

WHY THE WORLD IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY UNPREDICTABLE FOR US

Today the world has come up close to global economic changes. Expectations of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) based on rapid development of information technologies and use of artificial intelligence make both, private companies and states as a whole, look for new approaches to achieving economic growth and prosperity. At the same time, we're watching obsolescence of traditional forms of cooperation, blurring of the bloc world order as well as reduction of the Anglo-Saxon dominance in the established geopolitical order. Emerging economies are actively growing while increasingly voicing their rights to participate in forming the "rules of the game", pointing to the relative demise of the historical West and its erosion.

The trends for strengthening regional cooperation, compensating for manageability at the global level, are becoming increasingly clear amidst the failures of the globalization process. One can even say that the main burden in the radically transforming international system falls on the regional governance level. The Euro-Atlantic region, no matter how regrettable it can be, is in a double crisis – global and regional as, on the one hand, some strictly regional institutions such as NATO claimed and continue claiming to play the global role, or the West just goes on controlling the key structures of global governance (G7, the Bretton Woods system), and on the other hand, the current European security architecture which was transferred from the Cold War period, is failing to adapt to the demands of time, first of all in providing its openness and inclusiveness.

What is more, we're dealing with a non-linear and moving environment in international relations. It changes quickly, nullifying yesterday's and even today's realities. Many things are virtualized, they continue existing formally though have no real impact on what is going on. The world is at a point when short-term changes in some national and regional directions coincide with global shifts, being the manifest of these essential changes.

New approaches introduced by Donald Trump to the United States foreign policy play a significant role. Its foreign policy lost its former “democratizing” charge in favor of pragmatism coming close to cynicism. Washington tries to do business without basing on multilateral institutions and international law, enforcing its “rules” on all partners, be it within the framework of “transactional diplomacy” or by blatant sanction pressure in any way.

The public sentiments that brought Donald Trump to the White House are gaining strength in Europe as well. Brexit is a vivid example of them. And continental Europe is so engrossed in its internal problems (crisis of trust in elites, European Union’s/European zone’s prospects becoming vague all of a sudden) that it no longer serves as a beacon for the global development, noticeably “losing weight” on the international arena and nearly turning into a “sick man” of the world.

Thus, the foundations of international relations that seemed unshakeable are eroded. Agreements become viewed not as a guideline for behavior but as an object for various kinds of manipulations to justify one’s own unlawful behavior. Appeals of the collective West to some “behavioral rules” presented as international norms, that have already become a habit, look alarming and disturbing. This results in the termination or disintegration of many agreements such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s Nuclear Program, Treaty on the Elimination of Medium- and Short-Range Missiles, as well as drastic violations of the UN Charter – interventions in Iraq, Libya, Western coalition’s strikes against Syria. Such “legal nihilism” and ignorance of the central role of the United Nations, showing no interest in collective instead of bloc development of new international legal standards, lead to the destabilization of the whole post-war global system of international law and order.

One of the key elements of such disorganization of international affairs is the Western countries’ desire to act from the position of strength (power politics) even when the Western monopoly on force projection has been undermined. A vivid example of this inertia at the mental and practical policy level is the growth

of NATO military expenditures that have already reached US\$ 1 trillion per year. The perception of losing their former dominance in world affairs makes the United States and its allies nervous, increasing therefore the risk of ill-considered, sudden steps by them with consequences that are difficult to foresee.

Against this background the UN Security Council remains to be like a “stability beacon”. It still plays the key role in the system of international relations, allows to efficiently oppose harmful initiatives of some countries. It’s evident that after a series of foreign policy failures, Donald Trump’s administration is beginning to think about the necessity to act upon the approval of the UN Security Council. The Venezuelan crisis shows how this tool allows responsible players to prevent irreparable consequences.

Another example is the situation around the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. Consecutive decrease of the United States’ predictability, degradation of their ability to come to agreements force Pyongyang to demand additional guarantees during talks with Washington. No one trusts oral promises any more, thus stressing the need for carefully worked out, strictly obligatory agreements, and they can only be worked out in a multilateral format, with participation of all interested parties, and should be approved by the UN Security Council.

This shows that the established international institutions are still in demand. The impact of power politics in the medium-term perspective will decrease – both because of low efficiency and extreme expenses, and, most important, counter-productiveness for the interests of the initiators of the strong-arm scenarios. Besides other factors, we should name the loss of control over the international information and media space by the Anglo-Saxon world – as a result of the development of the Internet. Information technologies result in the fact that the West can no longer dictate the whole world an interpretation of the events that would be beneficial to itself, while rejecting the right to have alternative points of view, qualifying them as “fake news” or “post-truth”.

The West tries to protect itself from these information challenges. We’re already seeing first signs of that. For example, the recent White Paper by the

British government suggests introducing state regulation of social networks. Using plausible excuses (fighting terrorism and extremism, protection of the people from possible infringements on the Internet and infamous “foreign interference” into domestic processes), the state in essence intends to get not only access to personal information of users but also a powerful pool to use social networks in the interests of the elites.

These trends can be seen in the financial sector as well. On the one hand, we’re witnessing the growing authority of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, BRICS New Development Bank and other entities together with the IMF and the World Bank. The West’s irritation by such development course of events leads to sanction policy’s aggravation, fitful attempts to strengthen the dollar’s monopoly and to peg “disobedient” countries harder to it. This will result in the growing antagonism of the third world countries and undermine trust in dollar tools. The loss of trust in international stabilization mechanisms will lead to states wanting to return their golden reserves. Besides, new payment systems are created today, currencies are diversified and there are already talks about replacing the dollar in oil trade.

Attempts to suppress economic rivals by political means are especially disturbing. A very illustrative example of this is the West’s pressure on the Chinese company Huawei. Incapable of honestly competing with the growing Asian economy in the information technologies and artificial intelligence sector, Washington revives the far from civilized ways of doing business like the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls at the time of the Cold War. However, these measures increasingly often lead to a directly opposite result to the one desired, assisting even bigger insulation of countries, their reliance on own strengths, eventually resulting in their independent development and creation of breakthrough technologies outside the West.

Thus, all players will have to take into account the growing risks and unpredictability of the former world leaders’ behavior in the short-term and mid-term perspectives. On the one hand, non-Western states will have to take into

account the new American course of action, while on the other hand, look for “safety nets”, new forms of collective work in the framework of like-minded allies. Companies all over the world will take into account increased political risks, look for ways of doing business that will protect them from the arbitrariness of the Western elites.

Nonetheless, it seems that the “critical mass” of “non-acceptance” in respect of the current “cowboy” approaches by a number of Western states, will be accumulated in the world in the next ten years. New players and alternative institutions in the security and economic sectors will emerge and get strong. This will create the environment for restoring the global balance and gradually returning to civilized forms of settling disputes as well as the international behavior in general.