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## FOREIGN POLICY CONCEPTS OF RUSSIA

This paper studies main concepts of the foreign policy of Russian Federation as far as implementation of a foreign policy is the most important state function for any country. The author reviews such international law concept as the concept of “continuing state” and its difference from succession. The main focus of the paper is to study the transformation of Russian foreign policy concepts throughout the years and compare key messages in foreign policy concepts under B. Yeltsin’s and V. Putin’s presidencies. In the conclusion the author provides a list of fundamental interests of Russian foreign policy, which are the status of a great state in the international arena; promotion of the multipolar formation of the world; restraint of North Atlantic Alliance; the exclusive right to influence post-soviet space.

**Keywords:** foreign policy, concepts of foreign policy, continuing state, superpower, Russia.

Implementation of a foreign policy is the most important state function for any country, as far as economic and political stability and national security largely depend on its effectiveness. Modern international political processes require more attention with regard to the formation and implementation of fundamental principles of activity. This applies to absolutely every country, regardless their influence and authority. Emergence of various new non-government actors can undoubtedly influence the international political agenda and their unpredictability can be the basis of serious problems in decision-making processes in foreign policy. The effective mechanism of decision-making and its implementation in foreign policy is one of the main preconditions for the implementation of effective foreign policy. Such important mechanism for foreign policy is strategic planning. “Within Strategic Planning are formed prognostic, conceptual documents (concepts, doctrines, strategies), program planning and administrative documents, statutory acts and other supporting (analytical, information, reference) materials”<sup>1</sup>. A foreign policy concept belongs to conceptual documents during the formation of state foreign policy, which reflects the view of the development of the country, its foreign policy aspirations in a certain period of time.

The task of an independent formation of a foreign policy course in consideration of international political and economic situation emerged on the agenda of the sovereign states formed as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Of course, the Russian Federation was no exception. Before referring to the priorities of Russia’s foreign policy and discussing its program part, let’s briefly overview the Status quo of the post-soviet Russia in the prism of international law.

In international law there is a concept of “continuing state”. This status differs from the status of “succession”. While the rights and obligations are transferred from one state to another in case of the succession, for a continuing state, they are fulfilled by the same state but in another name.

The Russian Federation officially declared on December 24, 1991 that it represents the “continuing state” of the USSR in the international arena. Russian President B. Yeltsin personally notified the Secretary General of the UN that Russian Federation fully reserved USSR rights and the obligations in full compliance with the UN Charter, including financial liabilities<sup>2</sup>.

Of course, the issue and the formulation are controversial. In particular: How was it possible that the Russian Federation was the “continuing state” of the USSR? It is true that Russia has taken full responsibility for the rights and obligations of the USSR but Russia was no longer an authority of the USSR in consideration of both territorial and demographic as well as economic and military criteria. Therefore, for me Russia is more a successor of the USSR than the “continuing state”. The country faced to solve not only internal political, economic and social problems but also to maintain the status of an active and influential subject of international relations. For solving this and other important tasks it was necessary to elaborate clear strategies for the development of the country. For 2 years after the collapse of the USSR Russia had

<sup>1</sup> Кортунов, С.В. (2009). *Современная внешняя политика России: стратегия избирательной вовлеченности*. Москва, 161.

<sup>2</sup> Смирнов, А.И. (2013). *Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации: сравнительный анализ*. *Внешняя политика России: теория и практика: учебное пособие*. Москва: Книга и бизнес, 2.

not had any conceptual document that would define its strategy and action in foreign policy. “Absence of the united foreign policy doctrine or strategy gave serious arguments to the opponents of that time. Foreign Minister A. Kozyrev criticized the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs entirely in the absence of the concept”<sup>1</sup>. Criticism was also addressed to the supreme government of the country, as Russia’s positions actually weakened not only in the world but in the post-soviet space. All political forces in the country agreed that the rapid transition from political and economic stagnation regime to the development regime was needed. “The country whose economy approximately equaled to the Danish economy, which was 397 times larger territorially at that time could not have been regarded as the main actor in international relations. But how they could reach the appropriate economic growth and maintain internal political stability, still remained as the subject of dispute”<sup>2</sup>.

On April 23, 1993, the Russian President B. Yeltsin approved the document entitled “General Provisions of the Foreign Policy Concepts of the Russian Federation”. Groups of experts from various departments participated in its development, namely: Security Council, Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, Foreign Intelligence Service and two committees of the Supreme Council – Defense and Security, as well as International Relations Committees. The working group was headed by Y. Skokov – head of the Interagency Foreign Policy Commission of the Security Council<sup>3</sup>. The new document had to determine foreign policy priorities and implement the foreign political tasks that the country faced.

The relationships with CIS and Baltic states, i.e. post soviet republics were marked as a priority. It should be noted here that Baltic states have not been mentioned in either of the later editions. This was the first and the last record. The document especially focused on the military –political cooperation with CIS for the purpose to create an effective joint security system, as well as strengthening the borders of CIS and maintaining the current military bases, also establishing the status of Russia as the only nuclear state in the CIS space. Russia achieved this goal, with the direct support and assistance of the West it became the only nuclear state in the post soviet space. According to the 1992 Lisbon Treaty, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus transferred their nuclear weapon to Russia. For some reason, in that period, the West believed that for the stability of Europe it was better that Russia was the only nuclear successor of the USSR. As the future has shown, this position turned out to be very wrong and is beyond any criticism. Russia’s aggressive actions against Ukraine not long ago give me the reason to say that. Russia violated the sovereignty of Ukraine and also ignored Budapest Memorandum 1994. In 1993 Professor of political sciences, John Mearsheimer wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that “transformation of Ukraine into a non-nuclear state would make Russia more brave, Ukraine more vulnerable and America would be less capable to eradicate possible crisis between them”<sup>4</sup>. As we can see Mearsheimer’s prediction came 100 percent true and who knows what might happen to Kazakhstan and Belarus in the future.

The document also included priorities for deepening the relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, as well as West European countries. A separate section was dedicated to Russian-American relations in the concept. In authors’ point of view, development of mutual cooperation in different fields would be the firm basis in terms of the formation of stable and safe system of international relations. As for the priorities of the Russian foreign policy in the Asia and the Pacific region, it covers the development of balanced and stable relations with all countries, especially with the countries such as the USA, China, Japan and India. China was considered as the most important country in terms of geopolitical and economic situation.

1993 Foreign policy concept of Russia was adopted in the most difficult period for Russia. Hard economic situation and tangled political class made it difficult to adopt the conceptual document focused on the interests of society. “It was an epoch when the past values and ideology had lost actuality and the new one was still in search”<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Адомайт, Х. (2002). Концептуальные направления внешней политики России. *Внешняя политика России от Ельцина к Путину*. Москва, 16.

<sup>2</sup> McFaul, M. (1999). What Are the Foreign Policy Objectives?. *Carnegie Endowment*. <[carnegieendowment.org/1999/05/.../what-are-russian-foreign-policy-objectives-pub-4](http://carnegieendowment.org/1999/05/.../what-are-russian-foreign-policy-objectives-pub-4)>.

<sup>3</sup> Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации: сравнительный анализ. *Сайт МГИМО*. <<https://mgimo.ru/upload/.../64c1af3dde997df9ff3afd0a0c8bdb01.d>>.

<sup>4</sup> The Case for a Nuclear Deterrent. *Foreign Affairs*. <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/.../1993-06-01/case-ukrainian-nuclear-deterre>>.

<sup>5</sup> Шаклеина, Т. (2002). Основные положения внешнеполитической концепции Российской Федерации утверждены Приказом Президента Российской Федерации Б.Н. Ельцин от 23 апреля 1993 г. *Внешняя политика и безопасность современной России. 1991-2002. Т. IV. Документация*. Москва, 21.

Adoption of the document by the Russian authorities was a kind of attempt to be free from the soviet foreign policy narrative. It was a message to the international community that Russia was choosing a democratic way of development. One of the key long-term tasks was to “revive Russia’s democratic and liberal state”. In this case, the term “Renaissance” suggests that Russia is still in transition stage and has not reached the level in the world political arena for which it has ambition<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the substantive flaws, 1993 Concept was the first attempt to conceptualize foreign policy of the country. This document will later become the main basis in the formation of the country’s foreign policy for the next seven years until the new concept is adopted. One more very important fact is worth noting as well: the term “great country” was used three times in the document of 1993.

The next conceptual document was created in Russia in 2000 during V. Putin’s rule. Once Putin became the President, the foreign political strategy of the country was reviewed. Seven years had passed after the adoption of the first document, during this time the world changed, Russia also changed that also reflected on a new concept.

Adoption of this document was preceded by the adoption of a number of important documents, such as: “National Security Concept”, “Fundamentals of Russian Federation Policy in military-maritime operations till 2010”, “Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation”. On June 28, 2000 the President V. Putin approved a new concept of the Russian foreign policy.

The authors of the new foreign political strategy were the Minister of Foreign Affairs I. Ivanov and Secretary of the Security Council S. Ivanov. When commenting on the adopted document, I. Ivanov declared: “The universality of the concept was reflected in the fact that it was totally free from declared moments and focused on the fulfillment of realistic and implementation tasks.

The new document emphasized the strengthening of Russian positions in the international arena, while the previous document described only the necessity and aspiration to achieve that goal. However we have a significant disappointment. In the text we can read the following: “in the concept of 1993, new policy for establishing equal rights and partner relations which is considered as the main priority of the foreign policy failed to be justified with near oversea as well as remote oversea countries”.

Together with CIS which was regarded as the keystone of the foreign policy, it is also important for Russia to take an active part in sub-regional organizations, such as: Shanghai Organization (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Eurasian Economic Union (EurAsEC). Relationship with EU and Asian countries was considered as the priority tendency. Among Asian countries China and India were still considered to be at prospective level. The concept confirmed Russia’s readiness to play an active role in resolving different international conflicts, including in the Near East as well.

As for the relationship with the US, the new edition clearly emphasized the essential difficulties that have emerged in recent times in mutual relations, though at the same time there seemed the readiness of Russia to cooperate for the eradication of current disagreements, since “Russia-US constructive cooperation represents a necessary condition for providing international global strategic stability. Therefore Russia will continue the dialogue at all levels to prevent “pause in relations and hopeless situations in the process of negotiations about different political, economic and military issues.”<sup>2</sup>

Traditionally, activation of the North Atlantic Alliance is annoying in the east. Its expansion, as in the previous concept, was perceived as a threat to Russia’s national security. But this process is of irreversible character, by that period it was several months since Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic had entered NATO.

While the document of 1993 included the objectives before which the country stood such as: “strengthening”, “achievement”, “becoming a full participant”, in the new edition we read that Russia was one of the main players in the world political arena; Russia was an active participant in all those processes and moreover, role of Russia was the most important in the formation of the world’s new agenda. At the same time the government was going to be more actively involved in international relations, remain as an important player and an influential actor both at regional and global level. For maintaining and

<sup>1</sup> Concepts of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation ... *Научные статьи Казахстана*. <<https://articlekz.com>>.

<sup>2</sup> *Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 2008* (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <<http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785>>; *Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации 2000* (Президент Российской Федерации). *businesspravo.ru*. <[http://www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow\\_DocumID\\_16974.html](http://www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow_DocumID_16974.html)>.

strengthening the achieved status, in the concept it is recommended to further strengthen the Russian statehood, consolidate the civil society and rapid transition to higher indicators of economic growth<sup>1</sup>.

This concept was valid throughout the entire period of Putin's first governance (2000 – 2008). In this period Russia managed to achieve internal stability after the past chaotic 90s as well as significantly improve the economic situation due to "petrodollars". Putin became the main energy supplier of Europe, which provided to increase his political influence both within the country and internationally. He often manipulated with this profitable position and used it for achieving various political goals.

Just based on such immense power, he decided to restore the lost positions in the international arena and return the status of "Superpower". In 2000 Concept the term "great country" was used only once.

The concept of 2000 was substituted by the President D. Medvedev in 2008. At that time it was only two months he had been elected at this post, so it should be assumed that the document was developed during the rule of the President Putin. Everyone was interested in one of the most important issues: whether the substitution of the political leader would influence the country's foreign policy course or whether the new president would remain on the commitment of the predecessor's foreign policy course at international level. I would like to note that in the conditions of the new administration, even the authors of the new concept did not put the unchangeability of foreign course under question. As an example, Alexander Kramarenko, Head of the Foreign Policy Planning Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry emphatically confirmed the continuation of the course<sup>2</sup>. It may be said that the Concept of 2008 is based on the previous 2000 Concept because crucial changes did not appear in the views, major foreign priorities and vectors were maintained as much as possible. Though there was still one important nuance in the new edition, particularly: at first it was determined that "Russia will not allow strategic partnership with all member states of the CIS but only with those who are willing to share partnership."<sup>3</sup> While the concept 2000 uniquely emphasized that Russia was willing to establish strategic partnership relations with all member states of the CIS.

If in the Concept of 1993 it was clearly written that Russia should become a full member of the World Community and the edition of 2000 already emphasized that Russia has already become an active participant in international relations and influences the formation of the new world agenda, the Concept of 2008 stated that Russia's state role in international relations strengthened, the state has been actively involved in the formation and implementation of the international agenda, and Russia had a responsibility for the processes which have been taking place in the world. Such formulation evidently refers to "great country" views of the Russian Government. In the current document there was no mention of the term "great country", but not using the term does not mean to refuse it.

Professor T. Shakleina's point of view about this issue is interesting as well. She distinguishes the following parameters required for this category: 1) Maintaining high quality of independence in the implementation of foreign and domestic policies. 2) Providing the implementation of national interests, as well as obtaining substantial influence on the ongoing processes in the world. 3) Meeting traditional parameters required for status of Superpower (territory, population, natural resources, military potential, economic potential, intellectual and cultural potential, scientific and technical potential)<sup>4</sup>. The author considers that Russia meets all these criteria, hence she entitles it Superpower.

Upon becoming the president, Medvedev was soon aware of the need for a new course of structural reforms in the country. For this he developed a "modernization" program, which first of all was intended to improve the economy. He decided to get closer to the West in order to attract investments and get the latest technologies that Russia's economy needed so much. His initiative coincided with the time of Obama's election in the United States who positively took Medvedev's challenge. Finally, the process came to the famous "Reset Policy" when S. Lavrov and Secretary of State of that time, H. Clinton symbolically pressed the "reset button" which opened a new page in Russian-American relations<sup>5</sup>. Medvedev became

<sup>1</sup> Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 2008 (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <<http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/785>>.

<sup>2</sup> Крамаренко, А. (2008). Идеология внешней политики современной России. *Международная жизнь*, 8-9, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 2008. *Официальный сайт компании «КонсультантПлюс»*. <[www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_85021/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_85021/)>.

<sup>4</sup> Шаклеина, Т. (2011). Великие державы и региональные подсистемы. *Международные процессы*, 9, 2 (26).

<sup>5</sup> Russian Foreign Policy under Dmitry Medvedev's Presidency 2008. <[cesran.org/russian-foreign-policy-under-dmitry-medvedevs-presidency-2008-2012.ht](http://cesran.org/russian-foreign-policy-under-dmitry-medvedevs-presidency-2008-2012.ht)>.

significantly active towards Asia as well. He realized that tight political and economic cooperation with China could bring significant benefits, but his attempt failed. Also the relationship with Japan remained tense because of Kuril islands, which prevented deepening partner relations. It should be noted that despite higher hierarchical situation, Medvedev failed to become the main political center of the country, during his entire presidential term he mainly focused on the economic segment which was expected. Even though Putin took over the post of Prime Minister during those years, in the ruling elite and broader society he was referred to as a “national leader”, which undoubtedly emphasized his superiority as well as Medvedev’s formal leadership.

On February 12, 2013 the new (old) President of Russia V. Putin approved the “renewed” concept of foreign policy. A completely legitimate question was raised: “Why “renewed” and not “new”? At the conference held on 23.01.2013 the Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Lavrov gave a comprehensive response to this question where he emphatically noted the following: “The new project aimed to make new changes in the doctrine of our foreign policy, this is not a new concept but a new version of the foreign policy concept”<sup>1</sup>.

Incomplete five years had passed after the adoption of the concept 2008. In this period many things happened and many have changed: Global financial crisis dominated in the world, the five-day war between Russia and Georgia was followed by the occupation of Georgian territories and their recognition by Russia; Russian-American reset policy and its failure; a new treaty between Russia and the United States on the reduction of strategic offensive weapons; the situation became extremely tense over Iran’s nuclear program; radical Islamists became noticeably active in the Near East; geopolitical competition for the Arctic intensified and of course, so called “Arab Spring”, which turned out significantly annoying for the Russian political elite. This and other ongoing processes in the world have laid the basis for the correction of the doctrine of Russian foreign policy.

According to the authors of the new document, the world became much more “unstable” and “unpredictable” than it was in 2008 and in this context Russia was the country of the “historic mission”. In their opinion, “the capabilities of the historic West with regard to the dominance over the world policy and economy are getting reduced”<sup>2</sup>.

According to the concept, the Russian ruling elite perceived the West as an important source of increasing instability in the international system. First of all, they criticized it because of its economic policy and name it as the reason for global, financial and economic crisis. On the other hand, they believe that the methods through which the West (mostly USA) reacted to regional crises (unilateral sanctions, humanitarian interference without the UN mandate) had undermined a number of sovereign states and paved the way for Islamist radicals for further action. And third, they were sure that the West had used the latest political technologies (“soft power”) in order to interfere with the political life of sovereign states and gain the desired political goal by manipulating the public attitudes<sup>3</sup>. Compared to the similar concept of 2008, in terms of political-economic integration, the focus has been made more on the formation and development of Eurasian economic union than on the CIS.

In geopolitical point of view, Russia considered the Eurasian union as the parallel regional center of Europe and Asia/ the Pacific Ocean. In the fourth concept of the foreign policy of the post-Soviet Russia, for the first time there was distinctly mentioned one of the states of the South Caucasus, in particular, Georgia and separated from it, Abkhazia that was occupied by Russia itself and so-called South Ossetia. In Paragraph 51 of the fourth chapter of the document we can read the following: “The unilateral priority of Russian foreign policy still remains to be the development of modern democratic statehood for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, strengthening of their international positions, insurance of sustainable security and socio-economic development”<sup>4</sup>. And the next paragraph showed Russian attitude to Georgia separately:

<sup>1</sup> Лавров, С. (2013). Ключевые принципы внешней политики РФ остаются неизменными. *РИА новости*. <[https://ria.ru/head\\_mid\\_conference\\_23012013](https://ria.ru/head_mid_conference_23012013)>.

<sup>2</sup> Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 2008. *Официальный сайт компании «КонсультантПлюс»*. <[www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_85021/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_85021/)>.

<sup>3</sup> Rodkiewicz, W. The Russian Federation's foreign policy concept. *OSW*. <<https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/.../russian-federations-foreign-policy-concept>>.

<sup>4</sup> Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 2008. *Официальный сайт компании «КонсультантПлюс»*. <[www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_85021/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_85021/)>.

“Russia is interested in normalizing the relationship with Georgia only in the fields where Georgian party is ready for it, considering the political reality developed in Transcaucasia<sup>1</sup>.”

There is no point in the fact that this document with its essence and view is very hard towards Georgia. It does not leave even the slightest chance of normalizing the relations in the nearest future because the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia are undermined, which in turn is the rude violation of international standards, which Russia cynically requires from other countries. We have a very ugly form of using “double standards” in international politics.

According to many experts, the foreign policy concept approved by the President V. Putin on November 30, 2016, both in the country and abroad is the renewed version of the 2013 edition. Despite the fact that the main part of the new text really cites and repeats the text of the previous edition, the difference is felt in its strict tone.

Before discussing the text, I would like to give a very interesting quote of Artem Kureev about the Concept of 2016 which he noted in his newspaper article nine days after the adoption of the document: “Current doctrine is based on the victory of the Democrats’ candidate H. Clinton in the presidential elections in the USA and her more or less predictable position towards Russia. However, the unexpected victory of the Republican candidate D. Trump and his promise regarding the improvement of relations with Russia and uncompromising confrontation with Islamist extremists in the Near East can put the new adopted concept on the agenda for the revision”<sup>2</sup>. The expert’s opinion is undoubtedly interesting but by that moment he is discussing the document only through the prism of Russia-US relations.

There is a clear indication of disagreements and different opinions in the text, which revealed themselves during the relationship between Moscow and the West in recent years. At the same time there was shown the intention of intensive cooperation with the Asian countries, the position towards Ukraine changed, Great Britain, Netherlands and Finland disappeared in the text, but Syria and Armenia emerged for the first time in return.

Let’s start reviewing the concept with the fact that two new tasks were named with regard to foreign policy. First of all, it “consolidation of the position of Russia as one of the most influential centers in the modern world” and on the other hand, “strengthening the position of Russian media and mass communications in global information space. Also, sharing the public opinion of Russia to broader circle of the world community”<sup>3</sup>.

After Georgia, another country of the South Caucasus – Armenia was also mentioned for the first time. Within economic union of Eurasia, Russia discusses the deepening of integration processes with the Republic of Armenia as an important task<sup>4</sup>. This record is irritating and disturbing for the third state of the South Caucasus – Azerbaijan, which is actually in war with Armenia.

Before, if the main priority for Russia was to develop relationship with Ukraine together with Belarus, today it is no longer a priority for it. Now it is only about interest in the existence of “diversity of connections”. At the same time, Russia expresses its readiness to work on the political and diplomatic regulation of internal conflicts of Ukraine<sup>5</sup>.

In a new version of the concept there is a strange surprise, separation of Russia from European civilization. The quote: “Russia as an integral part of European civilization” has disappeared from the 2016 edition but NATO and European Union are accused of attempting a geopolitical expansion. Of course, first of all their expansion policy to the east is meant here. The new Paragraph is also added in which Russia declares support for those countries which are not NATO members. The Kremlin believes that “these countries will make a significant contribution to the security and stability of Europe”<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации 2008. *Официальный сайт компании «КонсультантПлюс»*. < [www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_85021/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_85021/)>.

<sup>2</sup> Kureev, A. (2016). Decoding the changes in Russia's new foreign policy concept. *Russia-direct*. <[www.russia-direct.org/opinion/decoding-changes-russias-new-foreign-policy-concept](http://www.russia-direct.org/opinion/decoding-changes-russias-new-foreign-policy-concept)>.

<sup>3</sup> Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации 2016 (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <[kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451](http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451)>.

<sup>4</sup> Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации 2016 (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <[kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451](http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451)>.

<sup>5</sup> Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации 2016 (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <[kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451](http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451)>.

<sup>6</sup> Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации 2016 (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <[kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451](http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451)>.

No matter how surprising it is, the tone is evidently strict towards the USA. In the opinion of the Concept's authors, "the course taken by the US and its allies on Russia's restraint and political, economic and informational pressure on it, threatens regional and global stability". The concept states clearly that Russia will not tolerate any pressure from the US and adequately respond to any unfriendly action conducted by them. I think that such formulation of the position is much more aggressive for the program document<sup>1</sup>. As noted above, Syria was also mentioned for the first time in the new concept, which was expected based on its active interference with internal affairs of this country and support for the current regime (military). "Russia is initiating to solve conflict in a political way and supports its independence and territorial integrity as a secular, pluralistic and democratic state."<sup>2</sup>

As we can see, the tone of the 2016 Concept is more strict than expected for the program document. What's the reason for this? We can only judge assumptions and make proper conclusions.

Firstly: "factor of NATO"; although NATO factor is traditionally annoying for Moscow and perceived as a threat to its sovereignty, in 2013-2016, i.e. within the period from concept to concept it has not conducted either any important military operations which directly contradict Russia's interests (for example: bombing of Serbia by NATO in 1999) or has not received members in its group during that period. Prior to the adoption of this concept, the last member states that had access to the block were only Croatia and Albania in 2009. Hence, the "NATO factor" is less presumable.

Secondly: "sanctions"; considering the fact that the issue of sanctions is not mentioned in the document at all, thus this can be considered partially a reason.

Thirdly: "European Union"; it is true that the record in which Russia considers itself as "an integral part of European civilization" disappeared in the new concept, but despite this, Russia still continues to see the possibility of enabling visa-free regime with the EU and considers joint coordinated efforts against global terrorism. Hence, this factor can be considered partially possible.

Fourthly: "USA"; in the "National Defense Strategy" adopted by the US Congress in February 2015, Russian policy in Ukraine is considered as an aggression against a sovereign state. There are also rumours about the development of the strategy against the Kremlin propaganda, for example, by raising combat effectiveness of NATO forces and the eastern European countries bordering Russia. In my opinion, in addition to other factors, this document played a crucial role in selecting tonality for the 2016 Concept.

Thus, on the basis of the theoretical research we can distinguish a list of the fundamental interests of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation which was revealed as a result of the study and analysis of its foreign policy concepts:

1) Establishing the status of a great state in the international arena.

Here the matter is simple, Russia will either be a great and powerful Superpower or it won't exist at all. This is its supreme national idea and historical mission. Russia as the conqueror of "Heartland", "third Rome".

2) Promotion of the multipolar formation of the world.

An idea dominates among the largest part of Russian government as well as political circles that the Western world has an attempt to establish such system of international relations where the top Western countries led by the US, will be able to fully monopolize the ongoing processes in the world. It is about the global dominance by the West and unilateral decision of the main issues of international policy, that is, by the use of military and other forceful methods. Accordingly, Russia will in all respects contradict the hegemony of the West and support the formation of a multipolar world order.

3) Restraint of North Atlantic Alliance.

NATO, from the very beginning, has been identified in the concept as a threat to Russia's national security. In Russia they think that after the end of the "Cold War", NATO which was created as a military counterweight to the USSR, was not disbanded but became even stronger and expanded at the expense of new members and is approaching Russian borders more and more. The last point was to deploy anti-missile systems directly near Russian borders. (meaning Eastern European countries)

4) The exclusive right to the influence on post soviet space.

"Exclusive sphere of influence", "Sanitary Cordon", "Historical Russia", this is the set of political formulations that enter the post-Soviet space in the Russian worldview. Russia will never tolerate that other

<sup>1</sup> Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации 2016 (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <[kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451](http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451)>.

<sup>2</sup> Указ об утверждении Концепции внешней политики Российской Федерации 2016 (Президент Российской Федерации). *Kremlin.ru*. <[kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451](http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451)>.

forces poke their nose into this space and nor will it allow the subjects of this space to have a relation with them.

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