

Russia and the West Today: European Experts View

Jan Campbell^{1a}, Gustav Gustenau²

¹Institute of Left-Wing Parties, Prague, Czech Republic

²Independent Expert Analyst, Austria

^ajancam@jancam.eu, 211146@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8230-2824>

Abstract. The article provides assessments of the current state of relations between Russia and the West by European experts. Complex issues such as the Northern Military District in Ukraine, the situation in the South Caucasus, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and their consequences for European countries and the global world order are analyzed. The authors talk about the need to prevent outbreaks of a third world war, to overcome bipolar ideological confrontation, and about the values of the future world order. Justice and morality must become the basis of peace, which will lead to the restoration of trust between peoples and states. The need for dialogue with Russia and the inadmissibility of isolating individual countries from participation in international dialogues are argued. The authors are supporters of the principles of a multipolar world, freedom, justice, information objectivity, respect for other cultures and religions, and speak of the inadmissibility of discrimination on national, racial or religious grounds. The article was prepared based on the materials of the international symposium “United Kingdom – EU – Russia – Greater Middle East: Challenges and Prospects”, held in Bratislava (February 27–28, 2024).

Keywords: world order, international conflicts, West, Russia, SVO, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, South Caucasus, Western experts

For citation: Campbell J., Gustenau G. Russia and the West Today: European Experts View. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2024, 2(12): 20-38, doi.org/10.53658/RW2024-4-2 (12)-20-38

Introduction

The events of recent years demonstrate the crisis of the global world order, the deepening polarization of the modern world. The reasons for the polarization are the fundamental differences of political elites in their understanding of the rules and values of the future world order. International law is being replaced by the law of individual nationalities or situational rules of the game with illegitimate arbitrators. Against this

background, two world poles have formed - the West and the World Majority (countries of Asia, Eurasia, Africa, Latin America, etc., united in the formats of BRICS, SCO, NAM, etc.). An ideological confrontation has developed between these poles.

On February 27-28, 2024, the international symposium “United Kingdom-EU-Russia-Greater Middle East: Challenges and Prospects” was held in Bratislava. The conference presented the positions of the scientific community, cultural and political elites of Europe, Russia, Austria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Great Britain, Germany, Israel, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and others. The central theme around which the speakers’ reports were built was the role and significance of Russia in the modern world order. The participants focused on Russian-European relations and noted the need for dialogue with Russia. Slovakia expressed its readiness to become a platform for such negotiations. The idea was supported by the majority of the participants, since almost all other platforms had discredited themselves, ceased to be neutral and lost trust. The symposium participants spoke about the need to return rational approaches and values, dialogue and cooperation to politics for the sake of peace and well-being of millions of people. In this article, we publish reviews of the most interesting and scientific speeches of the conference participants.

Materials and Methods

The article is based on the reports of the participants of the international symposium “The United Kingdom-EU-Russia-Greater Middle East: Challenges and Prospects”, opinions expressed in the corridors of the symposium, as well as the materials of the symposium resolution. The reports and research of the symposium participants were based on the methods of statistical analysis, induction and deduction, comparative analysis, case study, political analysis, etc. In preparing the article, we used the methods of analysis, synthesis, generalization, comparative analysis.

Results

A look at contemporary international processes (J. Campbell)

First, I would like to remind everyone that on August 15, 1918, the US State Department officially announced the severance of diplomatic relations with Russia. After that, the Americans landed in Vladivostok and began the invasion of Russia. During their 19-month stay in Russia, the Americans lost 189 soldiers in the Far East. The last American soldier left Siberia on April 1, 1920. The invasion of the Far East was preceded by a conference in December 1917, which was attended by the United States, Great Britain, France and their allies. At the conference, it was decided to define spheres of interest in the territory of the

former Russian Empire. The Western partners planned to divide the largest state among themselves, and representatives of the “White movement” were to help them in this. One of America’s priorities in the occupation of the Far East and Eastern Siberia was to establish control over the Trans-Siberian Railway, the transportation of goods and natural resources.

The American leadership considered it necessary to create a number of independent states on the basis of the Russian Empire. Russia was to be divided into Ukraine, Great Russia (the European part) and Siberia. In August 1918, martial law was declared in the occupied territories and military ships were created. American companies received permission from the Kolchak government to trade in exchange for loans from Citibank and Guaranty Trust and exported goods worth over 950 million rubles in gold during the occupation.

The US Ambassador to Russia, David Francis, insisted on the occupation of the Far East: “I insist on the necessity of taking Vladivostok under our control and turning over Murmansk and Arkhangelsk to Great Britain and France.” Senator Poindexter, in his call for intervention, stated bluntly: “Russia has become a geographical term and will never be anything else. The strength of its unity, organization, and capacity for renewal has vanished forever. The nation no longer exists.” The occupiers wanted to divide the Russian bear, although it was still alive. The bear is alive today. I mention the invasion of the Far East because the powers of 1918 - the US, Great Britain, and France - are now pursuing the same goal as in 1918, simply by putting on a “modern coat” sold under the guise of NATO and using Russia’s western borders: Ukraine, the Carpathians, and the Caucasus. The example of the US and its allies’ invasion of Russia in 1918 shows that the conflict in Ukraine began long before 2014, let alone 2022. The political leadership of the US and UK is one of the reasons for the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Russia was brought to the brink by the US and UK leadership, beyond which it could no longer step. Ukraine started the war in 2014. Russia tried to stop the war in 2022 and has not yet achieved one of the main goals of the special military operation: denazification - a ban on all neo-Nazi movements. Two important questions need to be answered: when will this goal be achieved and why has it not been achieved? The answers are not simple and not optimistic. The goal is still far from being achieved. Why? All leading Western countries support neo-Nazi ideas.

In a recent interview with American historian and journalist Carlson, President Putin clearly, decisively and in detail told the Western world why there was no Ukraine, there is no Ukraine and there will be no Ukraine. How a person perceives and evaluates such a statement is his problem. But one thing is for sure: Putin should never be ignored, as we have known since Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007.¹

Regardless of the outcome of the special operation and based on life experience, I confidently assert that Zelensky will lose everything. In fact, he has already lost everything, including his private life. Knowledge of the history of the management of processes by invisible British elites, with all my respect for them, does not allow me to draw any other conclusion. The planned position of the Manager, who will be based in Kyiv and have permanent unlimited access to the President of Ukraine and all key documents, speaks for

¹ Speech and the following discussion at the Munich Conference on security policy (2007) President of Russia. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

itself. Meanwhile, in our opinion, Zelensky is ideal for Russia. The longer he stays in power and the more he discredits himself, the better. Such a military “genius” who destroyed the Ukrainian army is beneficial to Russia.

Those in the know can easily imagine, thanks to Putin’s answers and the goals of the special military operation, the fate of the territory that is still called Ukraine today, the fate of the Carpathians, Transcarpathia and Lviv, not to mention the fate of Kharkov, Kyiv and Odessa. I will not speculate on the fate of these cities, but I will allow myself to say a few words about my personal observation of the western Ukrainian regions. If you ask the people of Lviv what they would like most and what country they would like to be citizens of, you will find out that they would prefer to be Austrians and would like to join Austria. Why? This was the period when they lived best. The strategic location of Lviv explains why Lviv itself was founded by Russian princes, and then was part of Austria-Hungary, Poland and the USSR, and why it will become the site of peace negotiations.

Today, as before, the road leads from the Carpathians and Transcarpathia to Russia. To invade Russia from the West means to cross the Carpathians. Whoever holds the Carpathians has a base for invading Russia. At the same time, the Carpathians represent Russia’s line of defense against Western invasion.

Therefore, the fate of Western Ukraine, in the event of achieving the three main goals of the special military operation, will be decided based on military topography and military-strategic feasibility for Russia. The mood of local residents and their preferences will play a certain role in this matter. In the event of peace negotiations, and not negotiations between a winner and a loser in the traditional sense, Ukraine will officially cease to exist as an independent state and a co-founder of the UN. Here it is worth returning to the history of the US and allied invasion of the Far East on August 15, 1918 and learning from it.

An assessment of the situation as of February 2024 shows that the tone and discourse of the West on Ukraine have changed by 180 degrees. If a year ago the Western elites were talking about victory over Russia and the overthrow of Putin, now they fear that Russia will overthrow the West. This, of course, does not mean that victory is very close, because Russia is fighting a united West. This should not be forgotten in the context of the previously mentioned invasion of the US and its allies in the Far East in 1918. Russia’s special military operation and the victory itself will reformat the security system in Europe and the Western Hemisphere. A military victory in Ukraine in itself will not necessarily bring such a result. It will arise as a result of the rearrangement of forces on the world stage.

The military conflict may last for quite a long time, and it is difficult to talk about specific dates. However, the conflict will not end there, since the West believes that Russia’s victory in Ukraine will threaten the very existence of NATO and the West. But the West has realized that Russia cannot be destroyed, it has survived and even become stronger. Therefore, sober minds will begin to look for ways to reformat the Western security system itself. It is obvious that Zelensky’s regime has reached a dead end and will disappear. The West no longer needs anything from Zelensky, since he wants to negotiate in order to keep as many Ukrainian territories for himself as possible. Therefore, the West will continue its aggressive policy.

As for the situation in Armenia. I would like to remind you that I have written a number of open and closed analytical studies and commentaries on issues related to the Caucasus in general and Armenia in particular, since I monitored and worked in Armenia immediately after the December 7, 1988 earthquake in Spitak, and then as a senior manager of projects financed by the World Bank. The assessment of the current situation in the context of the symposium topic is expressed as follows:

1) Armenia seeks to maintain its territorial integrity following Azerbaijan's May 2021, November 2021, and September 2022 offensives, as well as the creeping annexation of Azerbaijan, which has been strengthening its position between military offensives. According to official Armenian sources, Azerbaijan has occupied 150 square kilometers of Armenian territory. This does not include the territories that Armenia ceded under military and political duress in 2021, hoping that Azerbaijan would stop its territorial claims. 2) Azerbaijan demands the creation of an extraterritorial corridor through Armenia's Syunik region to connect with its exclave of Nakhchivan. In my opinion, Azerbaijan makes territorial claims to most of Armenia's territory, including its largest water basin, Lake Sevan, the capital Yerevan, and calls Armenia "Western Azerbaijan"².

3) The EU countries' position on the Azerbaijani-Armenian issue has become clearer. The EU and Armenia have decided to start working on expanding bilateral cooperation. Borrell recently stated: "We discussed options for visa liberalization. I took note of Armenia's strong interest in this and called for reforms to be implemented in order to achieve a process on this issue."³.

4) The European Union Mission to Armenia (EUMA) has temporarily reduced Armenia's concerns about new possible military offensives by Azerbaijan and given Armenia time and space to rebuild its defense capabilities. Does Armenia need this and will it be able to use its renewed defense capabilities in the current situation while EUMA reduces Armenia's security dependence on Russia and the CSTO?

Russian troops in Armenia have not prevented Azerbaijan's military offensive against Armenia in 2021-2022. Conservative Armenian experts have tried to explain this situation by Russia's war in Ukraine, as well as by the actions of the Armenian authorities, which "outraged" Russia. Some experts even suggest that Russia sanctioned Azerbaijan's military offensive against Armenia⁴, in order to pursue its geopolitical interests or punish Armenia for trying to reduce its dependence on Russia⁵.

As for liberal circles in Russia, they are convinced that it is in the common interests

² The concept of "Western Azerbaijan" is a concept to justify a new war against Armenia, says Pashinyan | Armenpress armenian news agency. URL: <https://armenpress.am/eng/news/1124887.html>.

³ EU-Armenia Partnership Council, 13 February 2024 – Eas. URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2024/02/13>.

⁴ – The Insider (2024) Russia pushes Azerbaijan to attack Armenia, but Aliyev fears full-scale war due to western sanctions threat, experts say, The Insider. URL: <https://theins.ru/en/news/269956>.

⁵ Ռուսաստանն Ադրբեյջանի ձեռքով ցանկանում է պատժել հայաստանին իր արևմտամետ քաղաքականության համար ադրբեյջանցի փորձագետ, 'Ազատ Եվրոպա/Ազատություն' ռադիոկայան. URL: <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/32825602.html>.

of Russia and Azerbaijan to force Armenia to cede the extraterritorial corridor controlled by the Russian Federal Security Service⁶.

Not only would this tie Azerbaijan to Turkey, but Russia would also use it to circumvent Western economic sanctions. The question arises: why did the EU – and not the OSCE or the UN – decide to station a mission in Armenia? The answer is simple: a UN and OSCE mission in Armenia would be impossible, since Russia has the right to veto such a mission in the UN Security Council; both Russia and Azerbaijan would oppose such a move in the OSCE. Even in the case of the EU, consensus was not guaranteed; moreover, Armenia has suspended diplomatic relations with Hungary until December 2022.

While the Artsakh War of 2020 had no immediate consequences for the EU, it set a precedent for the use of force by a larger country with higher military capabilities against a smaller country with lower military capabilities to resolve disputes.

The Azerbaijani offensive in September 2022 showed how fragile the region's security is. The shelling reached as far as the resort town of Jermuk in Armenia. War crimes were committed. The creation of the EU mission should be seen as an instrument of competition between Russia and the EU (the EU supports US interests) for influence in the region. Some Armenian experts believe that "now is the right time for the EU to use this situation to strengthen its position and weaken Russia's position in Armenia"⁷.

The deployment of EU monitors in an area where Russia has a military presence must be perceived as risky. Provocations or incidents against the EU cannot be ruled out. Russia's warnings about turning Armenia into another arena of geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the West should not be ignored by the EU and NATO, as they were ignored in 2007 and later.

The problem that EUMA has not addressed is that EUMA cannot contribute to the security and stability of Nagorno-Karabakh due to Azerbaijan's categorical opposition to an international presence there. And cooperation between the EU and Russia in this area is currently unrealistic.

It is therefore not surprising that on 11 December 2023 the EU Foreign Affairs Council agreed to strengthen EUMA's monitoring capacity in the Mission's existing area of operations on the Armenian side, increasing the number of staff from 138 to 209⁸. The mission patrols from six forward operating bases located in the cities of Kapan, Goris, Jermuk, Yeghegnadzor, Martuni and Ijevan. This covers the entire international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani President Aliyev called the EU's intention to deploy the mission "a very unpleasant fact"⁹. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said that the deployment of a new mission

⁶ The Armenian dilemma after Azerbaijan's September attack on Nagorno-Karabakh (2023) Sceeus. URL: <https://sceeus.se/en/publications/the-armenian-dilemma-after-azerbajans-september-attack-on-nagorno-karabakh/>.

⁷ Expert Petrosyan. The EU mission in Armenia operates against Russia and Iran. URL: <https://caliber.az/arm/post/234242>.

⁸ EU mission in Armenia to increase its presence on the ground (no date) EEAS. URL: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/euma/eu-mission-armenia-increase-its-presence-ground_en?s=410283.

⁹ Green, A. (2023) Why is the EU deploying a mission in Armenia and what to expect?, EVN Report. URL: <https://evnreport.com/politics/why-is-the-eu-deploying-a-mission-in-armenia-and-what-to-expect/>.

“can only be counterproductive” since it would not receive approval from the Azerbaijani side ¹⁰. He questioned the civilian nature of the mission, warning that the 2,000-strong Russian peacekeeping mission in Nagorno-Karabakh and Russian border guards serving in Armenia “will react to the conduct of EU monitors taking into account the situation on the territory”¹¹. He also suggested that the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization had prepared a plan for a peacekeeping operation on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, hinting that Armenia preferred an EU mission.

The West is artificially fueling the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Clashes have resumed on the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Two weeks ago, on February 12, Baku reported that as a result of another military provocation by the Armenian Armed Forces, a serviceman of the State Border Service of Azerbaijan was wounded. Immediately, despite the refusal of the Armenian side to admit the fact of the shelling, the Azerbaijanis began an action of retaliation. By 2:00 pm on Tuesday, four people were killed and one was wounded on the Armenian side.

These attacks were a consequence of the situation around the Armenian-Azerbaijani negotiations on concluding a peace treaty. The parties have not yet managed to achieve progress in the negotiation process. It has reached a dead end.

Therefore, the behavior of Pashinyan and his clique can be characterized as a path to Armenia’s suicide. This is confirmed by the intention to remove from the constitution the preamble to the declaration of independence, which contains the idea of reuniting Armenia with Karabakh, as well as Pashinyan’s latest interview with the Daily Telegraph. In the negotiation process, he shifts responsibility to the Azerbaijani side, but does not offer anything new.

And here begins a chain of events that resembles a multi-move game. The first step is forceful pressure. The Azerbaijanis understand perfectly well that neither Armenia nor its leadership are ready for war. In fact, Azerbaijan is exerting forceful pressure, threatening escalation if a peace treaty is not signed on Baku’s terms.

Escalation could entail big problems for Yerevan; Azerbaijan even allowed Yerevan to be captured. This would mean the elimination of Armenian statehood.

The US and the EU should ask themselves a serious question: how will Russia react, since Armenia is still a member of the CSTO, which means that Russia guarantees the security of Armenia’s current borders recognized by Moscow. What will be the consequences for Armenia, Russia and the EU itself?

Pashinyan ignores CSTO meetings, travels to European capitals and even supports Kyiv. Thus, Yerevan found itself in political isolation at a time when it had effectively severed relations with Moscow and began to rely on the support of France. France is actively sending its instructors to Armenia and is trying to take away Russia’s status as a friendly partner country of Armenia. At the same time, the chances of Russia intervening in the conflict are zero: Russia has its own hot spot, and Yerevan takes an anti-Russian position.

10 Там же
11 Там же

In fact, Pashinyan himself needs peace. Why? In the event of a peaceful resolution of the conflict issues with Azerbaijan, the current Armenian authorities will untie their hands for a geopolitical turn to the West and the implementation of the prime minister’s main task, which he has been implementing since coming to power in 2018: to surrender Karabakh, sever relations with Russia and pave the way for a new attack on Russia.

In the event of a new conflict, for example, around the Zangezur corridor, one of the CSTO members will enter into confrontation with an external adversary and will need support, and there will be no need to speculate on the development of events in the Caucasus and the consequences for the EU and Europe.

I will dwell on some other conflicts and the problem of deceiving society. According to the methodological principles of ACLED, events are divided into three categories: political violence, demonstrations and non-violent, politically significant events. I recommend that you familiarize yourself with the analysis of the ongoing hostilities and their potential consequences, offered by the Swiss newspaper NZZ. Part 1 gives a general overview. The second part looks at the ongoing fighting in Myanmar, Congo and Brazil, and examines whether the violence could spill over into Europe.

When considering the significance of small conflicts to the overall geopolitical situation, the first category is the most important – fighting, bombings/violence and violence against civilians.

In 2007, President Putin warned America that the idea of a unipolar world would destroy not only America itself, but also the global order.¹². No one feels safe and no one can hide behind international law as if it were a stone wall. Such a policy is a catalyst for an arms race. And that is exactly what happened.

Today, anyone with healthy eyes or the right glasses can see how America thinks long-term, acts pragmatically and at the same time destroys itself from within. Anyone who listened to or read the full text of Carlson’s recent interview must admit that Putin did not say a word about expecting a war with the West! He kept repeating that there is a possibility of dialogue. Unfortunately, I do not hear anything like that in the West, where we are increasingly warned about the need to prepare for war with Russia, especially after it defeats Ukraine, spends more and more on military equipment and forgets the word peace. Therefore, it is wrong to deceive the general public and especially the younger generation, the influence on which is important for any government in the world.

The Americans say that today the key is the confrontation between autocracies and democracies. But the reality is more complicated. America and its remaining satellites are trying to consolidate a unipolar world. On the other hand, there is a group of sovereign countries that either openly support the creation of a new, more just order (Russia, China, Iran) or tacitly support this idea (the states of the Global South). They know that a new order is being formed.

Today’s world is focused on the problems in Ukraine and Gaza, while other conflicts receive less attention. However, these hidden wars can also threaten geopolitical stability if

12 Speech and the following discussion at the Munich Conference on security policy (2007) President of Russia. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

the major powers use them for their own purposes. This raises a painful moral issue for our elites.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has shown the world the inability of the United States to continue playing the role of hegemon. The United States and its client Israel can no longer dominate the Middle East. They have proven ineffective even militarily. The Houthis, who are not a state, are able to block one of the key transport arteries, and the Americans can do nothing about it.

The conflict has divided the West and non-Western societies from within into those who are pro-Israeli and those who cannot tolerate the killing of civilians. The non-West has the initiative and advocates a normal settlement of the conflict.

Let me turn to the topic of the Munich Security Conference (MSC). Over the past 60 years, the MSC has continued to introduce new formats and topics for discussion. However, its core and official mission has not changed: to provide a platform for debate and to build peace through dialogue. Six decades after its founding by Ewald von Kleist, the MSC will bring together high-level decision-makers and experts from around the world on 16-18 February 2024 to discuss the most pressing issues of international security. The preparations for the 2024 MSC and the course of the conference met the expectations of the organizers, and perhaps most of the invited guests. It is difficult to assess the actual results of the MSC, but based on life experience, I can assume that strengthening the international order on the current rules will lead to further escalation of tensions. A broad coalition to overcome revisionist tendencies and actions around the world will almost certainly fail. Doubts are raised about decisions in the area of global world order, climate change and many other issues. Europe, the EU and the US are not the three musketeers who will solve all the problems, they have chaos in finances, unresolved debt problems, do not have their own sufficient volumes of natural resources and minerals necessary for further technological development, including green policy. Hence the need to change the values of the elites and the political and economic system, which has not been done within the MSC. Thus, there is a high probability that the West will continue its aggressive policy, but with less and less success. Military actions will continue and even intensify. Destabilization of the world will continue, as will the conflict in Ukraine, but I believe that the situation will develop increasingly in favor of Russia, although Russia has always been a complex society.

The US and some other Western powers, fearing that they will lose their global hegemony, have devised a plan to widen the divisions between the countries of the Global South so that these countries will not be able to achieve their common goal. Therefore, including specifically for this symposium, the Western powers are going to exploit the divisions between India and China to create a struggle between the two large Asian neighbors for dominance in the Global South. This plot must be defeated.

Finally, India and China must treat all countries of the world as equals. Larger and richer countries have a responsibility to help poor and less developed countries in their efforts to meet the aspirations of their people for a dignified and peaceful life.

The idea of a new world order is expressed in China's three strategic initiatives: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization

Initiative. China does not view the West as an enemy of the Global South. Instead, it seeks to radically reform the prevailing unjust, undemocratic, and violence-promoting structures of global governance. It is not surprising that the "hypochondriacs" of the MSC and EC supported this proposal

In February 2024, one of the Russian scientists A.V. Korotayev, a representative of the theory of nonlinear social evolution and one of the founders of cliodynamics, stated that we live around a singularity point. In his opinion, the evolution of the planet in the form in which it has been since its formation 4 billion years ago cannot continue in this way.

According to the published mathematical model, at the singularity point the curve goes to infinity, which means that some very old trend(s) should be replaced by a completely new one. However, it is not yet clear which one. So it is logical to expect radical changes in 2024. It should be welcomed if Western countries decide to cooperate with India, China, Russia and other developing countries on the principles of equality and equal responsibility. In fact, the 21st century puts all countries before the need to erase the differences between East and West and South and North and unite all the peoples of the world into one harmonious family. This is indeed the main goal of building a common destiny for humanity.

Ukrainian conflict (G. Gustenau)

An analysis of the public discourse on the war in Ukraine in Western Europe shows that there is no strategic approach and that there are political-ideological debates about it. The positions of those disputing Russia and Ukraine are based on "value-based" normative ideas, while at the same time ignoring the objective geostrategic framework conditions. This has happened because of the growing alienation between Europe and Russia over the past 25 years. Both before and during the armed conflict in Ukraine, the actors in the West have largely failed to act strategically.

What do I mean by the ability or inability to act strategically? I will give a few examples.

The first prerequisite for strategic action must be a generally accepted idea of the future global strategic structure: at the expert level, it is obvious that Western liberal ideas have lost their relevance, but Western politicians and the mainstream media still believe that Western values are the basis of the international order. However, without a realistic vision of the emerging international order, it is impossible to define a sustainable role for Europe in it and, consequently, to build relations between Europe and other powers. This also makes it impossible to define clear strategic goals in relations with Russia and Ukraine. This was the case, for example, at the NATO summit in 2008, when the West supported the prospect of NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia and at the same time prevented it.

In the absence of a realistic strategy towards Russia, the West has ignored Russia's strategic interests and underestimated Russia's willingness to fight for these interests. Following the escalation of the war in Ukraine, the West has formulated unrealistic war aims and therefore also shares responsibility for the continuation of the war. As is now becoming clear, the West has no exit strategy in case Ukraine fails to achieve its war aims. The failure to find an exit strategy is also linked to the fact that the West has no idea how to

shape a Eurasian world order that is consistent with the new global strategic realities. This determines the question of whether it is in Western Europe's interests to enter into a long-term confrontation with Russia.

The failure of Western Europe to recognize that it has isolated itself with its position in the Ukrainian conflict is fatal. In these circumstances, narratives have become increasingly contradictory and positions uncompromising. There seems to be no alternative to continuing the armed conflict.

I advocate an approach that explores alternative options for Western Europe's relations with Russia. The widespread belief that the coming decades will be characterized by confrontational relations with Russia is only one option, which is disadvantageous for both Western Europe and Russia.

Alternative approaches can be developed at two levels:

First, these are proposals for options for ending the Special Military Operation with the aim of a ceasefire. This involves assessing the current military strategies of the parties to the conflict and the possibility of ending hostilities as a basis for further negotiations.

Second, and much more important, this is a study of alternative models for shaping relations between Western Europe, Ukraine and Russia in the coming decades. In other words, planning for the post-war period.

Naturally, there is a connection: the sooner the West, Russia and Ukraine develop common ideas about the world order, the sooner a lasting end to the war will be possible.

Of course, the military conflict can drag on for a long time. Eventually, exhaustion on both sides or the inability of one side to achieve a decisive victory will lead to a ceasefire. At present, this is the most likely development, but the consequences for the Eurasian continent will be devastating.

What would alternative approaches look like? Strategic options for creating a new world order must be developed through the joint efforts of experts from all parties involved. At present, there are no such efforts. The following is fundamentally important: such a project must involve experts from Western Europe, Ukraine, Russia and the United States. This is the only way to develop common ideas and strategies.

But what are strategies, not in the usual sense of the word, but "real" strategies? Strategies provide guidance for actions in the future and/or for shaping the future; they influence the future and achieve sustainable effects only there. Such strategies are not empty actions.

If strategies are based on assumptions about the future, we must first know what the future we want to shape or in which we want to achieve our goals might look like. Future scenarios need to be developed to create a common understanding of possible futures, for example, Eurasia in a global context in 2040.

Future scenarios are formed from conceivable constructs, variables, so-called key factors, because who can say how these so-called key factors will behave in ten years and beyond? Here are some questions for open development in this area:

- What are the results of the war in Ukraine and what will the state of Ukraine look like?

- The state and political orientation of the main players USA, EU, Russia, China: how stable are these players within the country and what is their potential and desire to project power?

- Global strategic constellation of states: what model of world order can we expect? Bipolarity, pentarchy, as Herfried Münkler suggests, multipolarity (consisting of more than five elements), or anarchism? What does pentarchy mean for Eurasia, in particular the relations between Western Europe and Russia? Are they based on cooperation or is it a case of coexistence based on minimal rules in the pursuit or renunciation of economic benefits? Do we expect a permanent confrontational division and, if necessary, war? Are liberal Western ideas about world order relevant? What is the significance of the energy transition, especially in Europe?

After creating the scenarios, it is necessary to analyze how these options may develop. Finally, the risks and opportunities that may arise from the implementation of these scenarios for the various players should be analyzed.

- Do the stakeholders have common interests or is there a future scenario that has more advantages than disadvantages for everyone, and which scenarios should be avoided in any case?

- What steps must be taken together to implement the most attractive scenario, and what efforts must be made to avoid a negative development path?

These steps should be taken now, without waiting for the end of the special military operation, since the situation could become even more difficult if decisions on the development of the conflict are left only to the discretion of the American-Ukrainian headquarters in Wiesbaden.

If this is allowed to happen, the following will happen:

- the parties will persist in their irreconcilable narratives and will continue to act without regard for strategy. There will be long-term hostility between the West and Russia;
- the continuation of the armed conflict or, ultimately, a permanent frozen conflict will become inevitable;
- the costs will increase, especially for Western Europe;
- Ukraine will be destroyed.

The demand for a rapid end to the war is currently unrealistic, but the absence of alternative options for the development of the situation is irresponsible. Therefore, it is proposed to create a group of experts from Western Europe, the USA, Ukraine and Russia with the purpose of jointly assessing scenarios and influencing the stakeholders; finding the desired future and developing scenarios for the future of Eurasia in the context of the emerging new world order.

The feasibility of this proposal lies in the following:

- the framework conditions for solving the problem are, of course, bad, but the need to resolve the issue is very urgent;
- the result will be not only a "product" in the sense of a joint analysis of the future and an assessment of strategic options, it is equally important to establish an exchange of opinions between experts from all stakeholders.

Discussion

An analysis of the opinions presented in this article, an analysis of the opinions of other participants in the symposium and discussions, allows us to make a number of general judgments.

The participants consider it important to adhere to the principles of a multipolar world, freedom, justice, information objectivity, respect for other cultures and faiths, and the inadmissibility of discrimination based on national, racial or religious grounds. During the discussions, it was possible to form a consolidated position on the following issues.

In order to prevent outbreaks of a third world war, it is necessary to overcome the bipolar ideological confrontation of political elites in understanding the values of the future world order. Justice and morality should become the basis of peace, which will lead to the restoration of trust between peoples and states. Conscientious, responsible observance of the principles of international law concerning friendly relations and cooperation between states is necessary. It is unacceptable to replace international law with situational rules of the game with illegitimate arbitrators.

It is unacceptable to exclude individual countries from international dialogues. According to the UN principle, states are obliged, regardless of differences in their political, economic and social systems, to cooperate with each other in various areas of international relations with the aim of maintaining peace and security, promoting international economic stability and progress, the welfare of peoples and international cooperation free from discrimination.

In order to ensure regional security, prevent loss of life, restore dialogue and economic ties, NATO and Western countries must suspend arms supplies to Ukraine, accept Russia's proposals, begin peace talks with Russia's participation, and sign a peace treaty.

The participants of the symposium supported the peoples of Palestine and Nagorno-Karabakh, and appealed to international institutions and governments of countries with the demand to act within the legal framework, stop the genocide of peoples, protect the rights and legitimate interests of citizens and ensure conditions for the voluntary return of the people to their permanent place of residence, and treat Christian shrines with care and responsibility.

Of particular importance was the discussion of the role of the expert community in international processes. It was proposed to conduct an open, honest, non-politicized scientifically based expert assessment of the international situation and the situation in the regions of the world. Consolidation of efforts in international humanitarian cooperation, development of public diplomacy and cultural exchanges with the participation of European, Russian, Middle Eastern and other foreign and international scientific and non-governmental organizations is required. The successful historical experience of Bratislava in organizing peace negotiations and concluding peace agreements was noted and it was proposed to return Bratislava's status as a City of Peace, to create conditions for organizing

multilateral dialogues and international symposia in Bratislava with a peacekeeping mission of experts, scientists, government officials and the public.

Conclusion

During an open discussion, the symposium participants discussed current international relations between European countries, Russia, the Middle East and the South Caucasus, analyzed the causes and course of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, the Ukrainian conflict and their possible consequences for the countries of Europe and the global world order.

The materials of the symposium, published in this article, convincingly demonstrate the diversity of points of view on relations between Russia and the West. All participants expressed concern about the inability of international institutions to resolve confrontations, ensure peace and security. A dialogue is needed based on the principles of a multipolar world, freedom, justice, information objectivity, respect for other cultures and faiths, and the inadmissibility of discrimination on national, racial or religious grounds.

References

1. Atanesyan A.V., Reynolds B.M., Mkrtichyan A.E. (2023). Balancing between Russia and the West: the hard security choice of Armenia. *European Security*, 33(1):1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2023.2258528>. [In English]
2. Christian Reus-Smit, Ayşe Zarakol. Polymorphic justice and the crisis of international order, *International Affairs*, 99 (1), January 2023:1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iia232>. [In English]
3. Casey Justin S., Dolan Lucas, Ideological Topography in World Politics: A Guide to the End of the Unipolar-Homogeneous Moment, *International Studies Quarterly*, 67 (1), March 2023, sqad011/<https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqad011>. [In English]
4. Liu Z., Shu M. The Russia-Ukraine conflict and the changing geopolitical landscape in the Middle East. *China Int Strategy Rev.* 5: 99–112 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-023-00134-5>. [In English]
5. Mansbach R.W., Ferguson Y.H. (2021). The Return of Geopolitics and Declining U.S. Hegemony. In: *Populism and Globalization*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-72033-9_3. [In English]
6. Neset S. et al. (2023) Changing geopolitics of the South Caucasus after the second Karabakh War. prospect for regional cooperation and/or rivalry, CMI. [Available from]: <https://www.cmi.no/publications/8911-changing-geopolitics-of-the-south-caucasus-after-the-second-karabakh-war>. [In English]
7. Russia in the South Caucasus: Losing, adapting, overcoming (2024) Sceus, [Available from]: <https://sceus.se/en/publications/russia-in-the-south-caucasus-losing-adapting-overcoming/>. [In English]
8. Tsygankov A.P., Tsygankov P.A. (2021) Constructing National Values: The Nationally Distinctive Turn in Russian IR Theory and Foreign Policy. *Foreign Policy Analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orab022/>. [In English]

About the authors

Jan CAMPBELL. Analyst at the Institute of Left-Wing Parties Prague and Pharus de Victoria (Lighthouse of Victory). <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8230-2824>. Address: 1531/9, Political prisoners, Prague-New Town, 11000, Czech Republic. jancam@jancam.eu, 211146@mail.ru
Gustav GUSTENAU. Independent Expert Analyst, Austria

Contribution of the authors

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: April 15, 2024 Approved after review: April 20, 2024 Accepted for publication: April 22, 2024 Published: May 15, 2024.

The authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.