



July Brings all the Major Players to Europe

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This July, a surprising number of significant geopolitical events have turned Europe into the meeting ground for virtually all of its key players.

Surely, much public attention was drawn to the (growingly indecent) scandals within the noble family still referred to as the "West". However, the "West's" maneuvers around two of the world's other leading players, i.e. China and Russia, were no less remarkable.

Taken together, these events provide ample material to speculate on the general and even eternal themes of "major global politics".

For example, is it really worthwhile to continue seeing the "West" as one united family? Or are its core members de facto in a state of divorce? A divorce covered up by a marriage contract concluded

long ago in completely different geopolitical conditions and today worth nothing?

Generally speaking, this issue could have been addressed long ago, in the early stages of the integration process launched in post-war Europe. For example, immediately after signing the Treaty of Rome in 1957. However, the dreaded "Soviet Threat" had continued to press against the shores of the Atlantic. With the end of the cold war and the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, only a confirmed "pro-Western" enthusiast could have avoided the emerging question: "So, what's it all for?"

Indeed, why does the US bear huge expenditures to maintain their troops five thousand kilometers away from their own territory on the other side of the Atlantic? The hastily constructed theme of "international terrorism", it seems, is dying out while the no less artificial "Russian Threat" (i.e. the reincarnation of the same "Soviet Threat") starts to sound like a boring *deja vu*.

So why should Americans care about protecting those who not only fail to spend money on their own defense but even implement mutually beneficial projects together with Russia? All this in conditions that have nothing in common with those of the Cold War. For in the past 30 years, a very real and new major source of challenges to US interests has come to light in the face of China.

All of these questions, which "polite Western society" had carefully avoided as a sign of poor manners and bad taste, were all of a sudden blurted out by political newcomer Donald Trump in 2016. Condescendingly looked upon during the election campaign, Trump, in fact, became the president of the "West's" leading country. The latter may have even been unintentional, as his participation in the US presidential race seemed to be driven more by business zeal than anything else.

But the same zeal will now encourage him to fight for a second term. It's still unclear how the discredited US "elite" (or its major part) is going to prevent this. The arguments about "Russian hackers who helped D. Trump in 2016," sound quite pathetic.

At this point, it's appropriate to mention the virus implanted into our political science during the years of "perestroika", the virus which personifies the driving forces and significant events in recent history with various leaders ("Gorbachev's policies", "Yeltsin's course").

Such consequences are fully manifested in the description of the D. Trump phenomenon: We often hear wise talk about "specific Trump's business-driven mentality which explains everything".

But the very idea of binding historical processes to the actions of specific individuals is in direct contradiction not only to the views of monotheistic religions but also those of contemporary social theories.

Generally, setting certain (quasi) resolvers of world problems center stage aims to cover up the threads leading back to the playful fingers of their "behind the scenes" representatives. But that's only part of the problem. Both public actors and private "clubs-cum-masons-cum financial internationalists" represent only the foam on the crest of a historical wave, the main part of which is a set of quite ordinary people.

As to the legitimate question, "Who (or what) generates and drives the wave in question," we'll leave you with the traditional reply, "great is the mystery".

Probably without even realizing it, D. Trump repeats the clumsy words of the "average American", addressed to "dear allies": "In exchange for our specific services, you sell us bottled air in the form of oaths of allegiance. That makes you no different from China, which annually cheats us by almost 400 billion dollars, plus steals our advanced technology to modernize their army and make products which they then sell back to us."

Against the background of such problems of their key ally, the Brussels-London "politicians" have now served D. Trump "the problem of Russian aggression in Ukraine", "the Crimean question",

the "threat to the Baltic States" and to "Europe as a whole", "the Skripal poisoning", as well as the "violation of various rights" (women, children, sexual minorities, dogs) and other nonsense. All this while waiting for the right moment (just in time for the next stage of talks regarding transatlantic relations) to play anti-American games with the main geopolitical opponent of the US, currently represented in Europe by Prime Minister of China Li Keqiang.

In the course of his European tour, Prime Minister Li held yet another 16+1 forum in Sofia (comprised of a group of Central and Eastern European countries plus China), and then met with EU leader, German Chancellor Angela Merkel. As we may recall, only a month earlier, Merkel was in China herself on a working visit.

Naturally, D.Trump is in the mood to start his own games with Russia.

It is important to note that in the set of cards available to each player, special importance is currently given to the card that reflects the quality and scale of the national economy. It cannot be replaced by the "military power" card which has its own specific function denoted in XVII century cannon inscriptions as "the kings' last argument".

This has a direct relationship to the game initiated by D. Trump in respect to Russia. Put more precisely, the US is hardly interested in the game's economic component. The reason is obvious: Russia's current weak position in the global economy.

Setting Moscow against Beijing, on the other hand, seems to be a clear motive. And here, it is necessary to be vigilant. It's not a coincidence that D. Trump mentioned China in his short opening speech during the meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Helsinki. Russia should be willing to go quite far in improving relations with the United States, but not at the cost of coming to the forefront of the US struggle with its main geopolitical opponent.

Let's keep in mind, however, that precisely economic aspects are at the heart of the ongoing process of restructuring the world order. That's why, since the start of his presidency, they have become the focus of D. Trump's activities. Inevitably, this opened up cracks in the "West", which, I'd like to repeat, have deep roots.

In this respect, accusations brought up by the US political "elite" about the "West" splitting up sound like arguments about bad weather. The anti-Trump (and essentially anti-American) US elite standing behind the Korean, European and even Russian policies of the US, might just end up having their own "1993" with the guillotine installed on Congress Square. Especially since (extreme) left-wing politics are rapidly gaining supporters in the United States.

Such "guillotines" appear on the horizon of a particular country when the elitist "foam" completely loses touch with the "wave" on top of which it floats – more often than not, with great comfort.

Such are the unfortunate associations brought up in my mind by events that occurred this July in "major global politics".

Though, who says they're unfortunate? According to certain beliefs, historical events like "1993", "guillotines", and other "troubles" (e.g., world wars) are simply excesses brought about by the generally positive and progressive roll of history. One that no kind of retrograde conservatives could ever stop.