

The U.S. and Russia in the New World Order

PYOTR V. GLADKOV

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States and Russia have been undergoing a serious moment in history. They find themselves at the crossroads between the orientation of their foreign policies and that of the emerging international system, over which both of them still exert a definite influence. This influence over the nascent global order, however, is considerably weaker than the one exercised 45 years ago after the end of yet another conflict of global proportions—World War II.

The United States has a choice. It could assist in the formation of a collective security system under which it would not only partake in single sporadic operations to maintain peace, but secure its presence in an integrated international system in order to guarantee a counterbalance to what Woodrow Wilson called “violations of law.” This idea could loosely fit into what George Bush called the “New World Order.”

Or, the U.S. can yield to a situation of “general disintegration,” characterized by (1) the emergence of a multitude of autonomous politico-military centers in different regions of the world (2) separation and regionalism of power and (3) the disbanding or weakening of military alliances and of many political and even economic intergovernmental groupings.

From the point of view of American national security, the situation of “general disintegration” will be mostly characterized by the absence of serious coordinated politico-military threats to the integrity and status of the United States and American society. In other words, following a half-century of Cold War and superpower summits, a scenario of general disintegration will be characterized by systematic violations over specific parts of the world (which will arise in multitudes), but they will be scattered and no single power or circumstance will be able to inflict damage to the security and basic interests of the United States.

In this scenario, the U.S. will be invulnerable until (and this is an important condition) it either undermines itself from within through inept leadership, or fails to straighten out its economy and society or, if the government steps out of its basic boundaries and unjustifiably attempts to use force in remote parts of the world.

The American position in the world after the end of the Cold War is

Pyotr V. Gladkov is the head of the Multilateral Diplomacy and Negotiations Department of the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada (Moscow), the president of the Russian Scientific Foundation, vice-president of the international consortium Europe-America 500 and one of Russia's leading authorities on global strategy.

reminiscent of the beginning of the 1920s (but not the end of the 1940s) in one way: it is unlikely in the near future that a group of governments hostile to the U.S. will appear. A system or an alliance capable of posing a direct threat to the U.S. will not arise as it did in the 1920s and 1940s.

A New International Relations System

The gradual evolution from the rigid bipolarity which began breaking down during the Nixon-Kissinger era has given rise to a new multipolarity where the widespread consolidation of power and authority has been replaced by the dissolution of political-military alliances and by power struggles on even the lowest levels in increasingly smaller regions.

As spheres of influence are shrinking and the existing powers are divided over political and military initiatives, the existing multipolar balance will be expanded to include these new powers. The increasing proliferation of nuclear weapons will especially lead to the formation of a world order of eight to ten states with their separate strategic policies, vying for control over their own regions.

As before, force will remain the decisive factor in determining the status and role of a state in regional and global terms. Power will not be limited to strategic military might, however, but will also be determined in increasing proportions by economic, social, and even cultural factors. Looking fifteen to thirty years down the road, along with the leading powers of the United States, China, Japan, and Russia, a new vanguard of rising regional powers will be emerging. Several likely prospects are Indonesia, India, Nigeria, Iran, Brazil and possibly, although doubtfully, Vietnam, Germany, South Africa, and Egypt. Amid this sea of minor powers, those with the most potential to be perceived as rivals of the emerging powers are Pakistan, France, Israel, and Argentina, and more doubtfully, Mexico, Canada, South Korea, Australia, Bangladesh, Great Britain, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq.

“Russia will undoubtedly face a series of conflicts along its extensive periphery, primarily in its south-east Asian regions . . . ”

In this future international system, there will no longer be any super-powers in either the scale of the past or the present. Instead, the United States and Russia, confined to their respective regions strategically, will be relegated to the status of mere regional powers, but still remaining the two most prominent world leaders. Although threats to its security are greatly diminished, Russia will undoubtedly face a series of conflicts along its extensive periphery, primarily in its south-east Asian regions where it will form a trilateral balance of power with China and Japan.

One should not confuse the symbolic strength of non-uniform or even

internally hostile groupings based mainly on common economic interests like the European Economic Community with true integral alliances. One should make serious reservations also about the status of Japan—not only of its capacity to use its high productivity, industrial discipline, technological achievements and accumulated capital for military and political influence, but also of its capability of maintaining a high level of influence in the world economy. Germany, too, should be considered in the future as a dubious hegemon. It might (and probably will) actively support Russia but will not be able to attach it entirely to its foreign objectives. Always-vigilant but not obviously hostile France will direct itself to the creation of alliances in central and eastern Europe, and will confront the intentions of Germany.

What, then, will be the main features of the emerging international system?

First of all, there are and will continue to be constant grievances and calamities such as embargoes, expropriations, coups, revolutions supported by exterior forces, multinational and ethnic conflicts, sanctions, etc.

The second trend will be the increase of interdependency—not in the idealistic understanding as a purely positive factor, but rather as a negative one in many respects. Interdependency is a series of links between states: resources, activities of economic organizations, migration of populations, the environment, etc. All these factors contain problems, from common nuances right up to threats to the basic security of other states.

The third element of the future international system will be the absence of an elaborated mechanism, in the form of a supra-state institution, maintaining order in the system and overseeing its normal functioning. Obviously, some kind of organized cooperation between states will continue to evolve, but the situation described here depicts the absence of the usual hierarchy in the system's structure.

The fourth factor stems from the above three: states wishing to guarantee security in the world system may soon resort to unilateral interference rather than broad-based cooperation with other states.

The fifth factor is the partition of global power between a large number of states with roughly equal regional strengths. This phenomenon has several aspects, the first of which is the emerging limitations to political unions and splits in military alliances. The other aspect is an outgrowth of the first—the impossibility of effective use of military force, both nuclear and conventional.

The sixth emerging factor which will complicate the maintenance of international order (collective or even unilateral) is the absence of internal support to its very creation. The absence of public support to interventions may not prevent them but may be a serious obstacle to their realization.

Summing up the results, we should stress that the world system is drastically changing, since shifts in its parameters are taking place. I do not refer here to the overused term “multipolarity.” The world system is rapidly

moving in a direction beyond a relatively controlled system with regulated balance of power—and with set conditions of interaction between a limited number of players. It is moving to a greater dissipated order beyond the balance-of-power system, to the condition which I call “general disintegration.”

Instability will be the norm in all parts of the world, as well as the emergence of regional “hegemons.” This will provoke situations which may entail regional rivalries but not a spill over beyond the region. Contrary to existing notions, such a situation will not likely promote hoped-for regional integrations (at least at the political level), even in Europe. The spread of nuclear weapons will be both the symptom and the cause of the regionalization of global power.

On the whole, the international system will suffer for a long time from various, mainly non-strategic disorders such as the refusal to supply raw materials, limitations of trade, economic violations, mass migrations, drugs and terrorism. However, even taking into account that a majority of the world’s regions will be unstable, the system on the whole will probably remain in a pseudo-stable condition since regional troubles are unlikely to threaten either of the leading states previously known as superpowers. Thus, even with the presence of somewhat serious conflicts in various regions of the world, there will be no need for the U.S. to be engulfed in them.

The Changing Dynamics of Global Threats

In response to the downfall of the scepter of communism, predictions have arisen that future threats to American security will be neither military, nor political, but rather, ecological, social, and economic. The United States is plagued by such environmental hazards as global warming, air and water pollution, holes in the ozone layer, and mass destruction of the rain forests and by the social crises of terrorism and the narcotics trade. But the most effective threats will be of an economic nature. By means of embargoes and denials of resources, regional powers will attempt to achieve their strategic goals.

Secondly, despite the huge significance of the factors enumerated above, structural and politico-military questions will remain the most important factors for international “system-forming.” In other words, who is in power and what sort of form and structure the international system is composed of (who possesses power, how is it regulated and what rules of behavior are guiding the main states in their foreign policies), will still be the main considerations.

America in the New World Order

The intervention of American and other nations’ troops in the Persian Gulf was not only a military victory, but also a victory for the former president’s

concept of a "New World Order." One interpretation of this concept sees it as the actual creation of a multinational collective security system designed to impose order on any region of the globe. Even if this interpretation did in fact hold true for the recent events in the Gulf, such a coalition is inherently unstable and destined to be short-lived. A second interpretation, however, proposes that the Persian Gulf War was merely an aggressive assertion of the United States' position as the only remaining "superpower." While that may be true to a certain extent, the allies' interests are not considered in this interpretation.

At any rate, with the absence of rivalry with the USSR, American strategy will be reformed and directed towards active intervention in the resolution

"The best course of action that the two remaining superpowers could pursue would be mutual freedom from regional obligations."

of conflicts worldwide in the name of America's general interests. In light of changing conditions and attitudes in the international arena, the United States should alter its foreign policy from actively interfering in localized conflicts, as interference

inevitably leads to the universalization of the conflict and brings discord to its own territory. Instead, the United States ought to strive to maintain the balance of power in the regions.

In the Persian Gulf, for instance, through its incessant and useless interference, the United States intercepted a role intended for the countries in the region itself, thereby entrenching itself where the turmoil will undoubtedly outlast American interests. The alternative to an active interventionist policy is leaving such countries in peace with their claims to regional hegemony, allowing them the possibility of self-destruction before taking action on their claims and crossing borders into neighboring countries. The Gulf War clearly corresponds more closely with the trends of disintegration and dispersion of power, than with those of resolution. The best course of action that the two remaining superpowers could pursue would be mutual freedom from regional obligations.

While examining its alternatives for the future, perhaps the new administration will realize that restricting the Soviet Union's attempts of penetration in the Third World for half a century had been unnecessary. After putting such revisionist policies aside with the demise of the Soviet empire, it is obvious that unstable regions are not prey to the hands of a global enemy and therefore should not be stabilized by military force. Most importantly, a balance of power and even rivalry should be encouraged. In other words, the principal policy aim in respect to regional conflicts should be preventing them before being forced to quell a full-blown crisis by military interference.

The New Administration and Europe

As Washington is undergoing a transition of leadership, so is its role in the arena of world politics, especially with respect to European affairs. With the diminishing American presence in Europe, Germany's role in Europe will undoubtedly be enhanced. There are apprehensions that the Clinton administration will extend its pragmatic economic policies towards Europe, since he had in the past revealed inclinations towards protectionism. He also has allowed certain concessions to influential opponents of free trade in American enterprises and trade unions. A potentially more conservative American position at the GATT negotiations will hardly be conducive to a rapid resolution of the crisis between the United States and the European Community over the subsidization of European agricultural exports. On the other hand, with a Democratic administration in the White House, it is possible that Western Europe will have greater freedom to manoeuvre, strengthening the European Community in terms of defense.

It is obvious that Clinton is in favor of preserving U.S. connections with its allies within NATO and of maintaining a presence in Europe. By late 1995, however, the president intends, with the support of the Senate, to reduce American military bases and decrease troops from 150,000 to 100,000 or even 75,000 in Europe. Clinton considers NATO's foremost task with the end of the Cold War to be able to adequately react to threats to European stability by former Communist countries and by continuing regional conflicts. He feels that NATO, possibly in connection with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), could play a more active role in humanitarian operations in conflict zones such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Clinton also speaks favorably of the expansion of spheres of cooperation between NATO and Russia as well as with the east-central European states. He also expressed his desire for the allies to take on a greater share of the burden within NATO's framework. While the West European allies may be willing to increase their contribution to common security, they would rather fortify their own defense than pay for the reconstruction of NATO.

It is not Western Europe, however, from where Clinton faces his greatest challenge, but from east-central Europe and the Balkans—where instability and disorder may touch upon the interests of the U.S. The course of the new administration with respect to the Yugoslav crises will be difficult as well. During his election campaign, Clinton had suggested a series of strict steps with respect to Yugoslavia. He spoke in favor of using force against the Serbs, with the consent of the U.N., as well as the use of American air power. Clinton also spoke in favor of lifting the arms embargo to Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the aim of providing more weapons to the beleaguered Muslims and therefore create a better balance in the conflict. Today, he continues to dwell on the problems of Yugoslavia, declaring that there are many variants for their resolution and he would not like to exclude any of

them. Most analysts think that Clinton feels strong pressure in favor of using military force in Yugoslavia—such as from at least two former U.S. secretaries of state—but would rather exhaust other options first.

In the meantime, with regards to the resolution of international conflicts, including Europe, the Clinton administration will likely emphasize the role of international organizations in the spirit of “democratic multilateral approach.” This will include a stress on moral problems in foreign policy, particularly protection of human rights and democracy in the world. Clinton will inevitably be striving to enhance the role of the CSCE in the resolution of European problems, since it is precisely this organization which is given the burden of setting standards. Apparently, the new administration will be more inclined to further institutionalize the Helsinki process.

New American Foreign Policy and Russia

Some hold the opinion that it is easier for Moscow to conduct relations with Republicans (Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Bush) than with Democrats (Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter). There is some truth to this. It is quite likely that the Republicans, with their pragmatic tendencies in geopolitics and forceful measures, and the fact that they do not create illusions of America’s weakness, were more easily understood and therefore in certain ways closer to the traditional leaders of the Soviet Union than were the Democrats.

It would be premature to extend this pattern to the new, postcommunist Russia. Moreover, there are serious grounds to assume that Clinton may now open up new horizons for the development of Russian-American relations.

It is true that, in the short term, a change of administration always leads to a certain “pause.” This is quite natural: the new president has to form his team, establish working relations with the Congress and, importantly, he has to shake up, to “air out” all the foreign policy baggage inherited from his predecessor. This must be taken into account by the Russian Foreign Ministry, which has by now grown used to the Republican routine and was practically in complete unanimity with the State Department on most issues. The Foreign Ministry will also have a chance to review many issues concerning relations with the U.S., such as disarmament and policy in key regions. A constant dialogue on different levels will help reduce the loss caused by the “pause.”

There is little reason to expect that Clinton will ignore or underestimate the significance of U.S.-Russian relations as has sometimes been claimed. Serious consideration should be given to his remark during the election campaign that until stable democracies emerge from the ruins of the Soviet empire, the future of the world will remain in question. He believes that “no national security issue is more urgent.” Clinton postulated that the support of reforms in Russia would be one of the main aspects of American foreign

policy.

The new president has repeatedly emphasized that the success of political and economic reforms in Russia directly corresponds to American national interests. According to Clinton, Russian reforms will have a tremendous significance for the U.S. in that they will allow "lower defense spending, a reduced nuclear threat, a diminished risk of environmental disasters, fewer arms exports and less proliferation, access to Russia's vast resources through peaceful commerce and the creation of a major new market for American goods and services."

He is already proving he can follow up, and the contrast between him and George Bush is immense. One reason for this is that he is the first post-Cold War president, and does not suffer from the inertia of this war.

As regards to specific issues, Clinton is likely to discontinue nuclear testing as long as Russia does so as well. He is not a supporter of the Strategic Defense Initiative and will strictly observe the ABM Treaty. At the same time, he will be prepared to cooperate in the field of early warning systems for missile attacks and in tactical anti-missile defense systems. However, he is not likely to react positively to the idea of a "Global Defense System." This may be a disappointment for some of Russia's industrialists and scientists who were quick to seize upon the Republicans' myth about cooperation in the creation of costly and probably inefficient strategic defense systems that, aside from everything else, would have no evident target, as most Third World countries are more likely to commit blackmail or terrorism rather than launch intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The Democrats' concern about the proliferation of nuclear weapons also serves to stabilize the international situation. This concern may help solve some of the problems that surfaced after the disintegration of the USSR. The new administration will most likely resolutely oppose the emergence of any nuclear states besides Russia on the territory of the former Soviet Union. America will expect all CIS members to observe their obligations with regard to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

With Clinton in power the prospects for Russian-American international peacekeeping cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations will become more favorable. Russian initiatives in this field will receive a positive response from the Democratic administration. For the first time, plans for reforming the U.N. and granting it additional functions and powers shall be discussed at the level of practical policy.

The new president may also seek negotiations on curbing trade in arms and military technology. The possibility of even setting a quota for Russia on the international market is not to be excluded. If mutual understanding can be reached, more effective cooperation in the conversion of the defense industry will become a reality. Thus, even in this field, the scope of Russian-American cooperation will largely depend on the decisions made in Moscow.

It should be noted that Clinton never referred to Russia as a defeated country when speaking about providing assistance. Unlike George Bush, who in the course of the election campaign used the thesis of America's "victory" in the Cold War, Clinton stressed that the matter was above all, "in the courage of the men and women who lived in the former Soviet Union. They tore down the walls of repression and stood down the tanks of tyranny." This standpoint is more in line with the historical truth and bears better prospects for building Russian-American relations based on equality.

The appointment of his fellow Oxford Rhodes Scholar Strobe Talbott to head a new supercommittee to assist Russia's transformation was perhaps one of Clinton's finest decisions—instead of leaving the urgent matter to the seasoned structures of the State Department. His continued forceful stance

"The appointment of . . . Strobe Talbott to head a new supercommittee to assist Russia's transformation was perhaps one of Clinton's finest decisions . . ."

(which few predicted) on aid to Russia, plus his ability to mobilize to this task the other members of the G-7 group of industrial nations, the IMF and World Bank, and even the Congress, stands as testimony to his sincere intentions—not to mention his manifested condition of

support to the outcome of the April referendum, which handsomely paid off. More links will be established with the Democracy Corps, which will send thousands of volunteers to Russia to help carry out reforms.

However, at the same time, the Democratic Party candidate repeatedly stressed that American assistance (with the exception of humanitarian assistance) should be provided only on the condition that its recipients carry out full-scale economic reforms, reduce nuclear arsenals, demilitarize their economies, and respect the rights of minorities.

New Problems for Russia?

Clinton has demonstrated a rather good understanding of what is going on in Russia. At the very least, his experts can easily compete with the Republican Soviet specialists.

He states that Russia faces two main short-term economic tasks: stabilizing the economy and preventing hyperinflation. In the long term, he considers that it will be necessary to create the market from the bottom up. This is why one of the main priorities in both countries' relations should be the creation of an attractive investment climate in Russia. In addition to the establishment of political and economic stability, this task will assume a whole series of problems—the formation of a reliable legislative base, a business infrastructure (banks, communication, transport systems, etc.), measures providing efficient protection from the extortion and arbitrary actions of local bureaucrats, etc. Finally, but of no less importance, corruption and crime

(which have seriously curbed Western investment) must be effectively combatted. This is all extremely important not only for foreign investment, but for the development of domestic entrepreneurship as well.

In seeking Western investment, one must take into account the fact that Russia is competing with other countries of the CIS and in most cases it still loses.

Bearing in mind that the Democratic administration will probably be particularly sensitive to the problem of human rights and the development of democratic institutions, Russian-American relations will be directly influenced by the internal political situation in Russia. While American conservatives were fully satisfied with the banning of the Communist Party and the anti-Communist trend, these things will now hardly guarantee a favorable attitude among the U.S. political elite or the general public. There are increasing concerns in the U.S. in the declining popularity of democracy in Russia, the increasing calls for a centralization of power, and the potential rise of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian methods of ruling the country. Concern also arises due to the growing strength of reactionary, even fascist, organizations amid a growing apathy by the authorities to curb them.

The divergence of Russian and American foreign policies will be particularly painful if Russia slows down economic and political demilitarization or if it fails to ratify and observe the signed arms reduction treaties.

Conclusion

Almost all aspects of Russian-American relations hinge on the success of democratic reforms and the continuation of harmony and cooperation. If the Russian economy can be stabilized, if the corruption and incompetence of senior bureaucrats can be eliminated, and if Russia can avoid the temptation of authoritarianism in its desperation, economic and political partnership between the two countries only stands to grow stronger. Under such circumstances, Clinton might even support Russia on the issue of protecting the rights of Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltics and other former Soviet republics. Such moves should not be deemed as concessions to America, but as steps vital to Russia's interests in economic renewal, widespread democratization, and viable foreign and military policies. Russia's and America's interests, naturally, are not one and the same, but with continuing cooperation and negotiations, contradictions can be resolved without dangerous conflicts or confrontations.