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**SECTION 22. Policy. Innovations. Theory, practice and methods.**

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## SOME ASPECTS OF RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN 2014-2018

**Abstract:** In article some problems of foreign policy of Russia of 2014-2018 and the reasons which have caused them are analyzed. Main objectives and problems of this policy are specified. It is noted that Russia has practically returned in a row those states which in a varying degree define the course of the main political processes in the world. At the same time she doesn't apply for positions of "superstate" though successfully defends the sovereignty and doesn't allow weakening of the positions in the system of the international relations.

**Key words:** International Relations System, Unipolar world, Russian foreign policy, leading countries of the world.

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### Introduction

It was anticipated that the collapse of the world socialist system in the end of the 1980s with the consent of the leadership of that time of the USSR, and then the destruction of the Soviet State itself, which removed the world confrontation, defined by different ideologies between socialist and capitalist camps in the world by a different ideology between socialist and capitalist camps, would follow the disappearance of the main contradictions in the system of international relations and its transformation into a homogeneous unproblematic essence where the remaining countries would continue their development without any difficulties. As if it was so and the only remaining superpower - the United States of America - based on its incomparable potential, in principle, defined the world development, so the talks on "the end of history", a unipolar system of international relations started. But only 10-15 years passed and the middle of the first decade of the XXI century revealed the factors that suspected the existence of a unipolar system of international relations - managing the world from one center. Naturally, this influenced the foreign policy of leading countries of the world and choosing its main directions and demonstrated that modern international relations represent the complex implementation of the goals and interests of different

states into life. One of such states is the Russian Federation.

### Materials and Methods

A few years ago, one of the authors of the present paper wrote and published an article on these issues [1], but in this historically shortest time, there have been several events in the world that have great influence on the international situation of the country and its foreign policy and we are forced to return to this issue again.

We will start with the fact that in 2014 with the help of external forces to the legitimately elected president of Ukraine (for Russia, first of all it had a great importance for its strategic security and still has), Viktor Yanukovich, who abstained from signing the Association Agreement with the European Union for various reasons, actually forced to resign and leave the country. "Via Maidan", following the events (Moscow's view - state coup) of February 2014, the group that came to power began to pursue policies in the regions of Ukraine where Russian-speaking population was the majority. One such settlement was Crimea, where the vast majority of residents did not agree with Ukraine's new government's policy in a number of issues. On March 16, 2014, the Russian Federation supported a referendum on the state status of Crimea and



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Sevastopol (more precisely, on two issues: Crimea to join Russia as its subject, or the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea to be restored and Crimea to remain in Ukraine).83.1% of the electorate registered in the Crimean Peninsula, 96 96% of which supported the idea to join Russia[2] and in Sevastopol - 89,5% and 95.6% [3]. It should also be noted that according to the Ukraine-Russian bilateral agreement, all this happened under conditions when the military bases were deployed on the peninsula (mainly, in Sevastopol) on the basis of the legitimacy of the Russian military and other military units.This circumstance gives grounds to say about the Western countries to hold a referendum on the threat of force in due course.

It is known that Western countries and their allies deemed this decision of the citizens of Crimea and Sevastopol and joining/returning the peninsula to Russian Federation to be unlawful regardless of the Kosovo precedent. Therefore, on March 17, 2014, the US imposed the first sanctions against high-ranking politicians in Russia and Ukraine, on the same day, Canada imposed economic sanctions and visa restrictions against high-ranking officials from Russia and Crimea. Foreign Ministers of the EU countries as well agreed to introduce sanctions against Russian and Ukrainian officials.Also did Australia and others. In turn, Russia has adopted appropriate measures and initiated a series of sanctions that are still ongoing.At the same time, it should be noted that, in some cases, Russia was refusing to give an immediate response to the sanctions (for instance, after electing Trump as a President, Moscow did not respond to new US sanctions on the grounds that they were not introduced during Trump’s presidency but in the presidency of Obama).

Nevertheless, regardless of whether or not this decision was applicable to international norms of justice (Western representatives consider this to be a gross violation of these norms), the Memorandum of 5 December 1994, Budapest, (Меморандум о гарантиях безопасности в связи с присоединением Украины к Договору о нераспространении ядерного оружия)[4] and responded to the interests of other countries, and first of all the Western and Ukrainian interests, Russia annexed Crimea with Sevastopol.

In a very short time, the problem of Crimea was added that the conflict, which was started between the forces of the Ukrainian government and a large part of the population of Donetsk and Lugansk districts (Donetsk, as well as Lugansk's breakaway republics were created and came out of the jurisdiction of the state of Ukraine), Russia, politically, morally and materially supported them, as a large part of western politicians think. It did not to allow Kiev to fight against them using troops and categorically demanded a peaceful settlement of the problems

arisen.This position in Moscow has further complicated its relations with the West, but Russia does not consider itself as one of the participants of the conflict. This problem is still unsolved, even though almost all leading Western states take part in its resolution. Consequently, there is still a disagreement in different forms between Russia and these countries deepened with the above-mentioned conflict.

Later, in 2015, this problem was added that Russia was involved in the civil war in the country for the fourth time (peculiar continuation of “Arab Spring”) in the country, without the permission or mandate of another country (including UN) in which the allies of the existed official government and externally supported radical Islamists opposed each other.President of Syria B. Assad's request was due to the fact that his power had been significantly weakened, the radical Islamists, who had been formally fought by the West's coalition created by up to 70-member countries for a few years, occupied almost 80% of the Syrian territory. Therefore, it was absolutely possible to overthrow the existing legitimate government of the country and create a new Islamic State.Russia's involvement in the Syrian conflict (we also note that Iran has been acting on the side of Assad because of its interests), had already changed the situation by the end of 2017 - the Islamists lost much of their occupied territories, many of them died in battles and the part of them had to leave Syria. As a result, the legitimate government positions were strengthened.Assad himself survived practically - the only ally of Russia in this region, whose removal from the government seems to be one of the main goals of the international coalition of the West.

It is noteworthy that after Assad's downfall, Moscow would be “cut off” from this very important region of today's world. In fact, the opposite happened - Russia returned even “stronger” here. At the same time, Russia’s support of Assad's government showed that everyone, unlike Gorbachev's former Soviet Union and Yeltsin's Russia, it is not betraying and leaving its allies, but instead protects them and... seeks new ones.This conclusion can be confirmed not only by its increased diplomatic activity in Asia and Latin American recent years, partially in Africa, as well as recent relations with Turkey, when neither the destruction of the Russian aircraft in Syria by the Turks, nor the Russian ambassador’s (Karlov) murder in Ankara, and nordisagreements in the economic and political fields, that were occasionally felt from time to time, could not stop a certain convergence process of the two countries.Furthermore, several factors contributed to its further activation and acceleration: first, the relationship between Ankara and Washington was quite tense After the coup attempt of 2016 in Turkey,



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as there was a suspicion that the famous Turkish religious figure living in the US Fethullah Gulen stood behind this process and Washington refused to give him to Ankara. On the other hand, we also note that the Russian authorities openly and unambiguously supported the official Ankara during these events; second, the USA's widespread support of Kurds in Syria was contradicted by Turkey's interests in the same country - Ankara accuses Syrian Kurds in supporting Turkish Kurds, who are regarded to be terrorists; third, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan refused to join the new US sanctions against Iran, which are now intended to introduce by the Trump administration. In addition, at the summit of the Presidents of BRICS countries at the end of July this year, Erdogan has raised the issue of joining Turkey to this organization (!); fourth, in turn, the United States of America critically evaluates some of Turkey's attitudes toward Russia (for example, the decision to launch an anti-aircraft missile complex C-400 from Moscow), because the US believes that they do not comply with the requirements of NATO membership and promote the weakening of international positions of military-political organization.

It is important to emphasize that in the course of its action Russia practically breached the United States monopoly on the use of armed forces in different parts of the earth at its discretion, which has been formed in recent years, and still made suspicious the unconditional hegemony of that state in the existed system of the international relations and in the world in general.

The analysis of the current situation proves that neither earlier sanctions, nor the law passed by the US on August 2, 2017, "on the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act" (CAATSA), nor introduction of new sanctions by the US and some other Western countries, [On September 6, 2017, 28 EU countries decided to continue sanctions against Russian citizens and firms for half a year (153 people and 40 firms); In December of the same year the EU decided to continue sanctions against Russia for half a year; On January 29, 2018, the so-called "Moscow Report" of the Ministry of Finance was published, which included almost all members of Russia's current political leadership, excluding Putin and 96 big businessmen, to whom new sanctions could be imposed; It is also interesting that the sanctions were made on the day before the victory on German fascists and the day of the Russian state (June 11); On July 5 of the same year the EU continued economic sanctions against Russia for another 6 months - until January 31, 2019 [5]] ultimately failed to have a serious influence on the main directions of Russia's current foreign policy, however, to some extent, Moscow had enough difficulties in the economy and, partially, in politics. On the contrary, they forced Moscow to

think about the country's food security together with other issues, as well as to think about the replacement of the different types of industrial goods with the Russian products, which were restricted or prohibited because of the sanctions. All of this eventually helped to develop a number of branches of Russian economics or increase their pace of growth, encourage their advancement, and at the same time facilitated further strengthening of Russian and Chinese cooperation (which is unlikely to be in the interest of the United States today).

It is also unlikely that the decision made by the European leaders after a brief discussion on the agreements of Russia, Ukraine and Minsk on continuing sanctions against Russia for another half year would be successful [6].

It should be noted that Russia itself had earlier and still has complaints about the foreign policy of the West. For example, V. V. Putin in his speech in Munich on 10 February 2007 [7] openly declared that Moscow has complaints against the West's policies and added that the unipolar world is unacceptable for the world powers. The speech did not cause a call from the heads of Western States, however, it is obvious that it was worth thinking about what strengthened the positions of the Russian president while making a speech. In his speech of September 28, 2015 at the General Assembly of the United Nations, Putin, while evaluating recent Western foreign policy, directly addressed their leaders: "Do you realize, at least, what have you done?" [8] And later, in response to the current US government's threat that it may give Ukraine some sort of military weapon, Russia replied that it could also take sharp steps on some of Washington's territories [9].

In mid-June of this year, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said at the meeting with the representatives of the non-profit organizations of the country that the Western attempts have no prospect to change Russia's policy, Moscow will defend its sovereignty. He pointed out that the process "forming more democratic, more reasonable polycentric system" is going on in the world, but for centuries it is opposed by them, who "led the processes on the planet, set rules for himself and for others, demanded their fulfillment, but he did not even consider it necessary to accomplish them". He underlined that Western countries, under the guidance of the United States, are trying to break down the processes of forming multipolarity, but their dominance becomes the part of history. That is why Russia is accused of all existing and non-existing sins demanding to change its political path - he stated [10].

In turn, in an interview with China's media company, on June 6 this year, President Putin said: „I act in mind that Russia will be either sovereign or not at all. And, of course, the Russian people always choose the first“ [11]. In principle, it is clear that

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Russia does not intend to pursue the interests of the Western countries (it seems that it appreciates its earlier step this way!). More than that, Moscow did not even exclude to make a statement in the military doctrine 2014 of the state: "The Russian Federation reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to using weapons of nuclear and mass destruction against it and (or) its allies, as well as the in the case of aggression with an ordinary weapon against Russian Federation when the existence of the state itself is threatened", [12] Putin actually reiterated the same in an interview the journalist Megan Kelly in 2017 [13]. In Vladimir Solovyov's film "World Order 2018", he said that the nuclear strike would cause a global catastrophe and asked the question: "but how would we have such a world if Russia was not there?" [14]. All of this makes much more sense, especially considering that in his annual address to the Russian Federal Assembly on March 1 Putin on March 1 of the current year is not the general demonstration of the most powerful weapon that has not been analogous to the world.

All of this makes much more sense, especially considering that in his annual address to the Russian Federal Assembly on March 1 of this year, Putin did not avoid the general demonstration of the most powerful weapons, in some cases - without analogy in the world [15]. In addition, it is not excluded that the main purpose of this step was not only to demonstrate its strength, but also to prevent possible military adventurism, to warn Western countries, first of all, the United States of America and to prevent them from being overly abused by armed forces, maybe even to invite them to the negotiating table. And Putin and Trump's meeting in Helsinki on July 16, 2010, where they were talking about two or more hours face to face, can be considered as a confirmation of our viewpoint. The fact of the meeting itself has caused great dissatisfaction in certain political circles in Washington, primarily in the Democratic Party and the Republican leadership, and the confusion in the EU governments (especially those countries that joined the Union late). Furthermore, Trump and Putin agreed at the meetings in the autumn of this year and at the beginning of the next year.

Moreover, we should not forget that Russia, after the restoration of independence in the early 1990s, really started considering Western interests in its policy, since it believed that in exchange it would be received as an equal member of the new system of the seriously modified international relations. There was a need for some time before Moscow realized that its expectations were absolutely groundless - in fact, Russia was needed there (and still is needed today, tomorrow - we will see) as a secondary partner, for the West - the country with the richest raw material, that is, a secondary country new time and type and not a powerful "Derzhava", which

participates in the world's most important processes, as Moscow wanted. Thus, the West was looking at Russia not as equal or as a participant of the collapse of the world socialist system and the USSR, as Yeltsin's Moscow thought, but as a country defeated in the Cold War and the appropriate steps were taken against him.

When the new leadership of Russia realized it, however late, and began to find a new, profitable foreign policy course, there were several elements that were quite similar to its analogy of the most difficult periods of the cold war of the era of the bipolar world in the relations between the West and Russia. From this point of view, it is not a baseless speculation to think that at that moment, the West, primarily the United States, seem to have missed a very good opportunity "to help Moscow to build a truly democratic state", and we can agree slightly with the former head of the economic advisors group of the country's then-president Boris Yeltsin, American Jeffrey Sachs, that for Washington Russia was "on the other side" at that time [16].

In general, during the analysis of the ongoing foreign policy of Moscow and its usefulness, we should also mention a number of circumstances, which, due to impartiality, make this policy less acceptable for a number of countries, including neighbors and eventually resulting in weakening Russian positions in the modern world not contributing to achieving its long-term goals: first, there is a solid foundation to think that Russia's current leadership is still unable to adapt to the reality that it is no more a legalized "Older Brother" for former Soviet republics and they should implement a less rigid, non-violent, far more equitable, diverse and flexible policy towards them; Today, Moscow is still inadequate to find a more equitable, more profitable and mutually acceptable approach to their attitude. To prove this, it is enough mention its relationship with Georgia. Thus, in 2006, Moscow practically deported the citizens of Georgia from Russia without any new, serious grounds, even, as the press reported, sometimes in unacceptable forms, and in response to this it received not the fall of Saakashvili's authority in Georgia, but the Georgian's resentments with the Russian authorities. In principle, this attitude has not changed since the 2008 Russian-Georgian military conflict. This topic is not really a subject of our article review, so we only note one thing here - a bigger and more powerful state is more likely to be concerned with the small state; Second, sometimes there is an impression that Russia is more concerned not with the facts of violation of international law norms and inequality in international relations, but with its restriction in this respect, which it tried to overcome during Crimea's famous events.

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At the end of the article we will mention the following:

In general, it is suggested that in the process of achieving its geopolitical aims, Moscow should be guided by a more accurate prediction of the future and maximize the interests of the other (first of all, neighboring) countries, otherwise it may lose some of its still remained allies and still find itself in the "Sanitary cordon" like circumstance of 1920-30s (moreover, its neighbors today have a wider choice of foreign policy orientation (the USA, China)), at the same time, it may dramatically weaken its positions and the overall impact in international relations.

At the same time, we suggest another very important and considerable circumstance: while analyzing the perspectives of Russia's foreign policy in the current and coming decade, we cannot forget that they are very dependent on the relations of the three most important centers in the world - the United States, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. In the fight of today's world for a "decent place under the sun" the "third extra" will be defeated and we think that, in some cases, this circumstance will decisively define the contents and shape of foreign policy movements of Washington, Beijing and Moscow.

We also note the following: it is doubtful that the strongest countries of the world will be able to take the interests of other states seriously (except for a very few exceptions - Israel...), and these countries should be ready for that.

### Conclusion

Following the conclusion:

The authors of the article do not intend to participate in the polemic about the topic, they have just fixed their vision of the current situation, and they are sure that this view certainly does not reflect the existing reality with 100% of accuracy.

In addition, they believe that the relations among the three main centers of the world today: the United States, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation certainly have a substantial impact on the global problems facing humanity, such as the obvious deterioration of ecological conditions, serious social-economic inequality between North and South countries, international terrorism, permanent famine of hundreds of millions of people, demographic processes and so on. It is obvious that they cannot be solved by the forces of individual countries, it needs the unity of all the leading countries of the world.

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