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ASYMMETRICAL APPROACHES TO EXTERNAL MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL ELITES IN THE ERA OF GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY²

One of the key characteristics of the contemporary stage of transfer to the polycentric world is gradual loss of the exclusive global positions by the first of all “old” leading

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countries that dominated in the past (the United States and some other Western states).³ Nevertheless, Western powers are trying to keep them if possible, using both force and soft power. Exactly this special feature of the contemporary world leads to decrease of the predictability and manageability level in the world.

Is developing of the today’s unpredictability and instability of the world into a big war inevitable? If we agree that Lenin’s theory of imperialism is not something basically and completely wrong, we’ll also have to accept his conclusion that while there is imperialism, wars are inevitable.

Is his statement actual in our times? It’s well-known that N.S. Khrushchev corrected V.I. Lenin at the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, explaining that this statement was absolutely right for the Lenin’s time when “1) imperialism was the all-embracing global

al Challenges for Russia”, subprogramme “Africa in the New Global Realities: Challenges and Opportunities for Russia.”

³ Fituni L. L. Change of World Development Models and Global Governance in Civilization Dimension // The East. Afro-Asian Societies: History and Modern Times. 2013. No 4. P. 18–29.

system, and 2) social and political forces not interested in war were weak, insufficiently organized and could not because of that make imperialists refuse from wars"... "But currently, the state of affairs has changed cardinally. The global socialist community originated and has turned into a powerful force. Peace-loving forces have not only moral but also material resources embodied in this community to prevent aggression", the First Secretary of the CPSU went on in 1956... "Wars are not fatally inevitable. Now, we have powerful social and political forces that have major resources not to allow imperialists to unleash wars, and if they try to start a war, to rebuff aggressors crushingly, frustrate their adventurous schemes."¹

Is this provision applicable to the present-day state of affairs? This is not an idle question because it is directly related to how much is developing of the current global uncertainty into a world war probable? To a large extent, this is the issue of the anti-war forces potential in the world. "The powerful global social community", to the restraining role of which Khrushchev referred, does not exist any more. That unity was to a fairly large degree destroyed by the efforts of the first secretary himself. The power and influence of the anti-war movement in the world mostly came to naught by the end of Gorbachev's rule.

After the USSR disintegration, the world gradually returned to the predictably determined indicators of the era of inter-imperialist contradictions' aggravation: 1) imperialism in the new globalization forms has become the all-embracing global system, and 2) social and political forces not interested in war are now weak, insufficiently organized and because of that hardly able to "make imperialists refuse from wars".

Social and first of all political sciences face the task to renew the theory of imperialism if applied to the present-day realities, and this task is urgent. At the same time, it's important to understand that previous Marxist approaches can no longer be mechanically applied to present-day realities, but can still explain a lot in the current dynamics of the state of affairs development on the international arena.

Today, we're ashamed to use the "imperialism" term another time. This word in the Russian political and economic sciences, if applied to the analysis of the contemporary times, is nearly taboo, and foreign sources both having pretensions to being academic and mass media, mostly use it with the definition "Russian".

The basis of such state of affairs is apprehensions to be accused in "ideologization" of academic research. Meanwhile, the objective reality shows that identification of the contemporary imperialism research (by no means and far from only "Russian") and Communist ideology is a big delusion and result of scholarly ignorance.

I'll quote one interesting extract from Lenin's book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*²: "The German opportunist Gerhard Hildebrand, who in his time was expelled from the Party for protecting imperialism and now could well be the leader of the so-called 'Social Democratic' Party of Germany, supplements Hobson well, preaching the 'United States of Western Europe' (without Russia) for 'joint' activities... against African Negroes, against the

'great Islamic movement', to maintain 'strong Army and Navy', against the 'Japan-and-China coalition', etc."

If we abstract from Lenin's preoccupation with the problems within the Social Democratic Party of Germany at that time, it turns out that the lists of "global challenges" in the early 20th century and 21st century (taking into account corrections because of the modern times and situational certain present-day environment) do not much differ from one another.

The following are the main points of the agenda like one hundred years ago: 1) uniting Europe without Russia, 2) opposition to Islamism and "African Negroes" (currently, the last aspect has acquired the forms of the "African migration issue"), 3) necessity to increase military expenditures (currently – NATO) and distribute this burden between the countries of the united Europe, 4) the threat of the Japan-and-China coalition has transformed today into the threat of the necessity for the West to oppose Russia and China simultaneously.

Surely, there are many new problems as well: nuclear disarmament, climate change and many other issues. However, now and then the interests of the ruling elites of the hegemon powers consecutively destroy stability and predictability in the world.

In our days, it's difficult to say precisely when exactly the current processes of undermining international law and global security were launched. Some count the catastrophic increase of global uncertainty from the time of the Perestroika (restructuring) regenerated into the Soviet Union disintegration, the others connect these processes with non-standard and unpredictable President Trump coming to power in the United States and combining in one bottle the aroma of voluntarism of Khrushchev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin for his country and for the whole world.

In any case, there are very few people today who doubt that the future world is becoming less and less predictable in many aspects, and the level of global uncertainty increases even in comparison with the last decade of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, it seemed after the end of the said war that everything on the contrary moved to total predictability and the end of history.³ It was stated that after the restoration of capitalism on the territory of the former USSR, democracy and liberal approaches in global development proved their historical lack of alternatives.

William Kristol and Robert Kagan outlined the necessary contours of global transformations for the state and the world in the Project for the New American Century⁴, with the United States' "full spectrum dominance" concept as its basis. There were to be no rivals of this hegemon's dominance either on land or in the sea in the new predictable and manageable world.

The air, space, economic and political dominance of the United States was provided as a part of the "full spectrum dominance" concept. In the opinion of Richard Perle⁵ and Paul Wolfowitz⁶, the guarantor of that is the military doctrine of the "first strike winnable nuclear war".⁷

³ Fukuyama F. The End of History and the Last Man. Free Press. 1992.

⁴ <http://www.newamericancentury.org> (accessed: 28.01.2019).

⁵ Perle, a Pentagon adviser, sees more preemption in future // International Herald Tribune. Paris, 2003. April 12. URL: <http://www.iht.com/articles/93022.html> (accessed: 08.03.2019).

⁶ Lenin V. I. Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. A Popular Essay. The Complete Works, Vol. 27, p. 396.

⁷ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. September 2002 // <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002> (accessed: 08.03.2019).

¹ XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, February 14–25, 1956. Stenogr. report. Moscow : Gospolitizdat, 1956. Vol. 1. P. 37–38.

² Hildebrand G. The Shattering of Industrial Domination and Industrial Socialism (Hildebrand G. Die Erschütterung der Industrieherrschaft und des Industriesozialismus) (quoted by: Lenin V. I. The Complete Works. Vol. 27. P. 402.

The transfer to the predictable and stable world of the New American Century was to take place smoothly, evenly but at the same time fairly dynamically. The residue roughness and irregularities on the main road to freedom, light in the form of a giant number of the countries of the world still not turned into democracies, were planned to be rolled up in asphalt of popular revolutions and uprisings that would inevitably end in the change of the regime.

In recent years, the West is more and more employing asymmetrical and hybrid methods, occupying the intermediary place between power-based pressure and soft power. Unilateral or group sanction mechanisms, legal restrictions and threats to expropriate property of national elite representatives are referred to such, one can say, “para-strong-arm” methods. Marginalization of the opponent, his defamation and demonization, launching powerful flows of contradictory information with a lot of negative content play a big role in the set of the applied tools. Such information, even disproved later, leaves a trail of doubts about the object of information attacks.

Other conditions being equal, the bigger role is given to working with national elites of the emerging powers – “new players” aspiring to significant positions in the polycentric world as well as simply strategically or geopolitically important countries of Africa, the Middle East, post-Soviet space and other regions of the world.

This March, I heard the following words from an influential European official from the country proud of its colonial past, at one of the political forums: “We’re so efficient in this region of the globe that local leaders are competing with each other to sell themselves earlier and cheaper than the others”. There was neither contempt nor arrogant cynicism in the speaker’s intonations. The said was the statement of the fact for him, the summary of the report on the successfully performed work.

It should be explained that there is nothing principally and historically new either in the essence or the appraisal of the described by the speaker situation. Such things had happened in the world before. For example, the behavioral model of representatives of the local nobility in numerous African “kingdoms”, sultanates and “independent states” before the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 can be characterized in a similar way. That is the conference that is considered the top point in the “struggle for Africa”, where the European colonizers finally divided the Black Continent between themselves by parallels and meridians.

The English researcher of imperialism Hobson wrote in the early 20th century about the destructive role of local elites (in those times they were mostly local military elites) in the colonial division of the world: “Great Britain has gone farthest. Most of the fighting by which we have won our Indian Empire was done by natives; in India, as later in Egypt, great standing armies were placed under British commanders; almost all the fighting associated with our African dominions, except in the Southern part, was done for us by natives.”¹

In our times, the composition of national elites expanded both quantitatively and structurally. Political, economic, cultural elites in the states being of geopolitical interest or being global rivals are becoming the objects of manipulation and pressure from the West.

Purposeful support of oppositional or anti-governmental forces in national elites by the West led to the change of ruling regimes many times bypassing the election process, to “colour revolutions” and to the Arab Spring cataclysms and its post-effects in many countries of the Middle East.

National elites are not uniform in the contemporary complexly structured world, both in the developed and emerging countries. Various elite groups strongly differ in the force of their influence. The elite’s level of influence, its hierarchical “height” is often reflected in its name: global, regional (e.g. the elite of the European Union), national (country), local elite. The “national” elite term is often used in Russia and a number of post-Soviet republics to define “ethnic” elites. For example, elites of the title nations of autonomous republics. In this paper, we’re using the “national” definition as it is usually interpreted internationally, i.e. as referring to some certain state.

There are many criteria used by the modern science to typologize national elites. Nearly the most wide-spread in academic literature and political publications is the classification based on differentiation of elites according to the types of professional activities (military, scholarly, juridical, theatrical, etc.) or the established role of their representatives in social and political life of the state, actually also professional but in a wider sense (political, cultural).

As a rule, professional typology of elites turns out to be more objective because of its relative concreteness, and it outlines the borders of a certain elite group clearer than many others. However, there are other classifications, with more blurred elite borders and a lot of intersecting segments, e.g. patriotic and comprador, power and oppositional. Belonging or referring some individuals or groups of state residents to any of them is fairly subjective. The matter is that it’s not rare when different groups of people consider the same actions or views of elite representatives both “patriotic” and “treacherous” depending on their positions, world views and life experience. Besides, there are many gradations, categories and subcategories in academic literature.²

In order for sanctions or other repressive measures against national elites to lead to the desired effect, the repressor country should provide for satisfaction of the two obligatory terms. First, it’s required to correctly determine the focus layer inside the elite that could become the leading force for the change of course (regime), and if the task is not solved by a “palace coup”, mobilize “the public” (people’s forces) against the ruling government. This means that the focus group should itself be, on the one hand, fairly strong for the collective impact on the authorities and, on the other hand, manipulated enough to dare to engage in fairly risky for it activities.

For example, the imposed targeted sanctions should infringe upon the vital interests of this part of the elite to such a degree as to make it, at risk to itself, go against the ruling government and achieve the change of the country’s political course or its top leaders. To put it differently, the strength and character of sanctions should be such that representatives of the elite finding themselves under their threat, would be more afraid of them than punishment by national authorities. Combination of the fear of sanctions and inevitable punishment by the power regime

¹ See: *Hobson J. A. Imperialism: A Study*. Originally published by George Allen & Unwin LTD in 1902. Reprint 2002. Cosimo Inc. P. 136–137.

² See in detail, e.g. *Kryshchanovskaya O. The Russian Elite’s Anatomy*. Moscow, 2005.

for their treachery only strengthens opportunities for external political manipulation of the targeted strata of national elites. Their “zeal” in making the leaders of the state change the course increases. In more complex cases, manipulators charge this part of the elite with the task to provide the regime change without direct military intervention. Such methods are the basis of numerous successful scenarios of the so-called expression of the people’s will: from the USSR disintegration to success of the “colour revolution” technology in many parts of the globe.

In case the targeted by manipulators strata of national elites started energetic practical actions to change the regime but did not manage to solve the set task, as it was shown by Libya, Syria, Yemen, etc. examples, a direct military intervention may follow. In this case, the original sanctions and other manipulative measures will serve legitimization of external aggression camouflaged as support of the people’s rising against the repressive/corrupted/anti-democratic regime to struggle against the dictatorship, etc.

National elites are vulnerable for political manipulations from the outside in different degrees. The degree of dependence is determined by the specific environment of their formation and special features of socioeconomic development of their states. The possibilities to manipulate elites increased in the environment of the globalized world where, in comparison with the past times, the level of transborder activities freedom for all actors is very high (no matter if it is investing, migration, international arrests or forfeiture of property). Preservation of foreign investments, the fate of foreign real estate, opportunities for children and relatives to be residents of foreign jurisdictions, protection from the outside as “insurance” against arrest, etc. are becoming painful points for manipulating representatives of elites. It’s not surprising that national elites are becoming the natural objects for potential external pressure. The strength of sanctions’ pressure is determined by experience. If the original sanctions are insufficient, pressure may regularly increase within the limits determined by the economic and/or geopolitical potential of the repressor country.

What exactly national elite strata are of a special interest to external political manipulations in the reviewed context? As it can be seen from the above review, the determining factors for the choice are: a) the ability of the manipulated object to do as the manipulator wishes, and b) the sufficient number of incentives (positive and/or negative) for the object to do as the manipulator wishes. At the same time, the fundamental stimuli for all social strata and groups are self-preservation instinct (group and individual), ambitions to be in power and financial reasons (preservation or increase of all kinds of assets they have).

If we take into account these reasons, the close to the authorities elite strata look like a more attractive object for pressure by manipulators than oppositional or counter-elites. The oppositional elite is a part of national elite fighting for power within the framework of the existing political system (e.g. the Labour Party elite while the Conservatives are ruling in the UK, representatives of national elite in South Africa from the parties opposing the African National Congress). Oppositional elites in the Middle East and African countries are usually poorly consolidated but they are ambitious and often eagerly cooperate with external forces hoping for their support in the struggle for power.

In the countries of the reviewed regions with multi-party political systems, Parliament members from oppositional parties are components of the existing political system. They legitimize the existing authorities to this or that extent, voluntarily or involuntary, and many are interested in their preservation. At the same time (with rare exceptions), they are included in the political elite of the country only because they are Parliament members or occupy other significant positions in the system.

O. Kryshchanovskaya¹ and V. Ochirova oppose the counter-elite to the oppositional elite. The counter-elite is a non-ruling group in a society and because of that it is ready and even striving to change the political system of the state. V. Ochirova mentions that the counter-elite aspires to a high or even the dominant status while declaring its opposition to the elite leaders or elite as a whole.² Counter-elites in African and Middle Eastern countries readily cooperate with external forces in achievement of their goals and are willingly included in the plans of political manipulators from the West.

While there are definite advantages for foreign manipulators when dealing with oppositional and counter-elites, there are also undoubted minuses. The main of them is isolation of these parts of national elite from the real power in the country and impeded access to its top leaders. This practically excludes the regime change according to the “palace coup” scenario in the targeted country by representatives of these elite groups.

In this sense, relying on representatives of the power elites and especially the local oligarchy is more effective. Super-rich representatives of national elites (local oligarchy) are practically always in-built in the global elite structures. They strongly depend on the global establishment and strive to keep their position in it. Sanctions and demands to report the origin of their riches in their case are powerful tools for political and individual manipulations. Taking into account the fact that the number of millionaires and billionaires in many, including the poorest countries of Africa and the Middle East is growing, their relation with the authorities, external forces and inside their circle become more difficult, and possibilities for manipulations also expand objectively: blackmail, playing with them using their contradictions and conflicts, direct bribing.

According to the Boston Consulting Group report on the global wealth published in June, 2018, currently millionaires and billionaires have nearly half of the global personal wealth in comparison with slightly less than 45% in 2012.³ The role of the global information and communication impact on the object of manipulations is extremely important among the manipulating pressing tools in case of this part of national elites.⁴ Because of their being significant public persons, they find themselves under fire of information attacks and the threat of reputational risks practically round-the-clock and in any place on the globe.

By now, the declared in the past “unshakeable” principles of capitalist freedom to make money and manage it

¹ Kryshchanovskaya O. Op. cit.

² Ochirova V. The Political Elite’s Structure // Chita State Univ. Bulletin. 2010. No 7. P. 78.

³ <https://www.bcg.com/ru-ru/publications/2018/global-wealth-seizing-analytics-advantage.aspx> (accessed: 18.03.2019).

⁴ Fituni L. L., Abramova I. O. Political Manipulations with National Elites as the Means to Preserve the Existing World Order // Proceedings of the Institute for African Studies of the RAS. 2018. No 3 (44). P. 11–17.

without any control, are long gone. Various forms of control over individual wealth are more and more spreading in the world. The demand for clear origin of wealth and transparency of sources of income is declared more and more. These demands – justified themselves – turned into an effective weapon for manipulating elites from Asian and African countries and pressure on politicians and business elite. In some cases, thought-up and exaggerated accusations in unclear origin of incomes or insufficient transparency of property structures also turn into a tool in international commercial rivalry.

Authorities of developed countries demand transparency not only in case of operations with property in the real sector of economy but also in keeping money in bank accounts and even when using virtual units for settlement of payments, including cryptocurrencies.

The clear vision of wealth distribution and control over it by governments are important for the authorities. The state can't allow itself to leave this important resource fully in the hands of private persons because they fear their unpredictable independent behaviour. It is afraid that wealth as a resource can get under alien control. At the same time, controlling movements of financial resources, content and amounts of property of foreign legal entities and natural persons, finding the final beneficiaries in various transactions, the state acquires information and other levels to exert pressure on the owners and manipulate them politically.

Such political manipulations, the pressure of sanctions and legal restrictions in relation of national elites create considerable risks for the society, economy, the state management system. Globally, the established legal, political, economic, cultural and humanitarian foundations of international relations are being shaken. The mutually agreed upon tools and global co-existence and state interaction institutions that were built for a long time and with difficulties are being destroyed. Instability grows, fraught with catastrophic international consequences.

The phenomenon of unilateral correction by the United States and a number of Western countries of the rules of "legitimate" behaviour in the world is gaining strength on the global scale as well as the change of the established in the world financial-economic and regulatory-legal "rules of the game" and undermining some of the institutes of management.

In the environment of strong aggravation of the confrontation between Russia and most leading countries of the West, the latter are actively using new and perfecting old tools for exerting pressure on various strata of the Russian society in order to achieve the desired for the West changes in the balance of political forces in the country, limit the possibilities of its economic growth and modernization of economy, rise in the living standard of the most part of the population. The very fact of Russia's economic positions and positions in foreign policy strengthening, improvement of its international image and influence is viewed as a challenge and threat to the world order established after the USSR disintegration. A lot of attention is paid by geopolitical rivals to sanctions and other kinds of pressure on the economic, political and cultural elite of the country as a part of means for restraint of the "Russian threat" in the hope to urge representatives of the elite to actions to change the political course of the Russian Federation. Assessing these trends, the President of Russia named sanctions a very old, ancient tool "used by many, including American partners". "This is just a way of competitive struggle – illegitimate, dishonest, but this is so", V.V. Putin explained and added that this is also an "attempt to restrain the growth of defense potential of our country".¹

In this connection, the task of the Russian science is generalization of the world practice in the reviewed field and analysis of the sources, character and types of sanction threats to elites and international experience of opposing illegitimate pressure in the countries of Africa, the Middle East, CIS and other regions of the world.

¹ Quoted by: <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5a9fa61c9a794768526e548f> (accessed: 20.03.2019).