

THE PILLARS OF INTERNATIONAL ORDER

In what direction is the world going now, at what point of international relations do we find ourselves, why do many of us feel alarmed?

Confrontation dominates in relations between the great powers, and rivalry grows. More and more reckless players promote the idea of confrontation's inevitability. It's required to keep the coolness of judgment in this circumstances. Even after all reductions of armaments by Russia and the United States in recent decades, their military power as the power of nuclear-weapon states is so great, that it would be utter irresponsible to think that the mankind can survive World War III.

The world community lives and acts in the environment of persistent search for world order concepts, many of which originate as quickly as they are forgotten. This search is inseparably connected with the change of the balance of power in international affairs, which includes a broad set of important factors. Many of them are often forgotten. For example, the role of international law, the role of the United Nations and the UN Charter.

The UN Charter is a small book when you hold it in your hands. But what about its importance? The UN Charter is the child of 9 May 1945. It is an inalienable part of the Victory Day, defeat of fascism, of the army, which was considered invincible before invasion in the Soviet Union.

Currently, the world lives in the grip of two forces: international relations are threatened with chaos; the second force is the growing interdependence. Chaos is growing "somewhere", in the Near and Middle East, in North-East Asia, in Africa, but the whole Europe trembles; risks are increasing for Russia as well. The Old World experiences huge pressure because of the inflow of migrants and refugees; terrorist acts against Europeans and sometimes arranged by Europeans, become more frequent and bloodier.

Global politics is still done mostly by states. However, the process of many states' disintegration goes on in parallel, sometimes pushed by outside "well-

wishers”. But surely not always. A wide-spread reason is inability to handle freedom acquired in the second half of the 20th century and cope with the legacy of the colonial past, overcome problems as a result of disintegration of Ottoman and European empires.

As for the foreign pressure aimed at depriving certain states of sovereignty, their population start resisting this process. This phenomenon requires special attention. For example, identifying a number of states as rogue states and outcasts can be a method of such disintegration. Radicalisation of the society is a response to intrusion from the outside; extremist and terrorist organisations come to the fore. The example of Libya is obvious. It is possible to destroy a state, but instead of it demolishers do not have any alternative except restoration of the state. Even where there is no efficient and viable state as in cases of Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Abkhazia or South Ossetia, the great powers again prefer to call their de facto protectorates states.

Another example of a nation-state’s strong resistance to the policy of its desovereignization is the modern history of the European Union. The idea to delegate a part of sovereignty to supranational structures has its convincing reasons, including the acceptance that in today’s world it is a must to unite efforts in order to solve trans-regional and global problems. But after the supranational authorities are in place, they as any bureaucracy start not only reproducing themselves but try to expand their prerogatives. The “uprising” of eurosceptics in one of the leading EU member – the UK – and the ensuing Brexit have become the result of this process. Those who think that Brexit is an accident are mistaken. There are no accidents of this scale in history. It is possible to arrange a multiethnic “melting pot”, which is known from the history of empires and some modern countries, but only within federations, quasi-federations and multinational states. It turned out too much for the EU to arrange a “melting pot” from the existing and in most cases old nation-states.

After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, a harmful slogan “you’re either with us, or against us”¹ was coined keeping in mind Fronde even from some of the US allies. Recently the EU with all its loyalty to the United States encountered a bully behavior of Washington, which seeks to apply its national laws extraterritorially to promote American business interests². These are the example, although negative ones, of how nation-states call the tune in global politics. Those, who seek to create new subjects of international relations based on dilution of nation-states, cannot oppose them effectively. Strong nation-states can be balanced only by other strong nation-states.

Socioeconomic factors are not frequently discussed. But terrorism is impossible to destroy not only because it is often terrorism of individuals or small groups of extremists, which activities is difficult to follow. The problem is that terrorism is fed by modern means of communication, which so often ignite hatred or a sense of injustice.

Where does such fanatical devotion come from, such a burning wish to fight as a member of terrorist organisations? Of course, there are mercenaries, professional fighters. But there are many who grew up in poverty, who lost all hope to achieve anything in a civilized way, people in a rage because of injustices of this world, those who revenge deaths of relatives or friends as a result of various international military coalitions. It is impossible to justify terrorists but it is necessary to understand their motives, otherwise there is no hope of defeating them.

New populism, including euroscepticism, to some extent is a consequence of neoliberal economic theory and practice, including Thatcherism and Reagonomics. Until recently neoliberalism seemed to propose magic recipes for the problems of economic crisis, inflation and unemployment³. But then it turned out that the neoliberal model of globalisation is a dead end and requires replacement. In some aspects it promoted the development of global markets in the 1980-90s in the

¹ Literally – “You’re either with us, or you’re on the side of the terrorists”, see, e.g.: <https://iz.ru/news/252080>

² <http://tass.ru/ekonomika/4770649>

³ Roger Bootle. The Death of Inflation: Surviving and Thriving in the Zero Era. Nicholas Brealey Publishing; New Ed edition, 1997.

interests of big masses of population in post-industrial countries and in a number of emerging countries, including China. But by the second half of the 2000s it exhausted its potential, became an obstacle for polycentricity, based on new realities of the XXI c. The world financial and economic crisis of 2007 – 2009 and its consequences have become a striking evidence for that.

Each year we celebrate Victory on 9 May. But only experts remember two other dates: June 26, 1945 – when the Charter of the United Nations was signed, and October 24 – when the Charter came into force (the United Nations Day since 1947). That was the start of the new world order with the UN and modern international law as its nucleus. With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the war was fought not only for liberation of our country and others from Nazism but also for establishment of new rules of global governance based on the force of law, embodied in in 1945 in the UN Charter.

It was extremely difficult to establish the UN. There were no military victims in this political and diplomatic battle. But this victory of the common sense and wisdom of the winners, undoubtedly, saved the world, first of all Europe from new tragedies. Andrey Gromyko, the head of the USSR delegation in Dumbarton Oaks and later in San Francisco after Vyacheslav Molotov left for Moscow (Molotov headed the Soviet delegation from April 25 to May 8), did a lot for that.

The post-war history raises an important issue of sovereignty and independence. There can be no independent foreign policy without sovereignty. Servility in foreign policy leads to its gradual subjugation to the interests of other states. Such semi-independent states may resemble those states, which take sovereign decisions, and even believe in that, posing as “responsible allies”, but in reality they often pursue somebody’s else interests on international arena.

Sovereignty does not mean autarchy, on the contrary, the most active foreign policy and interaction with the widest circle of international players are required. But politicians and diplomats should have a clear understanding where their country’s national interests end and the interests of the others start. Such a

behaviour usually is a prerogative of great powers that do not need to offshore the provision of their security to “big brother” or “big sisters”.

The pillars of international order based on law are the principles upheld by the United Nations. Almost everything is open to change and improvement, but the principles obtained through sufferings of the mankind in World War II and in its epicentre – the Eastern front in Europe – are untouchable. If one starts playing with these principles, puts them into doubt in order to assuage the unease of lacking former greatness, if one starts using the UN to settle geopolitical scores with other members of the Security Council, the international security system becomes a hostage to such irresponsible behavior. And such a behavior has been demonstrated in the recent quarter of the century at the rates unseen even in the Cold War period. And that was notwithstanding a sincere, though naïve wish of Russia in the 1990s to join the West, and then in spite of its efforts in the beginning of the last decade to establish mutually advantageous partnership with the United States and its allies.

The world politics balances between the rule of law and the rule of force. Fragile relation of military force and force of compromise and diplomacy characterises the state of international affairs. And we should acknowledge that diplomacy and soft power are currently on the defensive. Relations of the East and the West quickly deteriorate and no serious positive shifts are expected to happen in the foreseeable future.

China is much more the East than Russia. Today, the confrontation of Washington and Beijing is not as strong as with Moscow. But in the long-run the American military strategy is directed at long-term confrontation with the Middle Kingdom. Ideologically the main opponent for the United States is communist China, the state with the one-party system and one fifth of the world GDP. As to Russia, it switched to a neoliberal market economy long time ago and its economy is much smaller. The defence budget of China (more than US\$ 150 billion in 2017) exceeds the Russia’s one several times and that gap will only increase.

The inability of the great powers to restore political trust in their relations seems inexcusable “luxury” against the backdrop of global problems. The state of affairs is not absolutely hopeless (let’s remember the Lavrov – Kerry diplomatic channel as well as attempts of Lavrov and Tillerson to find common ground). But many times their agreements, first of all related to Syria, were torpedoed by other American departments. Moreover the previous US administration in the end of its term did everything possible to send the Russian-American relations to a nosedive, unscrupulously using any methods available as, for example, the mass expulsion of Russian diplomats from USA several days before the new 2017 year.

Skripal case has opened a new chapter of anti-Russian hysteria in the West. Accusations of Moscow has reached the unprecedented scale of absurdity unseen even in the Cold War period. The UK and the US – the most “advanced” countries in this regard – are trying to drag as many states as possible into this whirlpool of confrontation appealing to Euro-Atlantic solidarity. As if solidarity means blind pursue of political mystifications.

Often one can hear: “Why do you, Russians, blame the West for everything?” This argument is wide off the mark. Western politicians are not blamed in Russia for everything. But many of them are blamed because one should not act on the international arena like a bull in a china shop. It is unacceptable to accuse Russia almost for everything and without evidence. It is irresponsible to turn another big power into a punching bag because of the civil war in the US politics or because T. May in the UK is fighting for her political survival. Russia acknowledges the status of other great powers and considers them important stakeholders in solving global problems. If Western partners think that Russia is wrong in something, this is not a reason for its demonisation.

Russia does not behave in this way. Moscow understands both the potential of the country and its limitations. Russia acts much more carefully and prudently on the international scene unlike those who are so eager to start a new cold war.

What should we prevent and what to achieve in the current poisonous environment? World War III should be prevented, and a sustainable and stable global governance should be installed. Is it possible to reach these existential goals in the circumstances when the idea of a new cold war is deliberately popularised? The question is rhetorical.