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## Dmitry Medvedev's Foreign Policy (II)

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"We will work with any administration that is formed following the elections.

It would, although, undoubtedly be easier to deal with people enjoying an up-to-date outlook, rather than with those who have reflections of the past in their eyes, or simply advocate semi-moronic views. The two countries have a lot of reasons to cooperate, including in the spheres of economy, regional conflicts, and other challenges. We have maintained cooperation with the Americans in all those issues." D.A. Medvedev

Certainly, the relations between Russia and the US will be a priority of the new Russian President's foreign politics agenda. No realistically thinking politician can ignore the US, which is the country with the world's largest economy and also the world's largest borrower, the country with the biggest military budget and with increasingly serious problems in various regions of the world from Iraq to Venezuela.

\*\*\* The current state of the relations between Russia and the US appears paradoxical. On the one hand, there has hardly been another epoch with such ample opportunities for progress in these relations:

1. Unlike the past, at least officially the two countries embrace common values such as democracy, liberty, private property, etc.
2. Being industrialized countries, Russia and the US have comparable potentials in terms of the level of their socioeconomic and technological development.
3. The US and Russia are interested in cooperating in a number of areas - from energy to fighting against international terrorism - which are of key importance from the standpoint of their national security.

On the other hand, there have been serious frictions between Russia and the US during the recent years. The contentious issues include a whole range of military and political aspects from the US plan to deploy missile defense infrastructures in Europe to the views on the political situation in the post-Soviet space.

A number of institutions which could play an important role in the cooperation between Russia and the US, such as the Standing Consultative Commission (disbanded as a result of the US unilateral withdrawal from the Missile Defense Treaty) and the US-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technological Cooperation, were formally abolished in the 2000ies. Strategic arms negotiations did not resume. At the same time, new bilateral mechanisms - the Consultative Group on Strategic Security, the Russian-American Business Dialog, the Russian-US Working Group for Energy Cooperation, the US-Russian Senior Interagency Group for Cooperation on Nuclear Security, and the US-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism - failed to gain enough political influence in Moscow and Washington to stop the drift away from bilateral regimes.

In other words, increasingly serious problems between Russia and the US have resulted in the erosion of the very mechanisms which were supposed to help resolve these very problems.

Finally, we are witnessing the onset of a new ideological confrontation between Russia and the US. Slowly but steadily, Moscow and Washington get drawn into an ideological standoff akin to that of the Cold War era. The sole difference is that in the past it was Russia who espoused the ideology of a global revolution, and at present the same principle is upheld by the US with its policy of a global democratization of political regimes in accord with the American standards.

The US National Security Strategy reads:

"It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. In the world today, the fundamental character of regimes matters as much as the distribution of power among them. The goal of our statecraft is to help create a world of democratic, well-governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system. This is the best way to provide enduring security for the American people".

The passage is strikingly similar to what we used to read in the foreign politics sections of the addresses of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to the Party's congresses. In the USSR, it was the official ideology that fighting for peace was the same as fighting for socialism (which practically meant the Soviet global dominance).

There should be no illusion that after the 2008 elections the new US Administration will be more pragmatically-minded and that it will abandon "the global democratic revolution" and start steering a realistic foreign-politics course. All the potential contenders in the US presidential race are determined to strengthen the US leadership in the world. The only difference is that H. Clinton and B. Obama emphasize the role of dialog and diplomacy, whereas J. McCain favors a tougher approach to the opponents of the US hegemony such as China and Russia. Neither the need for the US global leadership nor its possibility is questioned by any of the potential presidential candidates in the US.

This view is very popular in the US. According to V. Krashennnikova, a Russian scholar, the US imperial expansionism is rooted in the American feeling of being exceptional, in the universalism of values and the ruthless manner of practicing them, in the messianic inclinations, in the "moralism" in foreign politics, and in the Manichean vision of the world combined with a pursuit of material interests.

Currently, a curious process is underway: following the demise of the USSR Russia has turned into a CONSERVATIVE country espousing stability and respect for the international law, whereas the US has evolved into what can be described in the language of the Soviet propaganda as "the main revolutionary force of our times". This is the reason why the relations between Russia and the US have recently reverted to the state of an ideological conflict which seemed to be a matter of the past after the end of the Cold War.

The new Russian leadership has to deal with three interrelated tasks in the relations with the US:

1. Countering firmly the US claim for global hegemony which contradicts such basic norms of the international law as the equality of sovereign countries and their territorial integrity, the elimination of force or threats to use force from the international politics, etc. Regardless of anybody's objections, there is no room for compromise in the ideological struggle, and once it has started (actually it has been going on quite actively and for quite some time), it is impossible to exit the game. At the same time, the new Russian bourgeoisie is not interested in any ideological confrontation

with the US. Its choice is the pragmatic cooperation in the spheres of common interest.

2. Formulating a new US-Russian agenda adequate to the realia of the XXI century. This agenda should encompass both the traditional military-political issues and the ones engendered by new challenges ranging from the energy security to the development of the technologies for the future. At the moment, the new Russian leadership has some time to formulate its policy in the relations between Russia and the US before the same is done by the future US Administration.

3. Restoring the manageability of the relations between Russia and the US by re-enacting the abolished bilateral mechanisms and creating new ones. The relations between countries as important as the US and Russia should not be based entirely on personal relations between their Presidents, no matter how warm the personal relations may be.

The rotation in the Kremlin and in the White House opens opportunities for a fresh start in the relations between Russia and the US. It is not in the interests of Moscow to waste them.

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