

**If the Blind Lead the Blind**

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*Keywords: compilation, unwillingness to reflect, epistemic security, information competition, critical thinking*

Thinking is turning into compilation, playing with templates. As a result, we are unwilling to analyze independently, falling into a pernicious dependence on suppliers of ready-made information products. Intellectual life withers as it waits at the trough for feed to be periodically tossed in. The instinct of foraging for information atrophies: People lose the ability to seek out and find nourishment for the mind, to select from what is available the highest quality and most beneficial. They simply consume whatever is provided. Yet such “omnivorousness” does not in the least enhance an individual’s social competitiveness. Its outcome is degradation and infantilism. An inability – and, most regrettably, an unwillingness – to comprehend what is happening, to correlate events, to draw conclusions.

Certain representatives of the global ruling class, unwilling to invest in reversing this trend, quite naturally seek to lead the bacchanalia. Any forces that control society may at first glance find the state of mental dependence and manageability of the individual advantageous; it guarantees the least costly transformation of the individual into a resource of the powers that be.

Another important point. In any country, the information space cannot be fully isolated. No matter how artificially it is closed off, it remains to some extent integrated into the global media environment. And here competition – harsh and unprincipled – has not been abolished. For every domestic set of “talking points,” for every homegrown “guidebook,” there will be thousands of others offering a

different version of “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” There are no guarantees that consumers incapable of critical thinking will not find the products of competing forces more appealing. And they may become batteries in someone else’s social engineering tools.

Among the new challenges facing humanity in this area, foremost is the malicious activity of “adversaries” who deliberately distort information in their own interests, and of “blunderers” who believe fake news and unwittingly disseminate it. Second comes the deficit of attention amid the multiplicity and speed of information flows, as well as cognitive distortions in the perception and comprehension of events. Third is the emergence of closed, “island” communities with firmly entrenched worldviews that reject any information that contradicts their views. Fourth is the polarization of views and the intensification of ideological rivalry between such groups. Finally, content-generation technologies and the growing number of intermediaries transmitting information from producer to consumer complicate the assessment of the objectivity of the primary source, leading to an erosion of trust.

Allowing such tendencies to run their course, and especially encouraging them and attempting to profit from them, is mortally dangerous to any state. The mass loss of intellectually developed and clear-minded individuals, not to mention the intellectual elite, will inevitably result in existential losses. The epistemic challenge will evolve into a direct threat to state security. No one will point the way out of the political deadlock into which strategists will be driven by sycophantic and short-sighted advisers. No one will help find a solution when the country finds itself in crisis.

## **Malicious ICT Practices as a Threat to the Stability of International Relations**

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*Keywords: international relations, malicious use, information and communication technologies (ICTs), destructive practices, artificial intelligence, terrorism, extremism*

THE modern world is becoming increasingly informatized and technologically advanced with each passing year. A wide variety of digital gadgets, computer devices, and innovative methods of information transmission have already firmly entered the daily life of every individual. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have objectively become determining factors in the development of all areas of social relations – economics, politics, security, international relations, and human civilization as a whole. They are rapidly transforming the contemporary world order, opening not only new avenues for cooperation but also diverse and only weakly monitored means of implementing destructive actions. With the emergence of the ability to train artificial intelligence (AI), malicious software attacks have become even more sophisticated and difficult to detect. At the same time, in situations where confrontation between individual states does not take the form of open military clashes, strategies aimed at achieving political and geostrategic objectives without the direct use of military force come to the fore.

Key tools to implement such strategies are ICTs, including AI systems. Their widespread dissemination, relative accessibility, and anonymity create a unique environment to exert constant, large-scale malicious influence that is difficult to trace to its source. Consequently, the use of ICTs for destructive purposes is currently becoming increasingly extensive and sophisticated, capable of undermining the foundations of national sovereignty and trust among actors in the international arena.

An active orchestrator of the aforementioned ICT strategies is, for example, the US, whose political doctrine has been developing a propagandistic and legal framework for carrying out so-called cyber operations, which in essence constitute aggression against other countries.

Amid current geopolitical turbulence, malicious hacking activity remains consistently high. For example, in 2025 the number of crimes targeting CII facilities of the Russian Federation increased almost fourfold. This was reported by the press service of the Office of the Security Council of the Russian Federation following a meeting of the Security Council's Interdepartmental Commission on Information Security, which examined issues of countering crimes committed using ICTs.

Russia's response to such actions has included strengthening legal liability for harm caused in the information field. For example, since January 1, 2018, Russian legislation has contained a specific provision establishing criminal liability for computer attacks and other unlawful interference with CII facilities of the Russian Federation.

Destructive use of ICT is also evident in foreign policy. Among the most well-known examples are the "Arab Spring" (2010-2012) and the change of power in Egypt in 2011, in which digital platforms functioned not as tools of direct foreign intervention, but as factors mobilizing protesters.

Russia, its allies, and like-minded states advocate the mobilization of the international community to build a robust global system of information security to respond to the aggressive policies of Western countries led by the US. As early as 1998, the Russian Federation was the first to officially call upon the international community within the framework of the UN to reach agreements in advance and take practical measures to develop a universal international regime for activities in cyberspace.

## **Multipolarity and Technological Paradigms: A New Architecture of the World Order by 2040**

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*Keywords: multipolar world order, technological paradigm, digital economy*

THE current stage in the development of international relations is commonly characterized in Russian historiography and political science as a transition away from the unipolar world order that effectively emerged after the collapse of the USSR toward a multipolar one. Theorists associate the natural course of this process with the justified desire of independent states to strengthen national sovereignty and their legitimate right to independently determine their own interests. An additional impetus prompting them to act is the need to counter the neoliberal dictates of the collective West, which has grown accustomed to dominance in the international arena over recent decades and is unwilling to come to terms with the reduction of its political weight. That attitude on the part of the West is undermining the foundations of international cooperation and damages the entire system of supranational relations. This has nothing in common with the constructive agenda promoted by Russia in cooperation with interested partners.

The natural formation of a more just, multipolar world order provides developing countries with an opportunity to strengthen their positions in the international arena, increasingly confidently defend their priorities, participate in addressing transnational problems, and cope with global challenges. In proportion to the pace of the emergence of a multipolar world, “non-Western-centric” interstate groupings are gaining strength, where the principles of equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefit prevail. This is particularly evident in the example of the Eurasian space and BRICS, the SCO, and ASEAN. At the same time, as these processes

develop, numerous research tasks and debatable questions arise: How many polarities/poles of the new world order can exist, and is their number limited? How is influence distributed within a multipolar system of international relations? How is a mutually acceptable basis for interaction formed? Is the factor of competition eliminated? How will the principle of indivisible security be ensured at the global and regional levels? Why multipolarity rather than, for example, polycentricity? And finally, the question of greatest interest to us in this study: When might the process of building multipolarity be completed? The answer to that question will undoubtedly be given over time and as scientific thought develops; however, some forecasts can already be made.

The challenge for states spearheading the formation of a multipolar world order is to seize the moment of this transition and assist like-minded partners in unlocking their potential amid the expected shift in technological paradigms and the ongoing digitalization of the global economic space. Based on the concepts of long waves and technological paradigms, this will take approximately 10 years, after which, having traced the interconnection between the shift in technological paradigms and the final phase of the formation of multipolarity, we may be able to determine whether a stable multipolar world order has been created under conditions favorable to its further viability.

## **The Ukraine Crisis as a Catalyst for Transformations in the EU's Energy Security Strategy**

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*Keywords: European Union, strategy, energy security, Ukraine crisis, natural gas, Nord Streams, diversification, energy crisis*

THE European Union defines energy security as a combination of the following factors: uninterrupted access to affordable energy, including security of supply; maintenance of reserves; protection of critical infrastructure; and diversification of energy sources.

The purpose of this article is to identify the role of the Ukraine crisis in the transformation of the EU's energy security strategy, as well as to determine the main prospects for its further development.

The study employs a content analysis of EU legal acts and official documents, including strategies, regulations, and joint statements. The article analyzes the extent to which the Ukraine conflict shapes the EU's approaches.

The main document defining the EU's approaches to energy security is the European Union Energy Security Strategy adopted on May 28, 2014. The adoption of this document was the EU's response to growing geopolitical risks associated with the deterioration of relations between Russia and Ukraine. At the same time, the document preserved an economic rationale: The emphasis was placed not on a complete rejection of Russian gas, but on minimizing transit risks, in this case through Ukraine.

It should be noted that the energy crises of 2006 and 2009 – namely, disruptions in the transit of Russian gas through Ukraine – demonstrated the EU's vulnerability, but those disruptions remained warning signals rather than triggers of fundamental changes in Brussels' energy policy. The measures taken by the EU's

leadership were not strategic and were rather aimed at mitigating immediate threats. This is confirmed by the absence at that time of documents directly aimed at overcoming the Ukraine factor in the issue of Russian gas transit.

The deterioration of Russian-Ukrainian relations in 2014 prompted both the EU and its individual members to develop regulatory measures to prevent the heightened risk of supply disruptions through Ukraine. In practice, the EU combined two strategies: first, short-term measures to reduce transit risks, including stress tests and stricter rules for gas transit systems; and second, more large-scale infrastructure solutions, including projects designed to sidestep the Ukraine factor. However, a truly radical shift toward the politicization of the process occurred only after 2022.

The escalation of the Ukraine crisis in 2022 compelled the EU to radicalize its approaches to energy cooperation with Russia. The previously discussed intention to move away from Russian gas has become more realistic, even if not in the immediate future, and the EU is taking steps in this direction. In practical terms, for Russia the situation unfolding in the EU threatens the loss of an important market and the disruption of national energy security. In particular, the Yamal fields will be partially left underutilized. The construction of the Power of Siberia 2 main gas pipeline, which could have redirected Yamal gas to China, has been delayed. Instead, preference has been given to a new branch of the Central Asia-China pipeline. In addition, Beijing's negotiating position is strengthening, as it has a wide range of suppliers and is in no hurry to make concessions to Moscow.

In the long term, out to 2030-2035, the European policy of decarbonization and finding alternative suppliers, including the US, Qatar, and African countries, indeed increases the likelihood of a further reduction in Russia's share in the structure of gas imports.

## **Russia's International Development Assistance**

### **Amid New Geopolitical Realities:**

### **Updating Objectives, Calibrating Tools**

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*Keywords: international development assistance, international aid, official development assistance, Russia, donor countries, partner countries, foreign policy*

THE contemporary world dictates new conditions of existence for national economies and the position of states within the system of international relations. Perhaps these new institutional conditions have manifested themselves most vividly in Russia's economic and political practice, as the country has faced the need to almost simultaneously revise its approaches to and areas of interaction with countries around the world. It can be stated that in the short term this recalibration of ties during the "emergency period" was successfully accomplished. However, consolidating it over the long term requires just as much effort. Moreover, ongoing global changes leave no opportunity to pause and reflect, forcing transformation to be carried out on the fly, which puts newly formed governance frameworks at risk of repeating past mistakes and falling into old traps.

Concepts of development as such and ideas of progress are currently being reinterpreted in academic circles. Experts and practitioners are asking questions like: What should be the main parameters of national development models? Should the international community promote development? Are the development paradigms proposed by Western countries, either bilaterally or through international institutions, suitable for non-Western societies? The Western approach to institutions is well known and is criticized for attempting to transfer models of Western societies to non-Western societies without sufficient reflection. The task of Russian

scholarship at the present stage is to create alternative approaches adapted to the needs of non-Western societies, [including] societies of the Global South.

From the perspective of foreign policy practice, IDA represents a new form of soft power. Soft power entails “selling” one’s own national development model by “promoting” it to foreign societies, often without regard to their specific characteristics. Over the 40 years of the existence of soft power as both a concept and a practice, its limitations have become evident, including monologue rather than dialogue with foreign societies and a belief in the exceptionality of one’s own development model.

Thus, development assistance, unlike Western system of official development assistance (ODA) in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) logic and unlike soft power, presupposes that the donor state does not necessarily possess a single, unopposed vision of the optimal development model for the recipient. IDA is co-action – i.e., a joint search for best practices that contribute to the development of partner societies. Such an approach and substantive content could form the basis of a conceptual framework, if not an entire philosophy, defining the ideological thrust of a new development discourse in the Russian Federation. The proper calibration of tools of interaction with specific partner countries could become a worthy support in implementing this conceptual approach.

## **The Future of Transatlanticism**

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*Keywords: NATO, the US, European countries, allies, geostrategic situation, national interests, transformation*

THE system of transatlantic relations, including military-strategic cooperation between the US and European countries based on their participation in NATO, is undergoing an evident transformation following the 2024 US presidential election and the coming to power of the Donald Trump administration. This refers to a certain shift in the focus of foreign policy interests toward a more rational US approach to the issue of allied solidarity; a refusal to follow or, at times, submit to the egoism and whims of Western European NATO members; and a greater orientation toward promoting national interests in other regions of the world rather than prioritizing them exclusively in Europe. Herein, it may be supposed, lies the emerging difference between the current American leadership and Democratic Party administrations, including the most recent one headed by Joe Biden.

At the same time, changes in the system of transatlantic relations that emerged after World War II and the creation of NATO have occurred before, following shifts in the global geostrategic situation, as well as their comprehension both in NATO headquarters and in the capitals of member states, beginning with Washington. Adjustments in the nuances of allied relations manifested themselves over a fairly long period of NATO's existence and within the broader conceptual complex encompassing the notion of postwar transatlantic solidarity, or the linkage between the US and West European countries.

The transformations in transatlantic ties during the present period, however, have their own distinctive features. The role of the Trump administration arguably

lies in the fact that it has for the first time publicly emphasized US national interests as the primary motivator of its foreign policy priority of revising the customary understanding of transatlantic ties. Moreover, Trump actively employs the factor of national interests to advance his domestic political agenda.

It seems that in the current context, the focus of Russian foreign policy as it relates to transatlantic relations should be based on the understanding of the high risk that the existing military-strategic balance will break down. This means Russia should prioritize relations with the US. It seems likely that only the acceptance by a majority of the American elite of a global balance in future foreign policy can keep both the system of Russian-American relations and the system of transatlantic alliance within pragmatic limits. This would prevent, *inter alia*, attempts to implement provocative schemes from European territory aimed at undermining nuclear parity between the two military superpowers.

Thus, the system of transatlantic relations between the US and its European NATO allies is changing. The Trump administration is *de facto* shaping a new foreign policy standard for the American approach to transatlanticism for the foreseeable future. Whether and to what extent this standard will take root, or whether it will once again revert to the traditional understanding of transatlantic unity – namely, the binding of the US to the priorities of a European regional grouping based on the European Union – will ultimately determine the prospects for the emergence of a new reference point in defining the geostrategic configuration of the world.