

Chapter 1

Russia's Changing Relations with the West: Prospects for a New Hybrid System

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At the end of 2016, both the political and expert communities in Russia appeared to be very pessimistic about the future of the world order in general, and the about the future of the West in particular. Indeed, the year had turned out to be an *annus horribilis* in many ways; numerous doomsday prophets referred to various harbingers of the looming cataclysms. They mentioned the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union and the victory of a non-system candidate in the U.S. presidential election. They highlighted the nearly global rise of right-wing populism and anti-globalism to a level that was unprecedented in recent decades. They talked about the wave of migration that was threatening to consume Europe. They pointed to the impotence of international organizations in the face of multiplying regional conflicts, and they noted a widespread decline in public confidence in practically all institutions of power.¹

These apocalyptic visions were, of course, somewhat self-serving. Notwithstanding all its problems, in 2016 Moscow demonstrated a lot of political, economic and social stability amidst this global turmoil. Inflation was put under control, devaluation of the national currency was stopped and even reversed, Western economic sanctions failed to bring Russia to its knees, and the parliamentary elections in September resulted in a predictable triumphant victory for the Kremlin's United Russia Party. Political and economic risks in the coming year 2017 appeared to be relatively low and manageable. Technocrats in the government and in the presidential administration had reasons to be proud of their performance: the Russian system turned out to be more adaptive and flexible than its in-house and foreign critics had maintained.

¹ As an example, see a Valdai Club Report of February 2017 by Oleg Barabanov, Timofey Bordachev, Fyodor Lukyanov, Andrey Sushentsov, Dmitry Suslov, and Ivan Timofeev "Global revolt and global order: the revolutionary situation in condition of the world and what to do about it," available at <http://valdaiclub.com/files/13306/>.

The notion of stability as the supreme value was back in circulation and used widely in both domestic and international propaganda. Even if Russia's stability looked more and more like the stagnation of the late Soviet period, stagnation still appeared to be a preferable alternative to the West's disorder and commotion. Not surprisingly, the greatest portion of gloomy and even apocalyptic prophesies of Russian pundits had to do with the fate of the European Union. In 2014–2016, the EU found itself in a perfect storm that revealed the frightening fragility and obvious obsolescence of many of its fundamental political, financial, economic, institutional and even spiritual foundations. Russia's problems appeared much less dramatic against the background of the EU seemingly sinking into chaos, and the apparent hopelessness of the "European project."²

Subsequent developments in Europe, however, demonstrated that the European Union had not lost its resilience and its cohesion. In this chapter, I argue that in 2017 Russian foreign policy started a painful process of reassessing its previous assumptions about the EU and its midterm prospects. This reassessment ran parallel to a growing disappointment in the ability of the Trump Administration in the United States to change the negative momentum in the U.S.-Russian relationship or to pursue a consistent foreign policy in general. One can foresee these changes in the Russian approach to the West continuing in 2018 and beyond.

Engagement Can Wait

The expectation (and, for some, the eager anticipation) of the inevitable collapse of the current world order influenced Russia's foreign policy and relevant discussions, particularly in late 2016 and early 2017. Indeed, what sense did it make to invest effort, energy and political capital in difficult negotiations with leaders whose days were numbered anyway? Would it be reasonable to keep following rules of the game that had been accepted way back when if these same rules would be rewritten very soon? Was it worth agreeing to concessions and uncomfortable compromises if a new post-Western world was about to arrive? Would it not be wiser to wait it out and observe from a safe distance the epic demise of the old era, which had formed at the turn of the century?

² Стратегия для России. Российская внешняя политика: конец 2010-х—начало 2020-х годов. Совет по внешней и оборонной политике, Москва, 2016 (http://svop.ru/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/тезисы_23мая_sm.pdf).

Russian foreign policy at that juncture seemed to follow a wait-and-see approach, abstaining from any far-reaching proposals, not to mention potential concessions to Western partners or recondition of Russia's past mistakes. The last visible attempt to set Russia-EU relations into motion was the occasion of EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's visit to Russia for the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on June 16, 2016. President Vladimir Putin handed to his guest a list of specific proposals on restoring Moscow's relations with Brussels. The EU, however, never reacted to the Russian list. Instead, the Kremlin had to live with the five principles of Federica Mogherini, only one of which (selective engagement with Russia on foreign policy issues vital to the EU) could be interpreted as a promise of limited cooperation in the future, but even this principle was deliberately vague and ambiguous.

A similar last-minute pitch failed in relations with the Obama Administration. On September 10th, 2016 in Geneva, after long and exhausting talks, John Kerry and Sergey Lavrov announced a tentative ceasefire deal for Syria. They also stated that this deal was to lead the way to a joint U.S.-Russian air campaign against ISIS and other extremist groups and new negotiations on the country's political future.

This hope—to use Syria as an opportunity to limit the damage in Russian-American relations caused by the Ukrainian crisis—did not last very long. The painfully negotiated Kerry-Lavrov peace plan collapsed just a few weeks after signing. The Russian side accused the United States of failing to exercise the needed pressure on the select groups of the anti-Assad opposition to make them abide by the terms of the ceasefire agreement—a task that was arguably too big for Washington to handle successfully. Russians also complained that the United States had not been able to separate the moderate Syrian opposition from more radical factions gravitating to ISIS and al-Qaeda. Again, it remains unclear whether the United States was in a position to arrange such a separation. However, the main source of the Kremlin's frustrations was the perceived unwillingness of the U.S. military to work in any substantive way with its Russian counterparts. In the fall of 2016 in Moscow, it became popular to argue that the Pentagon had managed to overrule the State Department, and that the hawkish views of Ash Carter had prevailed over the more moderate positions of John Kerry.

It seems that these failures to engage Europe and the United States, as well as the perception that the West was entering a long-term period of disarray and decline, led to a serious reassessment of Russian foreign policy

priorities. Syria serves as an example of this reassessment. After the unsuccessful attempt to create a Russian-U.S. alliance, the Kremlin focused its energy and diplomatic skills on building a coalition of regional players through the Astana de-escalation process. Bringing Turkey and Iran to the negotiating table was an unquestionable diplomatic victory for Vladimir Putin, and the Kremlin worked hard to get major Arab countries interested in this new arrangement. The invitation was also extended to the United States, but U.S. participation was no longer considered critical for the success of Russia's Syrian strategy.

Taking all of Russia's internal problems and restraints into account, in 2016 Moscow appeared to have one undeniable advantage over the West: a more considerable reserve of time. Russia's ailments, extremely serious as they are, are chronic and sometimes even dormant in nature: they have matured over years if not decades. The problems of the West, meanwhile, went from dormant to acute within a single year in 2016, and international experts started talking about the possibility of a fatal outcome. At any rate, the Kremlin had reasons to believe that in any possible confrontation scenario, Moscow would be able to outperform Western capitals, precisely because it had more time on its hands. The nature of the Russian political system, the high level of political mobilization and social consensus reached after the crisis of 2014, the marginalization of the domestic opposition and the relatively stable performance of the Russian economy—all these factors made the Russian leadership confident that it would not encounter major problems during, or following, the presidential elections of 2018.

Finally, the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States raised hopes in Moscow that Russia would be in a position to cut a deal with Washington above the heads of European capitals. Some of the election campaign statements by the new President sounded very encouraging; they apparently reflected a worldview and a set of foreign policy principles not very different from these of President Vladimir Putin. Though some Russian experts on the United States cautioned against too high expectations about possible change in U.S. foreign policy, the mood in Moscow on the eve of 2017 was largely optimistic. Only the pro-Western liberal minority was looking to the future with concerns and fear. This cohort of Russian intellectuals suspected that any further deepening of the crisis in the West would become a significant boost to authoritarian political trends inside Russia; the crisis and the growing impotence of the West could also create temptations for a more adventurist and risk-taking Kremlin foreign policy.

No Revolution This Week

Looking back to the “Trumpomania” of late 2016—early 2017, today many in Russia have turned from enthusiasm to fatalism. The common view in Moscow is that Trump had been overrated, that U.S.-Russian relations did not have a chance, that the Deep State is simply too powerful for any President to turn around, and that the U.S. establishment is genetically Russo-phobic. The logical conclusion is that in 2017, Russia could have done nothing and can do nothing today to change the momentum of the relationship. We now have to sit on our hands waiting for some shifts in U.S. politics. This is not a very optimistic view. However, was it really the case? Could we speculate about an alternative track of the relationship if Moscow had taken a different, more proactive approach, beginning in January 2017?

The inertia of negative trends in Russian-U.S. relations in early 2017 was very powerful and hard to stop. Policies toward Moscow became an important component of U.S. domestic politics and President Trump was significantly constrained in what he could offer his counterpart in the Kremlin. However, in my view, Russian policy made a few tactical mistakes that closed the door to even limited progress in the bilateral relationship during the first few months of the new Administration.

First, the political fallout of the alleged Russia’s interference into the U.S. presidential election of 2016 was grossly underestimated in Moscow. Instead of demonstrating its understanding of American concerns—no matter how grounded and justified these concerns looked from the Russian side—and offering full cooperation in investigating the hackers’ case, the Russian leadership took a very condescending and dismissive position in this matter. “This isn’t for us to get into; these are your domestic political squabbles. Therefore, you deal with them. Nothing to talk about,”³ was how President Putin responded to Megyn Kelly’s question about hackers at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in early June. This dismissive attitude played a significant role in consolidating the anti-Russian consensus in America. Two month later the U.S. Congress almost unanimously approved a new far-reaching sanctions package against Russia.

Second, its attempts to reach out to the United States, the Russian leadership targeted exclusively the new Administration, instead of sending

³ <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54688>.

meaningful signals to the U.S. public at large, including its representatives in the U.S. Congress. For instance, Moscow could have announced the abolition of the notorious Dima Yakovlev Law that banned adoption of Russian orphans by U.S. citizens. It could have demonstrated its good will by reconsidering the list of U.S. undesirable organizations that had been kicked out of Russia during the last years of the Obama Administration. It could have restarted a number of frozen U.S.-Russian exchange programs in education and civil society (the FLEX program being one of the most evident options). Unfortunately, none of these evident steps was made—probably because the Kremlin did not consider U.S. public opinion to be an important factor in shaping the Trump Administration’s foreign policy.

Finally, to the extent we can judge the initial Russian proposals to the new U.S. Administration, which allegedly were submitted to the White House in late March-early April 2017, they were limited primarily to restoring communications in three areas. Moscow offered to resume political dialogue, contacts between top U.S. and Russian military officials and information exchange between intelligence agencies of the two countries. Nothing suggests that these proposals contained any substantive ideas or demonstrated any new flexibility in Kremlin positions on matters like Syria or Ukraine. There was nothing in the proposals that would give the Trump Administration the prospect of an early and spectacular foreign policy success.

In 2017 it became evident that not only had the Trump Administration inherited the U.S.-Russian crisis from its predecessors, this coincided with what was arguably the most profound political crisis in the United States since Watergate. What was more, America had also entered a social crisis that went way beyond the Washington, DC Beltway and had the potential to affect the whole of American society. The hope that Donald Trump could be a strong president capable of restoring the shaken unity of the American people did not pan out, while the polarization of different political and social groups increased throughout most of 2017. The White House became significantly restricted in its ability to conduct a consistent foreign policy, not to mention implement any long-term strategy.

At the same time, the developments of 2017 suggest that the decline of the old era in Europe has been postponed, if not cancelled outright. The populist Eurosceptics failed in the Dutch and French elections, and the German election reaffirmed the continuity of Berlin’s European strategy. Notwithstanding all of Brexit’s negative implications, it actually

resulted in the European idea gaining more popular support within the EU's 27 remaining member states, and it became unlikely that any would follow suit any time soon. The migration crisis was not completely resolved, but in 2017 it no longer appeared as dramatic as it did in 2016 and especially in 2015. The euro did not crash, and no eurozone nations were thrown out.

It seems that Moscow was late to accept the important change of the curve in European developments and to change its tactics, if not strategy, towards Europe. Otherwise, it is hard to understand, for example, why Vladimir Putin chose to greet personally French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen at the Kremlin in March and why the Russian mainstream media were so critical, if not hostile, to Emmanuel Macron literally until the day of the second round of the French presidential elections. To be fair to the Kremlin, it demonstrated a much more prudent approach to the parliamentary elections in Germany in September. On the other hand, one can argue that there was a fundamental difference between the French and German election cycles of 2017: in France, three of four presidential candidate argued for a more accommodative EU policy toward Russia, including possible change to the regime of sanctions; in Germany no mainstream political party contemplated such a change.

The Resilience of the West

It would appear that the United States and Europe followed opposite courses in 2017: while Brussels was beginning to react to its systemic problems, albeit slowly and falteringly, Washington only watched its problems grow. On the other hand, these processes in Europe and North America, which might seem incompatible through the prism of global politics, essentially reflected in different ways the same fundamental meaning of 2017. The Western world as a whole demonstrated more ability to adjust, more resistance to destabilizing factors, and more resilience than anyone could have credited it with in late 2016. It would probably be an overstatement to label 2017 as *annus mirabilis*, but it was definitely not as bad as 2016, and it countered some of the most pessimistic views on the inevitability of Western decline.

It is true that after Trump became president, disputes intensified within NATO as to how the burden of defense expenses should be distributed within the Alliance. However, the May 2017 NATO summit in Brussels did not prove catastrophic, and any attempts to write NATO off appear

to be very much premature. It is also true that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership project is no more, but this has not resulted in heated trade wars between Europe and North America, nor will such conflicts break out in the future. Washington has left the Paris climate accord, but the major part of American business and society continue to observe the letter and spirit of that agreement.

This does not mean that 2017 resolved the postmodernist crisis in international relations: the fundamental problems of the modern global political system did not disappear in 2017, and the system will still have to change one way or another. However, we can now see that postmodernism is characterized by a good share of momentum and will continue to fight against advancing traditionalist forces for years to come. Therefore, current changes will most likely be characterized by a protracted evolution rather than a swift revolution; they will take years and even decades to complete. This process will have its ups and downs, speedups and slow-downs. However, it is unlikely that historians of the future, let alone contemporaries, will be able to pinpoint the moment when global politics transitioned from one qualitative state to the next. Speaking specifically of 2017, one can conclude that this period was dominated by restorative trends rather than by revolutionary ones.

What does this all mean for Russia? First and foremost, in 2017 decision-makers in the Kremlin should have cast away all illusions that Russia's problems with the West would disappear on the back of the radical changes taking place within the West itself. The assumption that Moscow's main task was to wait out this period in global politics, which, although extremely unpleasant for Russia, might appear to be short-lived, turned out to be highly questionable. In 2017, it became apparent that the Kremlin had no guaranteed advantage in short- and mid-term planning over the West. The Russian leadership had to plan for a marathon, not a sprint, and it was by no means a given that Moscow was better equipped to last out this contest than its Western opponents.

The upheavals of the past few years might not have completely cut down the snobbish, overconfident and not entirely perspicacious European bureaucrats and strategists, but they may at least have forced them to come down to earth. For the sake of the future of the European project, Brussels and other European capital cities were actively looking for new EU development paths, discussing possible solutions to key issues of political and economic reforms and plans to reform the key European institu-

tions. Can we say in earnest that in 2017 Russia was discussing the future of the Russian project with the same zealotry, breadth and intensity?

It is of course possible that skeptics will soon mount another attack on the European Union, and that pro-Russian leaders will come to power in one or two European countries. It is also possible that Trump will manage to win a tactical victory over the Deep State, minimizing the practical implementation of new anti-Russian sanctions. A new major armed conflict in the Middle East could distract the West from its confrontation with Russia, or global political instability could lead to a steep oil price hike. However, building a strategy on such premises is akin to planning a family budget in hope of a hefty lottery win. The unpredictability of international developments should not justify the absence of a cohesive strategy, especially when one has to deal with an opponent who is far superior in terms of overall economic, social and military attributes of power.

In addition, it is now becoming clear that Russia will not be able to engage in strategic interaction with the Trump administration while leaving the disintegrating EU by the wayside. So far, the opposite has been true.

It appears that in the foreseeable future, Russia cannot hope for much more than tactical interaction with the United States on a limited set of issues, such as Syria, North Korea, the Arctic and nuclear non-proliferation. If Moscow is particularly lucky, it might expand this list to add strategic stability, the fight against global terrorism and certain other problems. However, cooperation with the Americans on the creation of a new world order is no longer possible. The firmness of the anti-Russian consensus in Washington is indisputable; splitting this consensus will take a very long time, if it happens at all. Very few people in Moscow today believe that the decisions on anti-Russian sanctions made in Washington in 2017 are likely to be reconsidered anytime soon. What is currently happening in U.S.–Russia relations is more than a worsening of the weather; it is a fundamental climatic shift, the coming of a new Ice Age.

The EU, on the other hand, appears to be more promising for Russia. In order to overcome its numerous problems and ailments, the European Union will inevitably have to revise many of its existing mechanisms, procedures and priorities, and even, to an extent, its rules and principles. Russia could assist with the European Union's transformation for its own benefit by supporting a stronger Europe and abstaining from patronizing anti-European parties and movements across the continent. In this case, it could hope to gradually expand cooperation with Europe, on the con-

dition that at least some minimal progress is achieved on Ukraine, which is central to Russia–EU relations.

This does not imply that fundamental disagreements between Moscow and Brussels will cease to exist. The worldview of the current political leadership in the Kremlin is not going to change; an ideological revolution in the European Union is no more likely. In the observable future Russia will not become a part of the European project. Nevertheless, this division does not preclude various forms of cooperation similar to these during the 1970s or 1980s.

Back to the Cold War

Since no revolution took place in global politics in 2017, practical solutions need to be sought in the framework of the existing system of political coordinates; more grandiose plans have to wait. The old model of geopolitical confrontation between East and West, i.e., the Cold War model, should be revisited as an interim solution for the Russia–West adversarial relationship. This model is certainly far from ideal, it is expensive and to a great extent outdated. Nevertheless, notwithstanding all its shortcomings, the Cold War model used to ensure a satisfactory level of stability and predictability, both in Europe and in the world as a whole.

This model included numerous channels of political interaction, contacts among militaries, risk mitigation measures and arms control treaties. Furthermore, the Cold War model was based on mutual respect and even a degree of mutual trust. So why not fall back on this time-tested confrontation management practice, using such mechanisms as the NATO–Russia Council, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, or new ad-hoc formats like the Russia–NATO Crisis Management Group, which has been repeatedly proposed?

At this stage the name of the game in Russia’s relations with the West is not mutual trust, but rather mutual predictability. Since it is very difficult to make predictions about the Trump Administration, major European countries and the European Union at large become more important for Russia than was the case earlier. For example, both Russia and the EU have strategic interests to secure the multilateral agreement of the Iranian nuclear dossier. Likewise, the Russian and the EU positions are close on the North Korean problem.

In some areas, there is actually no need to return to the old model because it is still in place. This goes for Russia's nuclear interaction with the United States, for example. The two remaining pillars of this interaction, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and New START Treaty, while certainly offering some positive aspects, are nevertheless fully compliant with the logic of controlled confrontation and are fully within the Cold War paradigm. Retaining and reinforcing these accords would not require any historic political breakthrough, unilateral concessions, or switching to a fundamentally new format of Moscow's relations with Washington.

The goal to preserve INF and New START is definitely worth fighting for. Nevertheless, even if this hard battle is won, this will not signal the end of the fight to secure and to strengthen strategic arms control in the 21st century. Neither INF nor New START prevents the United States from spending \$1 trillion in the next 30 years on modernizing its nuclear bombs, bombers, missiles and submarines. Russia will also continue its large-scale strategic modernization program, even if the two agreements remain in place.

The crisis of strategic arms control is more complex and fundamental than the uncertain future of the two agreements, as important as they are. In the 21st century, strategic arms control is no longer about arithmetic; it requires applications of higher mathematics. These days, mobility dominates location, precision beats throw-weight; and the line between nuclear and conventional weapons has become almost invisible. The old arms control paradigm has entered into its own perfect storm. While preservation of its Cold War heritage is indispensable, preservation in itself is clearly not sufficient to provide for strategic stability in a completely new global environment.

One can argue that traditional distinctions between strategic, intermediate-range and tactical systems are becoming antiquated. The reality is that the United States and Russia have and will continue to have strikingly different geopolitical and geostrategic positions in the world; their threat perceptions and their respective strategic doctrines will never be identical to each other. If so, the United States and Russia could merge New START and INF into one umbrella agreement that would set overall ceilings for nuclear warheads and launchers on both sides. Within these overall ceilings both Washington and Moscow would be in a position to blend individual cocktails of strategic, intermediate range and tactical systems to their liking. For a better taste, they could even add the missile defense compo-

ment to the mix. The only sub-ceiling that they might need to preserve is the sub-ceiling for deployed warheads, which are of particular concern to the other side. This sub-ceiling can amount to a half or one third of the total number.

This approach will not address all the contemporary challenges to strategic arms control. For example, the time has come move away from a bilateral U.S.-Russian format to a multilateral one, but this approach will not do that. Still, an innovative approach would be a loud and clear signal to third nuclear powers that there is political will in both the White House and in the Kremlin not only to preserve, but also to enhance and to modernize global strategic security.

Skeptics can argue that today is not the best time to experiment with new approaches to strategic arms control. U.S.-Russian relations have hit historical lows, trust between the two countries is non-existent, political opposition to any new deals will be too strong to generate domestic support for any new agreements. These are exactly the arguments used back in the 1950s against a possible U.S.—Soviet collaboration to write a set of rules for the new nuclear world. It took the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962 to start moving away from this perception, and another ten years to sign the first U.S.-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement (SALT 1). Are we ready to wait for another missile crisis—in North Korea or elsewhere? Can we afford another ten years for a new *détente* between Washington and Moscow?

The Second Layer of the Pie

Overhauling and restarting the old Cold War model is a necessary but insufficient factor for the future stabilization of Russia's relations with the West. With all its comparative advantages, this model has at least four key structural limitations. First, the Cold War model is inherently static. It is aimed at preserving the status quo and precludes any evolution. Such a model is extremely difficult to reform; it was no accident that the Cold War ended not in an orderly transformation of the controlled confrontation model, but in a dramatic and chaotic collapse in the late 1980s. Given the dynamics of the international system today, any attempt to codify Russia-West relations for an extended period of time is unlikely to be successful. There are simply too many independent variables that might affect these relations, from rising China to the fourth industrial revolution to global climate change.

Second, the Cold War was primarily fought by two vertically structured politico-military blocs, which split Europe into the Soviet and U.S. spheres of influence. It would be absolutely impossible to divide today's Europe into distinct spheres of influence; the very idea of spheres of influence is considered to be hopelessly antiquated and unacceptable, at least in the Western world. Besides, contemporary Russia is not comparable to the former USSR at the peak of its might; a geopolitical parity between Moscow and the combined West is only possible if Russia creates a political and military alliance with China, but it is highly unlikely that Russia would be the leading partner in such an alliance.

Third, Soviet and U.S. leaders built the Cold War model in order to counter the most dangerous threats of the 20th century. Even though many of these threats still exist, the 21st century has brought up new challenges, including those posed by non-governmental actors. The Cold War model cannot offer much in terms of counteracting the new generation of threats to international security. In many ways, the Cold War model was the last incarnation of the traditional Westphalian world, which is no longer the world in which we live.

Fourth, the Cold War model was relatively effective in a situation when the two confronting systems remained virtually isolated from one another and separated by incompatible ideologies. No such economic, political or humanitarian confrontation between Russia and the West exists anymore, nor could it be reinstated, despite certain attempts being made on both sides. The current media war between Russia and the West looks like a caricature of the ideological struggle between communism and liberal democracy in the middle of the 20th century. Nor can Russia be isolated from the West in an age of unprecedented human mobility, porous borders, global information and communications technologies. Despite all of Russia's efforts aimed at self-reliance, import substitution and higher protectionism, the country's dependence on the outside world is likely to increase, not decrease.

The old model's considerable limitations necessitate the introduction of a new complementary dimension to Russia-West relations. The role of such a dimension could be played out through a system of global, regional and sub-regional regimes that would preserve and expand the common space between Russia and Europe, between Eurasia and the Euro-Atlantic area.

In the initial phase, such regimes would be easier to preserve and develop in less politically sensitive fields, such as education, science and culture. However, it may be possible to apply the regimes model to non-traditional security challenges, including international terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border crime, energy security and even cyber security. The regimes model can also work on the sub-regional level: for example, it has long been applied effectively in the Arctic.

In the current situation, the regimes model could efficiently complement the old Cold War model in Russia's relations with the West. As distinct from the inherently rigid Cold War model, which requires strict codification of agreements reached, the regimes model is flexible, often making it possible to do without burdensome negotiations over technicalities and avoid complex and protracted ratification procedures.

While the Cold War model requires a universally recognized hierarchy of parties in international relations, the regimes model is based on horizontal interactions between the parties involved, which may include not only large and small states, but also non-governmental actors such as regions and municipalities, private companies and civil institutions, international organizations and cross-border movements. This significantly expands the range of potential stakeholders interested in the development of cooperation, creating a critical mass for subsequent breakthroughs.

Skeptics would argue that this approach has already been tried in the relations between Russia and the West, but failed to prevent the current crisis and therefore should be rejected as inefficient. I would make a counterargument: the current crisis would be much deeper and more difficult to manage if the two sides did not have a thick network of social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and other contacts. Despite an ongoing and intense information war, the West still remains a point of orientation to millions and millions of Russians. It is true that Russians have not become completely immune to anti-Western propaganda, but the depth and the sustainability of anti-Western moods in the Russian society can be questioned.

Whereas the Cold War model proceeds from the premise that the parties are prepared for major deals such as the 1975 Helsinki Accords, and is mainly based on a top-down approach, the regimes model works in situations of strategic uncertainty, in the absence of major deals, and is mostly based on a bottom-up approach. Shoots of cooperation sprout up wherever there are even the most minuscule cracks in the asphalt of confrontation.

The question is whether such different models of Russia's relations with the West can possibly be combined within a single hybrid format. That this is possible in principle follows from the peculiarities of contemporary social organization in Russia and the West, which differs radically from how things were organized in the middle of the 20th century. Thanks to the high level of social, professional and cultural fragmentation in contemporary societies, the existence of multiple group and individual identities, and the extremely intricate mechanisms of interaction within vertical, horizontal, formal, informal, basic and situational ties, both models will have their target audiences, proponents, operators and ideologists in Russia and the West.

It is easy to predict that the logic of confrontation will inevitably restrict and distort the logic of cooperation. One way or another, the two mutually complementary models affect each other, because they simply cannot be isolated. However, the art of foreign policy presupposes, among other things, the ability to play chess on several boards simultaneously, or to be more precise, to play chess, poker and even the exotic Asian game Go at the same time, not just the traditional Russian game of *gorodki*. The most important thing is to delimit the spheres of application of the two models and gradually shift the balance between them from the former to the latter.

Looking Beyond the Horizon

Any significant changes in the current pattern of relations between Russia and the West is likely to be a slow, gradual and long process. At this stage, there are not many compelling reasons for the Kremlin to reconsider its fundamental approaches to the West. On the one hand, the current status quo is perceived as not perfect, but generally acceptable. Potential risks associated with maintaining the status quo are regarded as relatively low compared to risks that might emerge from attempts at changing the status quo. The margin of safety of both the Russian political system and its economy is still quite significant. On the other hand, the trend towards a new consolidation of the West is still very fragile and arguably reversible. There are many political, social and economic problems, to which neither the United States, nor the European Union, have found credible solutions.

The status quo-focused foreign policy does not exclude trial balloons, tactical adjustments, incremental concessions, and situational collabora-

tion. All these are important in 2018 and in years to come. However, a more fundamental change in Russian foreign policy is not likely to come as a cumulative effect of incremental adjustments or situational collaboration. Neither will it result from a revelation of a Russian leader, no matter who this leader is likely to be a few years from now. At the end of the day, Russia's foreign policy priorities will be defined by the economic and social development trajectory upon which the nation will embark once it has depleted the potential of the current development model.

Russia can definitely survive without the West generally, and without Europe in particular. It might even prosper without the West if global prices on oil and other commodities go up again and a new golden rain waters the national economy. It does not matter much to whom you sell your commodities—clients in the West or clients in the East, developed or developing nations, mature democracies or authoritarian regimes. With Russia's rent-seeking economy in place, the West is not likely to reemerge as an indispensable partner for Moscow. Moreover, Russia can even stick to a neo-isolationist foreign policy, consistently trying to protect its citizens from the dangers and challenges of the globalizing world.

This foreign policy option will be even more probable if the overall international system evolves in the direction of more nationalism, protectionism, rigid balance of powers, continuous decay of international institutions and international law. If the name of game is survival rather than development, if the top national priority everywhere is security rather than development, then incentives to change anything will remain low.

However, let us suppose that the name of the game is not to maintain the rent-seeking economic model, but to pursue a strategy of encouraging deep structural economic reforms, promoting innovation and entrepreneurship, and unleashing the creative potential of the Russian people. Let us suppose that the modern liberal world order successfully overcomes the ongoing crisis and the international system move away from hard to soft power, from unilateralism to multilateralism, from closeness to openness. In this case connecting to the West, borrowing best Western practices, learning from Western mistakes is going to be a critical precondition for any successful Russian modernization. This has always been the case, ever since Italian architects supervised the erection of the red brick Kremlin walls in Moscow back in 1485.

Given all the uncertainties of future developments in Russia and in the West, it might make sense to define three time horizons for this very com-

plex and uneasy relationship. Each of these has its own logic, priorities, goals, opportunities, and limitations. The first is about de-escalation, which involves a stable cease-fire in Donbass, moderation of inflammatory rhetoric on both sides, a truce in the information war, and resumption of political and military contacts and various levels. The second is about stabilization, including a more general political settlement in Ukraine along the lines of the Minsk Agreements, gradual removal of sanctions and countersanctions, a set of confidence-building measures in Europe, promotion of cooperation in areas of mutual concern (e.g. soft security), unilateral limitations on military deployments, and strengthening European regimes in humanitarian fields. Moving on to the third, long-term horizon, we should review and revise the idea of a Greater Europe that was unsuccessfully tried after the end of the Cold War; our second attempt should be based on lessons learned from the failure of the first attempt.

