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MULTIPOLARITY: AMERICAN THEORY AND RUSSIAN PRACTICE

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Abstract

Part I

The polarity concept, "invented" in the American international relations theory is by no means a clear well-defined theory. There are several competing schools of thought that do not agree with one another upon the issue of polarity and its relevance for the present day international system. Even the realist school that traditionally attaches greatest importance to the polarity problem does not speak with one voice. Realists do not agree with the neorealist re-interpretation of polarity instead. And some neorealists split the discussion further by not agreeing with the waltzian neorealism. This theoretical background is not a detailed analysis; it is rather a starting point for the discussion about the Russian use of the concept.

Part II

In spite of the complexity and vagueness of the polarity concept in the Western IR theory, it was warmly accepted by Russian policy makers in the second half of the 1990s. The Russian foreign policy elite, perplexed by the fast changing environment after the end of the cold war, desperately needed some new unifying theme. Kozyrev and his pro-Western approach was too controversial so as to be acceptable for all the main streams of Russian political life and so, the multipolarity doctrine, created by Kozyrev's successor Primakov, offered an alternative, thankfully embraced by most of the political spectrum. The doctrine uses the realist concept shown above but it, at the same time, it claims that it fights against power politics.

Its theoretical vagueness demonstrated above and its many risks did not prevent the doctrine from a tremendous success in Russia. It aimed at three objectives: building a consensus on foreign policy, counterbalancing the overwhelming American power, and promoting bilateral relations with those countries, which were dissatisfied with the American leadership. The doctrine has been only partly successful and though being formally still valid its heyday is already gone.

A more balanced, but still pragmatic approach under Putin is of more use for Russia, giving her an opportunity to approach the West while retaining good relations with the East. One of the main features of the Primakov doctrine – its strong anti-Americanism must be, nevertheless, removed. Today, even if not knowing exactly whether the current rapprochement between Russia and the West is merely tactical or of real strategic importance, we can declare the Primakov doctrine in its original form dead.

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Part I

Polarity – a controversial issue

The first part of my paper tackles the issue of polarity from the theoretical point of view. I try to demonstrate that the polarity concept is so vague and complex that no consensus among students of international politics is possible today. Moreover, in the second part, I contend that the use of polarity concept in the Russian foreign policy does not follow any clear line although it borrows much from classical realism and it is rather an eclecticist mixture of different theoretical perspectives. I am going to mention all relevant western theoretical approaches the Russian multipolarity doctrine uses – be it in its practical form or in official declarations.

The concept of polarity is not new in international relations. Implicitly, it has been part of political thinking throughout the history of mankind. The ancient historical records like that about the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides[1] or the struggle for hegemony between Rome and Carthago are some examples of thinking in terms of bipolar great power rivalry. In addition, we would find enough evidence for multipolar periods in premodern times, too.[2] In modern times, Europe has witnessed several times of multipolarity, the most famous of which was probably the nineteenth century's Concert of Europe created after the defeat of Napoleon.

But it had not been until the second half of the twentieth century when the concept of polarity won its fundamental theoretical features. The first who paid a great deal of his attention to polarity was Hans Morgenthau. He did not, however, elaborate the notion of polarity in its many different variants; he rather studied the international system at the beginning of the cold war and realized that bipolarity was one of its main features.

Morgenthau by no means shared his view of bipolarity with his neorealist successors. For him, bipolarity offered the world a possibility of stability but at the same time it encompassed a terrible menace of total destruction.

"The changed structure of the balance of power has made the hostile opposition of two gigantic blocs possible, but it has not made it inevitable. Quite the contrary, the new balance of power is a mechanism which contains in itself the potentialities for unheard-of good as well as for unprecedented evil. Which of these potentialities will be realized depends not upon the mechanics of the balance of power, but upon moral and material forces which use that mechanism for the realization of their ends." (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 289)

The most prominent neorealist author, Kenneth N. Waltz, elevated the concept of polarity to the systemic level. According to Waltz, structures are defined, first, by the ordering

[1] As an illuminating example could serve this part of The History of the Peloponnesian War: "At the end of the one (section of a former coalition – P.K.) stood Athens, at the head of the other Lacedaemon, one the first naval, the other the first military power in Hellas. For a short time the league held together, till the Lacedaemonians and Athenians quarreled and made war upon each other with their allies, a duel into which all the Hellenes sooner or later were drawn, though some might at first remain neutral." (Thucydides, Book 1, Chapter 1, http://classics.mit.edu/Thucydides/pelopwar.html)

[2] Kegley and Raymond (1994) provide us with six examples of premodern multipolar systems: Sumerian, Chinese, Indic, Greek, Maya, and Italian.

principle of the respective system, second, by the specification of function of the system units, and third, by the distribution of capabilities across units (cf. Waltz, 1979, pp. 100 – 101). Waltz claims that the international system is always anarchic, its main components – nation states – are like units, and therefore the only changing feature of the international system is the distribution of capabilities, i.e. the system polarity.

So, Waltz and other neorealists believe that the system stability is a function of changes in the polarity of the system. They argue that the war proneness of the system is relatively low in the bipolar system whereas multipolar systems are less stable.

Other well-known students of international relations have disagreed with the neorealist arguments and have believed that multipolarity is more stable. The idea that not bipolarity but multipolarity is characterized by bigger stability is even older than the neorealist concept. Some classical realists stressed the advantages of flexible multipolar systems (cf. Morgenthau, 1948).[3]

But soon the neorealist interpretation started to be challenged from yet another side by critical voices of those scholars who pointed at the extremely vague definitions, on which the neorealist polarity concept was based.

What I consider the most important problem is the problem of power measurement, and as a consequence, counting the poles. You would hardly find any two students of international politics having the same understanding of power and its key elements.

But let us stand clear of the difficulties of the power measurement and let us concentrate on counting the poles instead. Waltz and other prominent neorealists use the economic analogy of oligopolistic markets and believe that "[T]he question (of counting poles – P.K.) is an empirical one, and common sense can answer it." (Waltz, 1979, p. 131)

But exactly this vague definition is the stumbling block of Waltz's polarity concept. Scholars do not agree on the system polarity in almost any historical period. There are distinguished scholars who believe the international system was always either bipolar or multipolar and never unipolar until the end of the cold war (Waltz, Levy, etc.) while others designate several periods of hegemony or world leadership (Wallerstein, Modelski) (Mansfield, 1994). The distinction between bipolar and multipolar periods is even more nebulous.

Unfortunately, scholars are not one in mind as for the current international system either. Is, for instance, India a pole? Can we consider Japan, a military dwarf, a polar power? How many poles are there today? Some neorealists believe the present system is unipolar and its stability is guaranteed (Wohlforth, 1999), some other advocates of neorealism predict an early return of the multipolar world (Layne, 1998). Multipolarity equals instability according to many adherents of neorealist thinking.

One of the most influential expressions of neorealist stance towards multipolarity is Mearsheimer's article Back to the Future (Mearsheimer, 1990). He not only reiterates neorealist skepticism towards stability in Europe, more to that, he also contends that "[T]he most likely scenario in Europe is an eventual American exit coupled with the emergence of Germany as the dominant state. In effect, the region will probably move from its present

[3] Morgenthau explicitly claims that "[I]n consequence, the extreme flexibility of the balance of power resulting from the utter unreliability of alliances made it imperative for all players to be cautious in their moves on the chessboard of international politics and, since risks were hard to calculate, to take as small risks as possible." (Morgenthau, 1948, p. 272)

bipolarity (with the United States and Russia as the poles) to unbalanced multipolarity, which will lead to more intense security competition among the European powers" (Mearsheimer, 2001a)[4]

Waltz himself does not seem to be sure about the polarity of the today's international system either. In the beginning of the 1990s, Waltz believed that the system was through a transition from a bipolar to a multipolar one (Lebow, 1996). Later, he changed his mind and claimed that the international system after the end of the cold war remained bipolar (because militarily there were still, according to Waltz, two superpowers). In the end of the 1990s, Waltz admits that "[U]pon the demise of the Soviet Union, the international system became unipolar." But he adds " [I]n the light of structural theory, unipolarity appears as the least durable of international configurations" (Waltz, 2000, p.6).

So, we can divide the present day realist school in two main streams coping with the polarity issue: The "declinist" group – those who believe that unbalanced power is always feared and that unipolarity is drawing to its end; and those who base their opinions on the belief that the United States will remain the preponderant power for the foreseeable future.

There is, nevertheless, another tradition of theoretical thinking, which attaches at least some importance to the problem of polarity – the liberal tradition. Although neoliberals agree with the neorealist belief in the advent of a multipolar era – they predict the rise of the economic giants and military dwarves Japan and Germany/EU – they do not see eye to eye with them as for the significance of the term "polarity". The liberals accuse the neorealists of structural determinism and they think polarity of a specific system does not say enough about its stability.

Thus, Raymond and Kegley urge "there are different types of multipolar systems, some of which are more war-prone than others" (Raymond and Kegley, 1994, p. V).[5] Another well-known advocate of liberal tradition, Richard Ned Lebow emphasizes his disagreement with neorealists even more sharply (Lebow, 1996).

Declinists' predictions about the early birth of the multipolar world have eroded in recent years, especially because of the unprecedented growth of the American economy and the slower growth, or even stagnation in most polar status candidates, which made genuine multipolarity in the first decade of the 21st century highly improbable.

We can visualize some different views of polarity in the American IR theory by means of a table:

[4] Here, and also in some following quotations I cannot add the page number as there is no possibility of identifying page numbers in case of using internet sources.

[5] Interestingly, John Mearsheimer agrees with the above statement. In an interview for the Foreign Affairs he stated: "Regarding multipolarity, it is not always unstable. If one compares multipolar Europe between 1900 and 1945 with bipolar Europe between 1945 and 1990, it might seem that multipolar systems are especially prone to deadly wars. However, Europe was also multipolar from 1815 to 1853, as well as 1871 to 1914, and there were no wars between the European great powers during those two lengthy periods. Thus, some multipolar systems are more stable than others are. The key determinant of stability in multipolarity is whether or not the system contains a potential hegemon. If one state that has the wherewithal to dominate all of its rivals – like Napoleonic France, Wilhelmine Germany, or Nazi Germany – multipolarity is likely to be especially dangerous. In the absence of a potential hegemon, war among the great powers is still possible, but not nearly as likely." (Mearsheimer, 2001b)

Examples of some influential groupings in IR theory dealing with polarity

school of thought	(neo)realist declinists (e.g. Waltz)	(neo)realist hegemonists (e.g. Wohlforth)	neoliberals (e.g. Lebow, Kegley, etc.)
relevance of system polarity	very important	very important	some relevance
probability of the birth of a multipolar system	very high	not probable in foreseeable future	probable
stability of multipolar systems	unstable	unstable	depends on circumstance
stability of bipolar system	most stable	stable	depends on circumstances
stability of unipolar systems	extremely unstable	most stable (in the present phase)	depends on circumstance
polarity of the present system	unipolar, but shifting inevitably towards multipolarity	unipolar, it will remain so for a long time	unipolar, but the multipolar future is near

It must be also noted that the neorealist interest in polarity is theoretical as well as practical, whereas neoliberals dedicate the polarity concept less attention. These groups have also major impact on the American foreign policy making.

Relevance of polarity for the American foreign policy

However, it must be stressed that the polarity issue does not play a central role in the U.S. foreign policy, which differs sharply from the Russian foreign policy as we will see in a moment. Most of the relevant foreign policy actors in the United States agree on the present world being unipolar (Kagan, 1998; Kupchan, 1998; Layne, 1998; Haass, 1999; Ikenberry, 2001; etc.) with some notable exceptions believing that the world is in the middle of some transitional period between unipolarity and multipolarity (Huntington, 1999; Waltz, 2000).

The current polarity debate concentrates mainly on the question of durability and stability of the American hegemony (Kagan, 1998; Rodman, 2000). In addition, the foreign policy of the Bush administration has been redefined after the September attacks and its practical steps concentrate rather on the fight against terrorism, and problems with rogue states, and, therefore, it has further deflected from the original foreign policy priorities and from the polarity issue.

The relatively small importance of the polarity questions in the United States stands in sharp contrast to the polarity debate in Russia. To sum it up, the main differences cover the following areas:

1. In the United States, much more time and efforts are dedicated to the theoretical analysis of polarity than in Russia.
2. Russian foreign policy deals with the (multi)polarity concept with strong emphasis and uses it as a tool for advancing its relations with other countries.

3. Russian elites speak (or at least spoke in the second half of the last decade) with one voice on the multipolarity issue – it became a sort of unifying theme for different foreign policy groups.

Multipolarity in Russia under Primakov

The polarity concept seems quite different if viewed from Moscow. In the second half of the 1990s, multipolarity became a mantra of Russian diplomats. The concept was understood to be useful in three distinct ways:

1. It built domestic political consensus in Russia.
The multipolarity doctrine exerted vast influence across the Russian political spectrum in the 1990s. Many of those politicians dissatisfied with Kozyrev's approach, because of being too pro-Western for them, welcomed a new unifying theme of the Russian foreign policy. This was a necessary precondition for reaching the following two objectives.

2. It offered an excellent justification for opposing the American hegemony
"Counterbalancing American aspirations for a global monopoly, the concept of multipolarity as the best expression of country's national interests has received strong support in Russia." (Arbatov, 2000) Multipolarity would allow Russia to diversify its technology sources, financial help would be probably more available and the Untied States, if "overextended" – to use a Kennedy's term, would be less able to intervene in the regions where Russian interests are at stake (cf. Cohen, 2001).

3. It created a tool for advancing bilateral relations with other (potential) "poles"
The vagueness of the concept allowed the Russian foreign policy a high degree of flexible interpretation which countries are or could be poles, thus enabling to speak about multipolarity not only with China but also with France, India, Japan, Brazil, or even the ASEAN countries (cf. e.g. Rossija i Braziliya…, Pravda, January 11, 2002).

Although the multipolarity doctrine did not come into existence until Primakov's seizure of effective control of Moscow's foreign policy-making,[6] Russian diplomats considered the post cold war world to be multipolar already in the early 1990s. But that kind of multipolarity was altogether compatible with the American view of that time.[7]

Primakov – though having in mind the same main objective as Kozyrev, namely regaining or confirming the great power status for Russia - declared a totally different foreign policy: opposing the creation of a unipolar world under American dominance.[8]

[6] The trend of weakening of the foreign ministry's power under Kozyrev was reversed in early 1996. Especially after the creation of the presidential Foreign Policy Council under the auspices of Primakov there was no doubt about who decided about the future course of Russian foreign policy. (Goble, 1996)

[7] Kozyrev himself said during a meeting with Secretary of State Warren Christopher: "This meeting made it possible for us to see once again that in the multipolar world that we live now, Russia and the United States, instead of confronting each other, are in a position to realize the partnership relationship and the cooperative relationship that has been already agreed to." (News Conference with Russian ForMin, February 25, 1993)

[8] At Primakov's first press conference after his designation with Foreign Ministry, he pointed out four priorities: territorial integrity of the country; support for centripetal tendencies within the former Soviet Union; stabilization of the international relations regionally, especially within the CIS and the Balkans; non-proliferation of weapons

Primakov's offensive was, according to some political analysts, aimed at gaining a better bargaining position for Russia before the first round of NATO eastern enlargement (cf. Duleba, Hirman, 1999). I do not agree with this rather narrow interpretation and contend that the multipolarity doctrine has been a comprehensive strategy, not a part of the Russian negotiations before the NATO enlargement. The liberal pro-Western doctrine of the past has been replaced by the more active "statist" view of Russia as an active participant of international relations, without whom many problems cannot be effectively solved (cf. Wallander, 1998).

The multipolarity doctrine has filled up the gap in all the three relevant directions mentioned above: it replaced domestic political disagreements with wide consensus; it caught the wave of strengthening anti-American sentiments inside and outside Russia; and finally, it brought Russian foreign policy through the times of ideological confusion after the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Anti-Americanism of the doctrine

I cannot omit to stress the most dominant element of Primakov's doctrine once more – its thinly veiled anti-Americanism. The former Foreign Minister Kozyrev declared in 1999 that "the multipolar world is nothing else than an anti-imperialist front… it is a sort of 'take everyone who is not satisfied with the United States' (Radio Svoboda, Vybory, April 1, 1999, similarly Kosolapov, 2001). Many commentators see in the multipolarity doctrine a clear continuity with of the old Soviet doctrine of counterbalancing the United States wherever possible.

The relatively new foreign policy conception, adopted two years ago (June 28, 2000), is even more explicit: "The tendency toward creating the unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States is becoming more intense." (Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki Rossiyskoy federaciyi, June 28, 2000)

Thus, the efforts at balancing the power of the United States are one of the main forces behind the doctrine. Kenneth Waltz would certainly praise Russia for her demonstration exercise of external balancing against the preponderant power (cf. Waltz, 2000).

In spite of much talk about "the new just and rational world order" and "fight against power and block politics" (see e.g. Tekst Pekinskoy deklaraciyi, July 19, 2001), Russian policy makers, Primakov on the first place, are aware of the other side of the shield and speak about defending the Russian national interests and about the possibility of "free maneuvering and multidirectional diplomacy" provided by multipolarity (cf. Novyy etap vneshney politiki Rossiyi, Businesspress.ru, October 18, 1999).

How successful is the doctrine?

Has the multipolarity doctrine achieved its main objectives? Let us summarize those objectives once more:

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of mass destruction and prevention of destabilizing developments. (Novyy etap vneshney politiki Rossiyi, Businesspress.ru, October 18, 1999) But his behavior did not leave the least doubt as for his firm resolve to counterbalance the United States. Thus, even if the multipolarity doctrine was not explicitly present in the very first days after his appointment, it constituted the underlying theme of his foreign policy anyway.

Policy objectives to be achieved through the multipolarity doctrine

policy objective	current state	chance of success in near future
creating domestic political consensus	reached but now evaporating	low
opposing the American hegemony	not successful	low
strengthening bilateral ties	partly successful	middle

- political consensus

The first objective of Primakov's doctrine of multipolarity – creating a domestic political consensus was the only one out of the three mentioned, which measured up to the expectations. In contrast to his predecessor, Primakov gained almost absolute support at home (Duleba, Hirman, 1999). Today, the unity is beginning to erode. Many theorists doubt the relevance of the doctrine under current circumstances of undiminished American preponderance and some policy practitioners fear further rise of China – the alleged Russian ally in the fight for multipolarity (Holmes, 2001).

- fight against hegemony

The second target – opposing the American hegemony has not lead to the expected outcome at all. One could wonder whether it really has ever been an expected outcome, not just wishful thinking. The disparity between the United States and the other poles has not significantly decreased (cf. Wohlforth, 1999). In the scenario most favourable for Russia, a challenge for American dominance could come in 20 – 30 years. Not surprisingly, Russia would not be the challenger.

What is even more ominous, it is not at all sure that Russia will be one of the poles in the future multipolar world. Even the most zealous proponents of multipolarity express certain doubts as for the Russian polar status[9] (see e.g. Waltz, 2000).[10] Arbatov even argues that Russia – showing the rather optimistic annual growth of 5-6% – will not increase its world GDP share to more than 3% in the year 2015, thus stumbling far behind the other contenders for the multipolar status (Arbatov, 2000).

Russian GDP in comparison to other contenders for polar status (PPP – 2000 est.)

country	USA	Japan	Germany / EU[11]	China	India	Russia
country´s GDP (tril. $)	9.96	3.15	1.94 / 7.84	4.50	2.20	1.12
GDP in % (USA = 100)	100	32	19 / 79	45	22	11

Source: CIA Factbook, 2001

[9] Waltz believes that "the candidates for becoming the next great powers, and thus restoring a balance, are the European Union or Germany leading a coalition, China, Japan, and in a more distant future, Russia." (Waltz, 2000, p. 30).
[10] For a sceptic view of the multipolarity doctrine and of the multipolarity on the whole see Mirskiy, 2000).
[11] Source of the figures on the EU: The EU in the US, http://www.eurunion.org/profile/facts.htm

As for military expenditures, the situation is not that catastrophic but one should note that Russia is ahead of Germany or Japan only due to the relatively high GDP share of military expenditures.

Russian military expenditures in comparison to other great powers

country	USA	Japan	Germany	China	India	Russia
military expenditures (bil. $, 2000, constant 1998 terms)	280.6	37.8	33.0	23.0	12.3	43.9
share of GDP (%, 1999)	3.0	1.0	1.5	2.1	2.4	3.8
% of the US military expenditures	100	13	12	8	4	16

source: SIPRI Yearbook, 2001

- bilateral relations

The third task – to strengthen bilateral relations to other poles, has remained limited to those countries, which could accept the multipolarity doctrine as one of their foreign policy goals. Thus, the multipolarity doctrine can be an excellent vehicle for developing good relations with China, Iran, or India, partly with France or some other states not entirely satisfied with the American lead. It cannot, however, help much in case of Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada, and many other developed countries whose assistance to Russian reforms is needed urgently.

Even the relation to France – a strong proponent of the multipolar world – does not profit much from the doctrine, apart from common political declarations. The French often put emphasis on their own vision of the international system (cf. Rossiya takoy zhe polyus…, Izvestiya, July 3, 2001). The French foreign minister H. Védrine often speaks about the American "hyperpuissance" and French analysts pledge for the establishment of the multipolar world. It is, however, doubtful that the common stance on the polarity problem has affected their mutual relations any deeper.

So, the only relevant success of the doctrine is the relation with China, and, in a way, with some other Asian countries as India or Iran. The most debated is the Russia-China partnership. Their deeper collaboration started with the announcement of the "strategic partnership" as early as 1996 and it was crowned with the Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Co-operation Treaty, signed in July last year. Russia has never omitted to stress its opposition to Taiwan's since and it has been continually rewarded by the Chinese insistence that no country has the right to interfere into Russian domestic affairs (i.e. into the Chechen conflict).

Russia provides China with modern arms, thus making it possible for the PLA to be superior to Russian army in some areas in several years. The Chinese support the Russian presence in the Far Eastern economic cooperation (APEC) and their common giant energy projects can be advantageous for the both parties as well.

The co-operation also helped the two countries to cope more effectively with the rising fundamentalist threat in the Central Asian region, which even gave birth to the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. China, traditionally wary of alliances, has changed its policies and promotes the expanding role of the Organisation (cf. Shanghai… Jane's, July 19, 2001).

The former euphoria about a new anti-American axis (although formally, the partnership was not directed against any third party) has not been of long duration. Today, it is entirely clear that Russia is the junior partner in the relations with China (except for the military – but the gap can close very quickly even in this field). Russian local leaders in the Far East regions do not stop warning against the Chinese migration into the densely populated Russian border areas. Former Russian defence minister Rodionov even declared that "China

remains among the Asian countries posing a military threat to Russia" (Rodionov Calls for Bolstering…, 1997)[12].

On the other side, the Chinese look with suspicion at recent developments as the discussion about the NMD, Putin's approval of the American presence in Central Asia or the Russian participation in the new Russia-NATO Council.

In this way, the third objective has been partly fulfilled – speaking geographically; its eastern direction has been much more successful than the western one. Unfortunately, neither China nor India nor Iran can become genuine allies of Russia (cf. Arbatov, 2000).

From the theoretical point of view, the Primakov doctrine offers an interesting example of (mostly) classical realist thinking. Not in vain is the doctrine called pragmatic or realistic. It is based on national interests, balance of power politics (in spite of this being denounced officially) and its aims resemble strongly the great power concert of the 19th century (Albright, 2000). Even the Russian insistence on the importance of the UN Security Council can be interpreted in the same spirit (cf. Fedorov, 2001).

It is interesting that Russian policy makers have chosen a particular view of polarity (classical realism) without paying attention to alternative models. This is probably caused by the other models' pessimistic view of multipolarity (predicting instability in the multipolar world) or their scepticism about the possibility of changing the present unipolar system. Their diplomatic parlance, however, resembles Wilsonian liberalism from the beginning of the 20th century. In addition, the belief in different degrees of stability of different multipolar systems is rather a feature of present day neoliberal thinking.

It is useful to note that even given more possibilities of flexible manoeuvring in the multipolar world for the great powers – as classical realists and the Russian multipolarity doctrine believe – it does not necessarily bring the same level of stability to all players. Russia, being threatened by the USA and its European allies in the West (as Russia seems to suppose) and, at the same time, being overshadowed by the Chinese power in the East, may find herself in a very explosive situation in the future.[13]

The doctrine has been a useful tool for pragmatic advancing the Russian national interests in the last years. It has helped Russia find a firmer place in the post cold war world. It has also boosted the Russia-China relation, and Russia has regained a part of its former influence in the world, especially in Asia.

The Russian foreign policy swings, however, like a pendulum: From the "romantic" pro-Western Kozyrev style foreign policy to the support of anti-American forces all around the world under Primakov and his successors (cf. Rosenberger, 1998). Now, the time has come to recall Yeltsin's allusion about the Russian eagle looking both to the East and to the West and to balance the strong ties between Russia and China with an improved partnership with the West. Thus, the multipolarity doctrine undergoes a fundamental transformation: Its fight against hegemonism in the world politics is being replaced by a cooperative relation to the West while remaining valid in the relation to China or India. How is this being achieved?

[12] It must be noted, however, that recent opinion polls show a high degree of trust toward China among the Russian population. Two thirds of the population believe China is a friendly country. What is even more interesting Russians believe the partnership with China is more important than the relation with to United States (40%). In addition, the degree of trust in regards to China is high even in the Far East where the potential China threat should be felt most intensely – 53 % of the population of that region see China as friendly (Rossiya v poiskach partnerov, Izvestiya, June 7, 2002).

[13] Arbatov believes that the probability of the emergence of a bipolar world with the Untied States and China as poles is higher than that of a unipolar world Russia fights against or than that of a multipolar system Russia supports. (Arbatov, 2000)

Positive developments under Putin

First, under Putin, Russia has taken advantage of the window of opportunity, which opened after the terrorist attacks in September last year.[14] American unilateralism has been – at least for some time – replaced by a more multilateral approach (see e.g. Joint Statement…, November 13, 2001). Russia – because of its military potential, experience with the fight against terrorism, its geographical proximity, and its influence in the Central Asian states – has played a vital role in the American antiterrorist campaign. It is to be seen yet whether the result will be mere tactical moves or a real strategic shift. The deepening cooperation between NATO and Russia seem to point in the latter direction.

Secondly, Russia tries to take a more engaged stance towards Europe. This might be of key importance given the possibility of the return of American unilateralism. And moreover, many European capitals accept tacitly the multipolarity concept, hoping that Europe will become one of the decisive power centres. The special relations with France or Germany or Putin's proposals for a pan-European security architecture may serve as examples of this trend. Europe can develop to Russia's best energy customer and its main supplier of desperately needed new technologies (Trenin, 2001).

Thirdly, Putin tries to promote Russia's great power status not only internally (e.g. by means of centralisation or by stimulating higher economic growth) but also by regaining influence in those CIS member states which express interest in closer ties with Moscow themselves (as, for instance, Armenia, Byelorussia, Kazachstan, or Tajikistan) (cf. Nikonov, 2001).

Fourthly, Russia has steadily promoted its ties with China. Many Russian analysts fear, however, China's rise and express their mistrust towards the eastern giant. Some stress the fact that even the new Treaty does not guarantee Russian long-term security in the East. The Russians were particularly annoyed during the treaty negotiations because China refused to mention the finality of borders in an explicit clause (Holmes, 2001).

Russia should also support a more balanced power distribution in the Far East. Its one-sided orientation on its "strategic partnership" with China should be complemented with a stronger Russia-Japan relation, which requires a settlement of their territorial dispute. Some analysts recommend that Russia should welcome the American presence in the Far East region as well (Arbatov, 2001).

Conclusion

The transformation of the multipolarity doctrine seems to be so profound that it may lose one of its main features, its anti-Americanism. In case Russian policy-makers want to interpret the change in realist/pragmatic terms, we can say that it would change the concept into a doctrine of classical alliance making without determining the adversary. Thus it would help Russia balance not only the United States but also China if needed. It is, however, questionable, whether this balance-of-power approach can be applicable in the long term today.

The pendulum of the Russian foreign policy has stopped, at least for some time, in the middle between the two former extreme positions. This position is not – in contrast to both the extremes – loaded with so much ideology. Yes, the new Putin doctrine remains that of multipolarity in which Russia constitutes one of the main poles.[15] But the topic of polarity has lost its prominence in Putin's speeches during the year 2001. Putin is neither pro-American

[14] Putin's approach was more pragmatic than Yeltsin's even before the September attacks. Putin had to wait, however, for a chance for rapprochement of the two countries.

[15] See, for instance, Putin's statements during his visit to Germany, http://www.vor.ru/SMI/Smi_koi.html

nor anti-American. He pragmatically cooperates with the United States in those fields where it is beneficial for his country and where it helps Russia reassert its great power status.

Putin, however, does not fear to further develop its ties with those countries called in the American parlance "rogue states", especially as for the arms sales. He also goes on with the promoting of the Russia-China partnership although the United States is extremely suspicious about it.

Thus Putin's view of multipolarity may formally resemble the Primakov doctrine but it accentuates a different set of policies, being more pragmatic and putting a stronger emphasis on the economic sphere. Putin seems to know that the multipolarity doctrine is a good tactical tool but it is certainly not a strategic one. In one word Primakov doctrine of multipolarity is dead today (Putin's Foreign Policy…, Moscow Times, April 2, 2002). It has been replaced by a more flexible Putin doctrine. This new doctrine does not explicitly reject the efforts at establishing a multipolar world but the heyday of multipolarity in Russia is gone. It is not clear yet whether Russian foreign policy under Putin will abandon the multipolar doctrine entirely. The faster it does so, the better for Russia.

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