decline. What we're trying to do is to get America another fifty years as leader" [Mann 2012: 72]. So called "smart power" as a combination of "soft" and "hard" power was invented to cover real aims and means of democrats. They argued that while focusing on soft power, they should not forget about the importance of old-fashioned American military power [Mann 2012: 55].

The basics of American ideology dictated the country's behavior. The choice of any kind of war – hot or cold is determined not by Russia's "deficiency" or imperfection, distinction from the West, but most of all by its incompatibility with American plans and unwillingness to follow. To our regret we have to acknowledge that the mentality of the cold war is still with us. Many political experts in the United States and Europe see everything in very dangerous and categorical system of coordinates: Good vs. Evil, West vs. non-West, democracy vs. dictatorship, freedom vs. terrorism. Concentrating on ideological, political, economic differences, and living in permanent struggle – hot or cold war – reinforces existing threats (terrorism), divides countries preventing them from achieving success in solving global problems: exhaustion of natural resources, climate, poverty and epidemics, growing struggle for resources, global and regional criminal networks (drugs, arms, illegal migration), challenges to common and national security – piracy, militarization of space, growth of nuclear powers, etc. Special attention should

be paid to the world economy and financial system which is in crisis, to its disproportions and subordination to ideology and politics of certain countries. You cannot declare the policies of one country as market competition, and of the other – as political use of its natural resources. Laws of market economy say that the seller and the consumer negotiate and compete in their efforts to get better terms of the bargain. Ideology, politics, mentality of the cold war often overweight economic pragmatism.

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In 2010 during a debate with my American colleague Robert Legvold I stated that the cold war was over as there was no Soviet Union with its political and economic system, its ideology and the Warsaw Pact Organization. And Russia made a tremendous breakthrough in its development as a new member of international community.

By 2016 relations between our countries reached the lowest point since 1988. American global strategy reached a very dangerous point of permanent endless fighting with all possible means for preeminence: ideological, economic, military. Despite the fact that the world looked polycentric, and the number of leading powers has grown, the trend to establishing America's leadership/dominance continued [Jones 2014; NSS 2015].

Russia again was named as "threat № 1" and "an obstacle" to American policy of reforming the world and establishing a new world order. Thinking over the situation, analyzing views of American mainstream political experts and declarations during the presidential election campaign of 2016, the story of cold war relations got a new light and a new meaning. As it was mentioned above it is time to view the situation from a different point of view.

My conclusion is that the cold war is an inherent part of American global strategy mentality and practice. Since the Soviet Union was the first great obstacle to the realization of American global plans, it became the field and the object of this policy. And since this obstacle did not disappear after the dissolution of the USSR, and reemerged with the Russian Federation continuing its historical great power path, the United States pursued

its cold war strategy and tactics together with its allies with new strength and scale.

The situation is very upsetting and dangerous. There are many old and new global and regional threats that can be solved only by broad collective efforts. The military approach rarely leads to good solutions. The path of warrior or crusader is also not suitable for conflict resolution in the modern world. Any kind of war is unacceptable.

There are people in Russia and the United States who understand the seriousness of the situation in bilateral relations and in the world. Much depends on the improvement of Russian-American relations. They remain the two biggest

military powers in the world, two countries with the best experience in global management and finding solutions to global problems. They have the most developed expert communities with a great experience of finding compromise and solutions in the most dramatic situations. It is time to start moving towards real cooperation.

It is not easy to free ourselves from stereotypes, especially when some politicians and experts try hard to bring back the “shadows of the past” in Russian-American relations and in contemporary international relations. But we must do it [Accommodating Rising Powers 2016].

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