

**GLOBAL TRENDS, TODAY'S BIZARRE GEOPOLITICS,  
AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR RUSSIA AND THE WORLD<sup>1</sup>**

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*NATO left Afghanistan.*

*Putin took nash Cream.*

*Cristina Kirschner took the Union Jack*

*(not yet)*

*Final Cut UPD<sup>2</sup>*

A century after the First World War began, Europe – in a broader meaning of a Euro-Atlantic space from Vancouver to Vladivostok – and its security are now shaken by the New Cold War. It is a bizarre cold war as the bipolar world order – the type of world order accustomed to cold war – was gone 25 years ago. It is a new era of multistakeholder-cold-war.

The fact it is bizarre does not make it less dangerous than the “traditional” cold war of the past. Finally, the same actors as 25 years ago still have nukes. Unlike 25 years ago, though, they have most sophisticated types of lethal and non-lethal weapons. This cold war is not just a post-Ukraine-crisis hangover episode. We should get prepared for a long, shaky and chilly period of political instability and conflict.

This multistakeholder-cold-war has several major characteristics; one of them is chaos, fear and arms race in cyber space. Internet is still quasi-free, but de facto controlled by its original designer – the United States and its military - with little prospect for a new global internet governance. Snowden revelations have only been tip of the iceberg. More than 120 states work on cyber weapons or have active offensive/defensive cyber programs.

Moreover, even the multilateral efforts to promote cooperation and confidence building in cybersecurity area in such a dynamic and viable format of the ASEAN Regional Forum are still in the initial stage of development and can be crippled by the exacerbating turbulence in the international relations. For more details please read the roundtable on Russia-ASEAN cooperation in cybersecurity area.

Apart from cybersecurity issues, the ASEAN region appears to be a *safe haven* in today's turbulent world for some priority dimensions of Russia's foreign policy – as it makes the case with Russia-ASEAN cooperation in the nuclear sphere, which is analyzed by Ivan **Zolotukhin**. But neither this positive engagement potential, nor the sweet temptation to fall into *Myanmar mania* (examined by Olga **Skorokhodova**) are not able to balance the global tsunami of instability which Russia is facing together with the rest of the global community.

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Next dimension is the rapid development of new types of weapons. One example are UAVs; another one - Lethal Autonomous Robotic Systems (LARS). The challenge that LARS are going to pose to the international law and global security in coming years and the possible ways of countering it are examined by Elliot **Serbin**; however, one thing this analysis proves is that today the global governance mechanisms are hardly able to respond to the LARS challenge effectively.

In addition, everything is ready for arms race in outer space. International, particularly Russia-US space cooperation, active for 20+ years, is now gone. United States, China, Russia, India, and possibly other major players are ready to jump into the outer space with ambitious plans that would anyway, even if they are not overtly military, affect the global security – adding more global insecurity and vulnerability not only for those who do not play in star wars and other space games – but for all.

Finally, the deterioration of the international situation includes mounting uncertainties with regard to existing global or cross-regional organizations, alliances, clubs and coalitions, and their reshaping.

- The United Nations is completely confused regarding international law norms and sinking even further into a global-bureaucracy swamp;
- NATO has practically failed in Afghanistan and is largely driven by Poland and the Baltics in their search for a “new old” enemy in the counterproductive context of the Ukrainian crisis.
- CSTO largely remains a *sleeping structure* in the global security architecture. Very few people even know what it stands for, while the organization is having ridiculously low influence in the regions where it may be crucial like Central Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia. However, the Secretary General of the CSTO Nikolai **Bordyuzha** provides some valid arguments against utter pessimism concerning the CSTO and its prospects in his interview for the Security Index journal.
- The G8 is now gone after the outbreak of the Crimea crisis – and even well before the deterioration of the conflict in the East of Ukraine.
- BRICS is one of the few international coalitions, which is still trying to appear dynamic, even looking for expansion into Argentina and Turkey...but in reality it is facing growing contradictions among its members. BRICS unity will be tested very soon at the summit in Brazil’s Fortaleza. The contrast between BRICS ambitions and the divergence of the approaches practiced by its members is perfectly revealed in the field of global internet governance and cyber governance. The strategies of the non-Western giants’ forum in this field and their prospects in the light of the BRICS summit of 2015 in Ufa are highlighted by Oleg **Demidov**.

Ukraine was not the major reason but just a “final drop” in US-Russian relations. However, that was a significant “drop”, too painful and too poisonous for Russia to digest. Coup d’état in Kiev in February 2014 orchestrated by Washington was a classical one, tested many times before in places like Latin America, Africa, and the

Middle East - but the closest to the Russian borders and most vital to Russia's interests ever. Moscow acted swiftly and professionally on Crimea though the same idea of challenging or changing Helsinki-born principles and status quo was something alien to Moscow even a few months ago. Now, there is a civil war in Ukraine, with a risk of having a low-to-high-intensity conflict there for many years.

The Ukraine crisis has had a dramatic effect on Russian domestic policy as well, giving a unique chance to those who have always been on the margins of the Kremlin decision-making: ultra-cons, Orthodox fundamentalists whose ideology is anti-Western by itself, and will continue to be so, whatever happens next in or around Ukraine. Putin's long-term course towards saving of his own and country's energy on useless quarrels and investing in development instead, – this course has been torpedoed and significantly damaged. In that sense, Obama administration has achieved its very shortsighted, but clear and familiar goal: they weakened Russia again, by successfully provoking it to demonstrate its power.

On the other hand, this is Russia's hard, raw power – and President Putin's unquestionable strength itself – that attracts now important players from the Middle East, East Asia, as well as other regions who are more eager to do business with Russian today than ever before – Japan may be the best example but definitely not the only one.

In his July 2014 speech addressed to Russian ambassadors, President Putin deliberately chose a conciliatory, moderate tone. Without allowing any concessions vis-à-vis Ukraine and the West, and rightly so, Putin preferred to concentrate on constructing a Eurasian Union as a common economic (and, perhaps, in a future – a geopolitical) space – his favorite project considerably shaken by the Ukraine crisis but still alive and with a certain potential.

As some European observers have already correctly noted, President Putin's pragmatism should not allow him to go too far towards the new Cold War and to appease those in his team who, with limited vision and limited creativity, still push their own hawkish foreign policy agenda. At the same time, it is true that they are the true winners of the Crimea operation, and their growing appetite for power within decision-making process cannot simply be ignored or downplayed. Thus, Putin will have a search for a fine line between damage to Russia's development and playing down his increasing anti-Western feelings turned philosophy.

So what expectations should we have in the light of the Cold Reality 2.0 (as it was titled by Galiya **Ibragimova** in the international Security index in the First Half of 2014)?

*First*, the existing security treaties will be questioned, some of them will die soon, some will die hard, and some most essential, like the NPT, may even survive but without any chance of strengthening. Evgeny **Buzhinsky** provides a bright illustration of this trend in his examination of the questionable future of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987.

*Second*, new multilateral treaties dealing with new global threats and phenomena like cyber- ad outer space arms race will be very unlikely under current shaky and tense environment.

*Third*, formal international organizations such as the U.N. and its institutions as well as the informal coalitions and “clubs” of nations – let it be G7 or BRICS – will not be capable of dealing of adequately addressing this global security agenda.

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Therefore and finally, the impression of the last decades that hard power is reducing its role compared to soft power proved not only wishful thinking, not simply wrong, but dangerously misleading. The global processes went berserk, and we are doomed to increasing global instability.

As sad as it sounds, one can hardly ever find a panacea to prevent this destabilization – and this is truly a *bad luck* of today’s world.