



RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

VISION FROM GEORGIA

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is first – to examine what were expectations about Russia's "democratic future" based on: deep knowledge of Russian realities or "Realpolitik wishes" of the West? And second, - to foresee the Russian policy in general, but mainly on the post-Soviet space, in the 21st century, based on the experience of Georgian-Russian relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

These relations are based on multilateral, regional and bilateral interests, and not only because of the military-strategic and economic importance of South Caucasus, but also due to the rising international interest towards it.

The main question about the future of Russian foreign policy is as usual, based on the issue related to its domestic policy: namely on possible development of the Russian governing system and the possibility of it's becoming more democratic and oriented towards the people's-interests.

Can we, without such a change, expect any substantive, strategic changes in Russian foreign policy?

Or, can we expect any tactical, short-term steps, which the Russian government can use to improve its image glob-

ally and to ease the growing impact of foreign sanctions on its economy?

What kind of methods and instruments can Russia apply for making these steps successful, without (or along with) using military and political pressure? Is the using of more “soft power”, especially in it’s “near abroad”, a short-, medium- or long-term strategy of Russia? Will the West follow once more its “Realpolitik wishes” in relations with Russia, or work out (at last!) a realistic and, more importantly – a common strategy for this?

Who would grasp Russia with the mind?
For her no yardstick was created
Her soul is of a special kind
By faith alone appreciated

Fyodor Tutchew

Translated by John Dewey

This poem was and is always used in Russia to prove Russia’s exceptional nature. With such an understanding not only the Russian governing classes, but the Russian intellectuals (or “intelligentsia” as it was named during the Soviet period) and not only them, but quite often the ordinary people have tried, and are trying to prove, that this exceptional country has the right to have exceptional policies not only inside, but outside the country as well.

“The future of Russia” was quite an important issue for the world after each global shift in the history of international relations. It is more than relevant nowadays, when for many politicians and analysts, the comeback of the Cold War is in progress, as a New Cold War.

After the end of the “old” Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, most of the Western world had expecta-

tions of upcoming economic and political reforms in Russia and its desire to act together with the world community for building a new, more secure, cooperative world order. Now, especially after Putin's Russia's "bullying" policy towards the West and its "near abroad, mainly against Georgia and Ukraine, as well as its "activities" in Syria and the Middle and Near East, these expectations are generally practically finished.

Every historian and analyst is well aware, that in the world history there is a country, which simultaneously constitutes the West and the East, since it is scattered across the huge territory of Europe and Asia. In this country, there has always been authoritarian, non-democratic rule.

To some extent, it also may have urged the leaders of this country to think that they are very special, have a special mission in history or are the leaders of the "Third Rome" etc. but the true reason for such ambitions is not just the geographical factor, or the factor connected with the civilization.

On the one hand we truly have to deal with the "imperial mentality" of its leaders (which rubs off on to a certain part of the population) that they cannot forsake even today, but it is also true that the country which spans a considerable part of Eurasia, has had a tremendous influence on the development of the history of the world international relations.

Of course, we are speaking about Russia (formerly known as the Soviet Union), whose existence and the history of its relations with other countries, implies a resolve to either dominate other countries, or by means of the "iron hand" secure the indisputable influence on them.

In this article we are not going to analyze deeply the Cold War period of the Soviet foreign policy, but in order

to understand, where Russia will go in the 21st century, it is necessary to remember the period after the formal end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union.

Let us refresh our minds and recall as to what was the main goal of the international community after the Cold War. It was certainly creation of a new, safe and just world order based on free market economy and principles of liberal democracy. But the main thing is that many countries of the world, including those having immense power and Russia in the first place, restricted themselves only to these declared slogans, but in reality were doing completely the contrary.

In our opinion, by that time (and even currently, which are going to further discuss below), it was very important for the West and especially for the United States that Russia recognized this goal, as a country which was considered to be one of the most big and powerful countries and, most significantly, the former leader of those forces, whose governments and arrangements were, mildly speaking, far from the abovementioned principles

The Russian government expressed declared readiness to take the indicated principles into account, but this was only a declared and partial promise i.e. for the internal use and in terms of the problems in Chechnya.

By that time Russia was well aware, that from the economic and political point of view it was not yet ready to restore its status of a superpower and that the country needed a transitional period, to put it diplomatically – a strategic pause. But at the same time, it was pursuing the so-called Primakov Doctrine, in order to provoke and exaggerate political and ethnic conflicts in its near abroad, with the aim of not giving the newly independent former Soviet Republics the opportunity to develop quickly and

successfully and to widen the distance between themselves and their former “patron”.

At a time when Russia pledged to partner with the United States in establishing the new world order and to fight international terrorism, its actual goal was to use the new views and aspirations for its own benefit, first in Chechnya and the in the post-Soviet space, including adjacent regions.

Unfortunately the policy of the US Administration of that time and its European allies played into the hands of Russia. Today’s reality shows, that the policy of the west turned out to be excessively “Realpolitikal”.

At about exactly this time, Henry Kissinger underlined in his writing that “Incomparable conditions do not exist anywhere in Post-Cold Russia. Alleviating suffering and encouraging economic reform are important tools of American foreign policy, they are not however, substitutes for a serious effort to maintain the global balance of power vis-à-vis a country with a long history of expansionism”. (Diplomacy p. 814)

He also wrote, that “the overwhelming majority of Russia’s leading figures-what-ever their political persuasion- refuse to accept the collapse of the Soviet Empire or the legitimacy of the successor states, especially of Ukraine” (Ibid p.815) and that ”A realistic policy would recognize that even the reformist Russian government of Boris Yeltsin has maintained Russian armies on the territory of most of the former soviet republics-all members of the United Nations-often against the express wish of the host government. These military forces have participated in the civil wars of several of the republics. The Foreign Minister of Russia has repeatedly put forward a concept of a Russian monopoly on peacekeeping in the “near abroad”, indistinguishable from an attempt to re-establish

Moscow's domination. Long-term prospects for peace will be influenced by Russian reform, but short-term prospects will depend on whether Russian armies can be induced to stay at home. If they reappear along the borders of the old empire in Europe and in the Middle East, the historic tension-compounded by fear and mutual suspicion-between Russia and the neighbors will surely re-emerge". (Ibid. p.815-816).

Kissinger stressed, that "Integrating Russia into the international system is a key task of the emerging international order", but "It has two components which must be kept in balance: influencing Russian attitudes and affecting Russian calculations". (Ibid. p.818)

The world, especially the United States, the main victor of the Cold War wallowed in its victory and awoke unfortunately only after the unspeakable terrorist act on the 9/11, which diverted the world attention and also military forces to the problem of terrorism. A little later, due to the previously unseen rise of the prices on the energy resources and the hectic development of the so-called principles of the "State Capitalism", Russia amassed tremendous capital and resumed the play with "imperial Muscles", both in the near abroad and on the international arena. These two events set in motion a dangerous tendency: it was clear, that without having obtained answers to some underlying questions it would be hard to cope with the so-called "double standard" approach and to really unite forces in the fight with the most dangerous phenomenon of the 21st century.

The international community would have averted many problems if, after the end of the Cold War, it had made the right inference regarding the geopolitical and regional processes underway.

The book released by then Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbot in the Clinton Administration, clearly reveals the political sacrifice of the Clinton Administration for the cause of “Democratization” of Yeltsin’s Russia and for injecting Russia into the international system. It would be interesting to ask Mr. Clinton and Mr. Talbot: what did they get in return? Russia in the international system? Or a forceful aggressive Superpower which used the respite and threatened the new order with new challenges?

The fact, that the so-called “near abroad” would be the first target of Russian expansion looked obvious, but the West and its leader – the United States did not or could not recognize this.

The United States turned out not to be ready to reasonably assess Russia’s readiness in the creation of the just world order. Although the Administration of George Bush Jr., unlike the Clinton Administration, did not call the South Caucasus “Russia’s backyard”, still, the US considered this to be a territory, where Russia had sort of a “free hand”. Of course that did not imply such actions as Russia carried out against Georgia in August 2008, or is pursuing today (for example construction of military bases in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region).

The Administration of President George Bush Jr. also attempted to enhance its influence in the South Caucasus, an important region for the transit of energy resources, at the same time located in close proximity to the Middle East, but the Americans did what they did while applying the methods absolutely different from Russia, namely by strengthening security of the countries of the region and by fostering democratic development in these states.

Similar developments took place not only in the South Caucasus, but in Ukraine as well (bearing in mind the support of the United States to the so called “colored revolu-

tions”), but all this happened by means of political, financial or technical support, not by kindling separatism, provoking mutual distrust or interfering into internal affairs of sovereign countries.

Now it is clear, that after the Cold War, the extra liberalism towards Russia from the West has made it problematic to create a new type of international security system, which has naturally ruled out creation of the regional security system, including the South Caucasus.

It looked obvious, that Russia would go to any extent to regain the status of the superpower and retaliate for the loss of the Cold War.

To this end, Russia needed the traditional “hard hand” to restore order, which is impossible without the strong rule of the “force Ministries” which would mean loss of democratic processes. In foreign policy, especially with regard to the West, Russia traditional methods: exacerbating the relations between the United States and Europe, blackmail based on the reduction of nuclear and conventional weapons, forging alliances against the West with the eastern Countries (China, India, the Islamic world), taking advantage of the newly emerged economic opportunities (for example the unprecedented growth of prices on energy supplies and leverage of the energetic policy), while using the same policy.

In its “near abroad” Russia did everything to retain its influence employing both military political and economic methods and would not make even one step back. In this respect, the main weapon of Russia would remain preservation of instability, through instigating separatism, and bargaining over extension of the mandate for the international peacekeepers.

Also within the Former Soviet Space, Russia would employ economic leverage as well (Chubais’ well-known principles of a “Liberal Empire”).

Only in the beginning of the 21st century when, as a result of the skyrocketing of prices on the energy supplies, the revived Russia resumed its imperial moves, making clear that the country was throwing itself back to the authoritarian regime (seemingly for a long period of time), again, in the West there emerged experts, who began to cultivate the assumption that “China and Russia can create an economically developed and viable “second world”, which may be an attractive alternative for the American liberal democracy.” (Foreign Affairs, July-August 2007, Article by Azar Ghati)

Despite discovery of this new reality, the West still could not fully comprehend what was going on in the “new Russia”. For example, “The Economist” (July, 2008), in an article dedicated to the summit meeting of the Big 8 wrote that the “Russian slide from democracy to the State controlled Capitalism harmed the Club’s (G-8) political tone.” Is that it? Nothing more? Even this “awakening” was for the narrow circle of experts. The other part stubbornly repeated mistakes made by their predecessors. If you add Putin’s aggressive rhetoric, the inference of the western experts – All this does not constitute any threat to the West (?!), because on the one hand Russia spends far less than the west (!) and its military technology is still way behind that of west; even if there are any innovations, they are meant not for the improvement of the country’s military, but for the export (!); on the other hand: “All this done for the elections and has just propagandistic aims”. It is hard to find words to comment on the analyses of these “experts”.

It is very important, that these experts did not take into account that, during the same period, Russia withdrew from the Treaty on the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and declared, that in the event of deployment of the US anti-missile defense system in Europe, it would deploy missiles

with nuclear warheads in Belarus and create a “defensive security system”, together with the Central Asian States and China, not to mention conduction of their first joint military maneuvers on territory of the Russian Federation. Russia began to pursue a more aggressive policy related to energy carriers and lastly, and most ridiculously, the abovementioned “experts” relied upon information provided by the Moscow Analytical Center for Strategy and Technologym headed by Mr. Ruslan Pukhov and the Kremlin Spokesman Mr. Peskov’s information.

One thing is clear: one traditional moment was evident within the western approach of that time - the main thing was to avoid the nuclear confrontation and that Russia did not “reach” them, otherwise it was possible to hold a long bargain regarding the influence on its “near abroad”.

On January 19, 2008, the media published the statement of the Chief of the General Staff of Russia, army general Yuri Baluevski. Here is what General Baluevski had to say in the beginning of the 21st century (?!).

“We deem it necessary that all our partners must be well aware and have no doubt that in order to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia and its allies(?!) The country will employ its armed forces, including preventive actions and including the use of nuclear weapons (?!)... The military force must and will be used in order to demonstrate the readiness of the country’s highest Command”.

In August of 2008 Russia invaded Georgia and the Russo-Georgian War began. We are not going to analyze this war, its real reasons and awful mistakes made by the Georgian government at the time, which followed the longtime military provocations by Russia and Ossetian separatists and jumped into the trap prepared by Russia. We must only emphasize the existing results of this war - still occupied Geor-

gian territories, Russian “recognition” of these territories as “independent Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, against all rules of International Law and refusal to follow the terms of the well-known Sarkozy-Medvedev Agreement.

However, even after this war, in March 2009, the media dished up information about the proposals, concerning future relations with Russia, which had been reportedly presented to President Barak Obama by a team of politicians and experts on international relations. This team, led by the Senator from the Democratic Party Gary Hart and his Republican colleague Chuck Hagel, consisted of former diplomats and well-known analysts from both leading parties of the US. It seems that the major emphasis was placed on the proposals presented to the new Administration by the team, rather than its composition. The Russian media did not miss the opportunity to cliché this phenomenon as no other than the comeback of the US to the principles of *Realpolitik*.

The essence of these proposals lay in the fact that the new administration should abandon the fierce criticism of Russia for ignoring democratic values and violating human rights principles, go easy on its categorical demands regarding early membership of Ukraine and Georgia in the NATO and seek common ground with Russia about issues far more important for both sides, such as disarmament, fight with terrorism and the problems concerning Iran and Afghanistan. Apparently President Obama had agreed to the abovementioned proposals, since at his meeting with the Russian President Medvedev on April 1, 2009 in London, the sides reached mutual understanding on a number of important issues, except for two controversial subjects. In the first place, the sides expressed resolve to continue reduction of strategic nuclear weapons, agreed on peaceful resolution of Iran’s nuclear problems, decided to cooperate in resolving problems

in Afghanistan, expressed the willingness to enhance bilateral trade relations and discussed the US support to Russia's acceptance into the World Trade Organization. The parties also expressed concern over South Korea's intention to test its nuclear weapons.

Positions of the US and Russia did not concur only regarding the issue of deployment of the US anti-missile systems in Europe. The same was true regarding the assessment of root causes of the armed conflict in the "South Ossetia". The President of the United States accepted President Medvedev's invitation to visit Moscow at some point during July 2009, where the sides would sign a new Agreement on reduction of strategic nuclear weapons. After the meeting, President Medvedev stated that he was "optimistic about future relations between the two countries". President Obama emphasized during the meeting, that "there are clear indications of a new progress in the relations between the two countries". All these niceties may have really created an illusion that the United States and the West as a whole, had indeed "returned" to the principles of *Realpolitik* in their relations with Russia. As a matter of fact, it would be a mistake to think along those lines, for the leading countries and the West had never refused from these principles. There is no doubt, that during implementation of the principles of *Realpolitik*, all countries have important and less meaningful priorities. Powerful states of course possess greater leverage to make appropriate choices, than small and somewhat weaker countries.

Everything we have mentioned above, at first sight constitutes a well known dogma, but in contemporary international politics we still encounter examples when small, economically or militarily weak governments are often oblivious (I do not want to think that this is due to ignorance) of

these truths and often, like in a well known proverb, believe that “a dream came true”. Recent history of renewed independence of Georgia is unfortunately full of similar examples. Approaches like that have been apparent throughout the period of Georgian independence and mainly apply to our country’s policy regarding such leading powers as the United States and especially Russia.

It is Georgia’s policy in relation to these countries and not the other way around, because as was mentioned above, powerful countries have far more resources and means at their disposal to direct their policies, that play into the hands of their interests, in other words to implement *Realpolitik*.

Does that mean that Georgia was not in a position to carry out the fundamental principles of *Realpolitik*, i.e. to implement a more pragmatic policy regarding both leading countries of the world, especially Russia, which would have averted many calamitous events in our recent history? This does not mean that at all and from day one of our independence, Georgia, due to objective reasons, more or less, still had the possibility to pursue such a policy. To that end, we should have taken into account two simple things:

First, that Georgia is geographically situated in a region, where there is a permanent clash of economic and military political interests of the world’s leading countries.

Second is the fact that such countries as the United States and Russia will always have to sacrifice their interests in Georgia for the sake of their own interests, when it comes to the agenda in the relations of these two powers.

Georgia, in the first place should have taken into consideration the fact that after having declared the Cold War finished, Russia, notwithstanding certain difficulties, never expressed its readiness to build a new international system based upon liberal economy and the democratic political

system relying on the supremacy of the human rights, recognized by the US and the West in general.

On the other hand, no US Administration has ever declared that the problem of nuclear disarmament does not remain the foremost issue for maintaining international peace and that this issue, compared to other ones, is no longer number one within the relations of the two countries.

There was one thing that should have undoubtedly been taken into account. The Russian Federation has never refused to retain its influence in the former Soviet space. On the other hand, the United States, back at the time of Clinton's Administration, demonstrated the American tendency to "cede" their influence to the Russians. In one of his remarks, Clinton said that our region was "Russia's backyard".

It is also remarkable to recall the rapture with which Clinton's Administration embraced the phony prospect of building "a democratic Russia". Even if the Americans really bought the Russian "democratization", were not we there to make one dead sure that the "democratic Russia" was just playing possum and was from the realm of fairy tales? During the war in Abkhazia, when Georgian leadership asked the international community for help, the US did not give a damn about what was going on in Abkhazia. Just in accordance with the principles of *Realpolitik*, America was busy handling the nuclear arsenal in Ukraine and Kazakhstan and busy supporting "Yeltsin's democracy". Our problem was somewhere in the periphery of the US agenda. And our support by the US was limited to the watered down, balanced statements. Should we trust then Clinton's Adviser on Georgia at the time, Mr. Strobe Talbott, who said that Georgian diplomats of that time, at a meeting with him, state: If the Clinton Administration wanted to support Shevy, as they called their own President, then it must also

support Yeltsin against his domestic enemies,” because “as our (i.e. Georgia’s) big neighbor goes, so goes the neighborhood” (“*The+ Russia hand*”, Strobe Talbott, Random House, N.Y. 2003, p. 46).

Already under President George Bush Jr., a tremendously significant event, which we have already mentioned, occurred and influenced the policies of not only the United States, its allies and opponents, but has again proven the supremacy of the principles of *Realpolitik* in modern international politics. Namely, the quick and desperate reaction of the Russians to the 9/11 is a serious proof of what has been stated above. The Russian move spawned the United States position to the Russian reaction. Now things got clear: Russia’s first negative move and the solidarity with the West in response to 9/11, was nothing but an attempt to use to its own interests the slogan of the fight against terrorism, first of all against the Chechen fighters, afterwards against those he deemed as terrorists.

It is difficult to believe, that the US Administration fell for that trick. However, here again the supremacy of *Realpolitik* came to the forefront. The Bush Administration, at that period of time, in its relentless fight against terrorism needed the Russian support more than the “baloney” about the double standards of Russia. Besides, in the absence of the international legal definition as to who can be referred to as terrorist, the United States were also not free from the shackles of the abovementioned double standards.

Long before the August war in Georgia, serious printed media of the world repeatedly indicated, that Putin’s coming to power (who was later succeeded by Medvedev, while leaving the reigns of power in Putin’s hands), would encourage Russia to go to any extent in order to reclaim its status of a superpower. The same media more than once alluded

that Russia's "near abroad" or the former Soviet Republics, especially those implicated in internal conflicts, would be the best "arena" for achieving this goal. This assumption was strengthened after Kosovo's recognition by the international community. Together with the warning message to Georgia, it was a sign of devotion to the principles of *Realpolitik* on the part of the West, because the message Georgia got, was not an outright warning, but a hint, that in case of Georgia's conflict with Russia, the West would not render assistance either to post Soviet states or to Georgia *per se*. However, no matter how surprising this may be for the opponents of *Realpolitik*, such rhetoric continued on its course in Europe and, more importantly in the Bush's and later in Obama's Administration.

In September of 2008, *The International Herald Tribune* wrote that after serious deliberations the Bush Administration decided not to resort to punitive actions against Russia because of the conflict. "After lengthy debates, the Administration came to believe that unilateral actions against Russia would be less effective". Therefore, it concluded to delegate the responsibility to take adequate measures to the European Union. The US-European position was also expressed: "Although the Bush Administration is set out to work together with Europe, it also expects more viable actions on the part of Europe, instead of balanced statements of the EU. However officials stated, that in order to maintain the unified front with Europe the US had to agree to the somewhat soft stance of Germany and Italy toward Russia (*"EU says it will talk to Russia"* by Stephen Castle. *International Herald Tribune*, Nov. 10, 2008).

After a short period of time, both the United States and Europe resumed full-fledged relations with Russia. The reason for this step was clearly explained by the Minister for

Foreign Affairs of Finland, who said that *Realpolitik* largely influenced this decision, since normalization of the relations with Russia is in the interests of Europe in the first place. (*US rules out the unilateral steps against Russia*, by Thom Shanker and Steven Lee Myers *“International Herald Tribune”* Sep. 9, 2008).

The question that is heard quite often during recent years is not whether the New Cold War has begun, but rather when did it begin? As I have mentioned, I believe that the Cold War never ended. Russia just took a strategic pause for some period because of its immediate economic and social problems after the collapse of Soviet Union. However, after completing the war in Chechnya and the so-called reforms in the military and security agencies, President Putin immediately showed his intentions.

Edward Lukas, in his well known book “The New Cold War” wrote that: “One of Mr. Putin’s first acts in power was to create a strong state arms export company, Rosoborono-export. Since then, Russian arms sales have risen by more than 70 per cent, making the country the world’s second largest arms exporter after America. (Edward Lucas *The new Cold War* p.247)

He continued, that “Russia is too weak to have a truly effective independent foreign policy, but it is too disgruntled and neurotic to have a sensible and constructive one. It wants to be respected, trusted and liked, but will not act in a way that gains respect, nurtures trust or wins affection. It settles for being noticed – even when that comes as a result of behavior that alienates and intimidates other countries. It compensates for real weakness by showing pretend strength. Little of that – advanced weapons sales to rogue regimes aside – immediately threatens global peace and security. In that sense, the New Cold War is less scary than

the old one. But Russia's behavior is alarming, uncomfortable and damaging, both in its own interests and to those of other countries. And the trajectory is worrying. If Russia becomes still richer and still more authoritarian, all the problems (described in previous chapters) will be harder to deal with, not easier. Russia's influence in the West will be stronger; the willingness to confront it less. The former satellite countries will be even more vulnerable: the economic levers even better positioned. In other words, if the West does not start winning the New Cold War while it can, it will find it much harder in the future. The price of the confrontation now may be economic pain and political uncertainty. But it still offers the chance of a new relationship with Russia based on realism rather than sentiment, and tough-mindedness rather than wishful thinking. The price later will be higher- perhaps so high that the West will no longer be able to pay it.

Russia is reverting to behavior last seen during the Soviet era. So the first step towards winning the New Cold War is to accept what is happening.

Having accepted the magnitude of the problem, the next step is to give up naïve idea that the West can influence Russia's domestic politics.

At any rate, it is futile to seek friends among the feuding clans of the Kremlin. Their hatred to each other may lead to change, but not necessarily change in the West's interests. Instead, we are back in an era of great-power politics. If we want to defend our interests, we will have to think clearly and pay dearly." (Ibid p. 267-270)

In the words of Edward Lucas, a central message of his book was that "the world's richest and strongest free countries must stand behind small states now under threat from Russia. It may be inconvenient, costly or even painful

to do so, but if we do not win the New Cold War on terms of our choosing, we will fight at a time and place chosen by our adversary, and the odds will be tilted against us". (Ibid. p.270)

But we have mentioned at the beginning, that we want to analyze more the future of Russia during the remaining period of the 21st century, than its past.

From this point of view, quite an interesting vision of the future of Russia was presented by George Friedman in his book "The next 100 years" (A forecast for the 21st century), published in 2010.

In his book he is making generally quite a radical conclusion that, "the problem is that the very existence of a united Russia poses a significant potential challenge to Europe." (p.101). However, he also presents other conclusions, which are interesting in our opinion.

For example, that "Protecting its frontiers is not Russia's only problem today. The Russians are extremely well aware that they are facing a massive demographic crisis. (by 2050, there will be between 90 and 125 million of them) ...and between the geopolitical, economic and demographic problems, the Russians have to make a fundamental shift."

Friedman thinks, that: "In the next decade (from 2010) Russia will become increasingly wealthy (relative to its past, at least) but geographically insecure. It will therefore use some of its wealth to create a military force appropriate to protect its interests, buffer zones to protect it from the rest of the world – and then buffer zones for the buffer zones. Russia's grand strategy involves the creation of deep buffers along the northern European plain, while it divides and manipulates its neighbors, creating a new regional balance of power in Europe. What Russia cannot tolerate are tight borders without buffer zones, and its neighbors united against

it. This is why Russia's future actions will appear to be aggressive but will actually be defensive." (p.104-105)

"Russia's actions will unfold in three phases. In first phase, Russia will be concerned with recovering influence and effective control in the former Soviet Union, re-creating the system of buffers that the Soviet Union had. In the second phase, Russia will seek to create a second tier of buffers, beyond the boundaries of the former Soviet Union. It will try to do this without creating a solid wall of opposition, of the kind that choked it during the Cold War. In the third phase – really something that will have been going on from the beginning – Russia will try to prevent anti-Russian coalition from forming." (Ibid p.106).

As for Russian-American relations, Friedman thinks, that "The Russians will respond to American powergrab by trying to increase pressure on the United States elsewhere in the world. In the Middle east for example....By 2020 this confrontation will be the dominant global issue – and everyone will think of it as a permanent problem. The confrontation will not be as comprehensive as the first Cold War. The Russians will lack the power to seize all of Eurasia, and they will note a true global threat. They will however be a regional threat, and that is the context in which the United States will respond. There will be tension all along the Russian frontier, but the United States will not be able to (or need to) impose a complete cordon around Russia as it did around the Soviet Union. Given the confrontation, the European dependence on hydrocarbons, much of it derived from Russia, will become a strategic issue.....Russia is not going to be in the forefront of the technological developments that will dominate the later portion of the century. Instead, Russia will need to develop its military capabilities. Thus, as it has over the past two centuries, Russia will de-

vote the bulk of its research and development money to applying new technologies toward military ends and expanding existing industries, causing it to fall behind the United States and the rest of the world in nonmilitary but valuable technology.

The causes that ignited this confrontation (confrontation between Russia and the West) – and the Cold War before it – will impose the same outcome as the Cold War, this time with less effort for the United States. The last confrontation occurred in central Europe. This one will take place much further to the east. In the last confrontation China was an ally of Russia, at least in the beginning. In this case China will be out of the game. Last time Russia was in complete control of Caucasus, but now it will not be, and it will be facing American and Turkish pressure northward. In the last confrontation Russia had a large population, but this time around it has a smaller and declining population. Internal pressure particularly in the south, will divert Russian attention from the west and eventually, without war, it will break. Russia broke in 1917, and again in 1991. And the country will collapse once more shortly after 2020.” (Ibid p.117-119)

Of course, in 2018 the general conclusions of George Friedman look even more radical and far from reality, but if we will look to the future Russian foreign policy in our time, and from the Black Sea region, or more specifically from South Caucasus, there are quite a lot specific conclusions that looks quite possible and dangerous for our region.

We agree with the analysts and experts who think, that in the 21st century Russia policy towards the West and the “near abroad” will be based on using hybrid modes. This means that Russia will use the combination of military and “soft” powers. We think, that with the “near abroad”, Russia

will use more military “bullying” and provocations and less “soft power”, but from the point of view of some experts, even with the West, the hybrid modes of warfare can be used.

For example Zdzislaw Sliva, Vijliar Veebel and Maxime Lebrun think that “The old Cold War mentality has waned and Russia no longer has the capabilities to conduct such large-scale operations, conquering vast territories...

“This is understood and implemented by Russian leadership. Therefore, the NATO and the EU are being challenged by non-military tactics meant to weaken them, to destroy their internal cohesion, and to deepen internal divisions. The challenge is that the perception of the hybrid approach to warfare is understood differently among nations. It has direct consequences in governmental defense strategies and armed forces investments. It can be visible in a variety of political parties’ perception of threats, the different priorities in economic development, lack of unification e.g. within energy security and deals related to transportation of gas and oil. The advancing technologies and global market economy support the evolution of warfare by adding a variety of options to be exploited, some much stronger than in the past. The combination of a continuous build-up of armed forces and the creation of a National Guard ensures that the direct external and internal threat for Russia is reduced. Furthermore, it ensures close control of the internal situation, keeps opposition under control, manages the terrorist threat and thwarts any “colour revolution” attempts. It is partially linked to the recognition of power in popular movements capable of toppling governments. The latter has been under heightened attention in Russia due to the centennial of the October Revolution in 2017. In parallel, the development of military

and law enforcement capabilities is a facilitator for using other instruments of power supported by skillfully utilizing information and cyber domains. The hybrid approach is visualized and explained in the Gerasimov doctrine and the capabilities are available. The challenge is how long those capabilities can be preserved due to economic reasons. In the short term it is viable until 2020 or 2022, but in the long term the Russian economic situation must be improved to avoid the implosion of the current system. The answer from Western nations must be decisive and it must include all possible tools to put constant pressure on Russia. It must be conducted in a concerted manner by all members of the European and Euro-Atlantic communities, as any sign of a lack of cohesion or hesitation will be exploited against them. The hybrid threat requires a comprehensive answer by consolidating all available resources within each single nation and within security organizations. To face them, the NATO has agreed to “a hybrid strategy to cope with the fast-moving challenges posed through a range of military and non-military means”. It is necessary to remember, that complex challenges must be countered with a complex and coordinated approach to counter propaganda, information campaigns, cyberattacks and other soft non-military options that deny Western nations the ability to react. As described in Atlantic Council’s 2016 report on Russian hybrid warfare against the West, in that domain Russia is already successful:

Concerted effort to establish networks of political influence has reached into Europe’s core. Be it “Putin-verstehern”, “useful idiots”, agents of influence, or Trojan Horses, the aim is the same: to cultivate a network of organizations and individuals that support Russian economic and geopolitical interests, denounce

the EU and European integration, propagate a narrative of Western decline, and vote against EU policies on Russia (most notably sanctions) – thus legitimizing the Kremlin’s military interventionism in Ukraine and Syria, weakening transatlantic institutions, and undermining liberal democratic values.

The report on Kremlin’s Trojan Horses offers a comprehensive examination of how the Kremlin tries to influence politics in three major European countries – France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. To deny further influence: European policy makers can and should take common action to expose, limit, and counter Russia’s attempt to use economic leverage and seemingly benign civil society activities to manipulate policy and discourse in open societies. The report offers the following recommendations to France, Germany and the UK: to expose Russia’s network of Trojan Horses by shining a light on opaque connections, to limit Russia’s influence through government actions and to reinvest in European values and democratic institutions. Next to non-military means, the conventional capabilities must be preserved and developed further, as military weakness could be exploited by further territorial requirements recognizing that Europe is focused only on minor actions, such as deployment of limited forces to Eastern Europe, believing it serves as sufficient deterrence. The scale of Russian “snap exercises”, nuclear scenarios and the continuous modernization of armed forces are something to be taken very seriously and require investing in capabilities to face an unexpected attempt to further change national borders. Solid analysis must be done to face the risk that “the actual future capability will surely differ from whatever it is that NATO and the EU are currently planning to counter”, endangering the preparedness to face the opponent on the

future battlefield.(Russian ambitions and hybrid modes of warfare.” *Zdzisław Śliwa, Viljar Veebel, Maxime Lebrun, Sõjateadlane* (Estonian Journal of Military Studies, Volume 7, 2018, pp. 86–108. www.ksk.edu.ee/teadus-ja-arendusteg-evus/publikatsioonid/)

As for Russia’s behavior in it’s “near abroad: “The extreme manifestation of Russian political philosophy was the unleashing of two wars in Europe in 21st century: in 2008 with Georgia and in 2014 with Ukraine. Both cases showed that the Kremlin approved the corresponding plans in advance. Probably, such approved plans exist for other countries as well. Whether or not they will be implemented, depends on the degree of solidarity of the international community and its efforts to confront and restrain Russia. There is no doubt that, having established hegemony in the surrounding space, Russia will rush forth further. If Russia faces a well-organized resistance and a coordinated position in the international arena, it begins to return to the mainstream of the international law and refers to its norms and principles in order to consolidate the achieved success. Moreover, the options of sacrificing secondary issues for the sake of the achievement of the main goal may also be considered. Thus, as a result of international pressure, Russia can agree to an option for the solution of the situation in the east of Ukraine but it will get its teeth into the Crimea. Russia will compromise nothing vis-à-vis Georgia for two main reasons: first – Georgia’s issues are not considered so actively on the international agenda today as evidenced by the results of the last G-7 Summit in Charlevoix, Canada on June 8-9 this year: second – 300 km of the Abkhazian section of the Black Sea coast of Georgia is regarded by Russia as the means for strengthening its influence, including military, in the larger Black Sea region, and so named South

Ossetia is a military base in the heart of the South Caucasus which allows putting pressure in whole region, and not only Georgia". ("Russia – the main threat to the Global Order: the urgent need for counteracting and creation of the deterrence System". Valeri Chechelashvili, Volodymir Ogryzko, "Rondeli Foundation", CRS, 2018)

We cannot avoid mentioning the future of the so-called Geneva Process or the still ongoing negotiations between the parties in conflict and representatives of the West aimed at finding peaceful resolution of the conflicts in Georgia. Of course, Georgia and International community will never recognize (in our opinion, certainly not in the 21st century) the "new realities" (named so by Russia) in the South Caucasus – two more "independent states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia" and we think Russia understands this quite well. However, along with this, the latest steps of Russia and its separatist satellites show that they simply want to achieve abolition of the Geneva process. It seems so, because during the last several meetings, they refused even to discuss such important and natural parts of these conflicts as the situation around the violation of Georgian population's rights in Abkhazia and the rights of displaced persons and refugees to return to their native lands and are leaving the meetings.

Thus, the future of such international format as the Geneva process can change. If Russia and separatists will be successful in their efforts, the only existing format for possible conflict resolution can be "killed" and that will make the situation more unpredictable and dangerous in the South Caucasus, as well as the wider Black Sea region.

If we will add to this the new activities of the NATO in the Black Sea region, that were announced at the NATO's last Summit, and the readiness of several Black Sea countries, who are searching for more allies against possible

Russian aggression, to see “more NATO in the Black Sea region”, this can also increase the possibility of aggravation of conflict between Russia and the West in the region.

As for using more “soft power” in it’s “near abroad”, for example against Georgia, Russia can use - the economic interests of Georgian population in Russia itself, taking in account that these people are sending quite a big amount of money to their relatives in Georgia every year, sentiments related to the common religious feelings of Georgians and Russians as orthodox Christians, growing amount of Russian tourists in Georgia, contacts of Youth and Media organizations and str.

All this can have it’s short-term impact on Georgian-Russian relations, but without solution of the problems, related to the occupation of Georgian territories and recognition of so named “independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia”, it will be impossible to change the mind of the most of the Georgian people about Russia.

CONCLUSION

There are no visible signs that in a visible future, Russia's existing leadership will change their traditional vision of Russia's exceptional role in history and the international arena.

This means that the existing Russian government and President Putin will generally continue to follow Russia's present internal and foreign policy.

Russia will not change its foreign policy strategy, but it can use new and more diversified tactics in order to achieve its goals in various parts of the world.

Russia will continue using hybrid methods of its pressure, both with the West and its "near abroad", but with the West it can use more "soft power" and with the countries of the "near abroad" – both - more military provocations and bullying, along with the using of more "soft power".

If the West and other leading world powers will not acknowledge these realities and help the countries of Russia's "near abroad" to stand strong against Russia's growing pressure, the future of the more predictable and peaceful regional and world order in the 21st century looks poor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Diplomacy” by Henry Kissinger, Simon and Schuster N.Y. 1995

“The Russia hand” by Strobe Talbot, Random House N.Y. 2002

“The new cold war” by Edward Lucas, Bloomsbury 2008

“The next 100 years (A forecast for the 21-st century)” by George Friedman, Anchor Books NY. 2010

“Russian ambitions and hybrid modes of warfare” *Zdzisław Śliwa, Viljar Veebel, Maxime Lebrun, Sõjateadlane* (Estonian Journal of Military Studies), Volume 7, 2018, pp. 86–108. www.ksk.edu.ee/teadus-ja-arendustegevus/publikatsioonid/

“Russia – the main threat to the Global Order: the urgent need for counteracting and creation of the deterrence System”. Valeri Chechelashvili, Volodymir Ogryzko, “Rondeli Foundation”, CRS, 2018