



SOFT SECURITY – BACK TO THE STAGE

Global financial crisis brought back to the stage the issues of soft security. It turned out that even the mightiest and the most stable states cannot feel protected, despite the availability of modern armies, sophisticated weapons, and state-of-the-art police forces. On the contrary, they are the most hurt by turmoil on financial markets, irregular gas supplies, and social unrest – from Greece to the Baltic Sea.

The state of the world economy is totally unpredictable. Various international institutions give the crisis from one to three years to vanish; some optimistic forecasts argue that the situation may improve already in 2009. However, it is clear that this is a systemic problem and the global finance, along with other sectors, will get out of it totally anew, or will not get out of it at all.

It is noteworthy how quickly the leading nations abandoned their free market manifestos and resorted to classical socialist regulation of economy, including tough protectionism. Despite the victorious declarations at the Washington summit in November, most of the *G-20* countries rush to save their own companies, pump enormous government funds in the economy and cut off the jobs for migrants. Another quite leftist way to save the industry would be the increase in defense expenditure – ordinary taxpayers may thus save the monsters (car-building, aircraft building, construction, etc.) benefiting from state contracts.

What will the implications for the global security be? The answer is inevitable – it is time to think more about soft security challenges. Energy, food, water, finance, human resources – all these issues cannot be neglected and cannot be resolved with the help of missile defense systems, nuclear weapons, or a new generation of tanks.

There is also an urgent need for new legal instruments. How can the international community bear the killings in Gaza or in the Democratic Republic of Congo and reconcile with the fact that the decisions of the UN Security Council are fully ignored? And this is just the fresh example of UN impotence. Nonetheless, the nations that were so enthusiastic in condemning unilateralism do not seem to rush to invent the new multilateral mechanisms. Or even to support them! A response to the Russian European security initiative at the OSCE ministerial, or the reaction to the proposal to make the INF Treaty global clearly indicate – latent unilateralism and selfish approach to alleged «national interests» dominate the minds of decisionmakers. And only some real global shock, such as the financial crisis, may eventually change this mentality.

A perfect proof for that is the inability to fight piracy in Somalia. Warships from all over the place are sent to patrol a relatively small zone of the World Ocean. Important international decisions are taken. But pirates continue to seize the vessels. And after all they do it not only in East Africa, but also in the Strait of Malacca and in many other parts of the planet. Does it mean that today there is less commitment to put an end to piracy than in the 19th century when the monarchies were even more selfish in their foreign policy?



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As Dmitry **Evstafiev** puts it in his analysis,

«Now the issue of piracy off the Somali coast is considered by the UN Security Council, as if that body did not have any more pressing matters to turn its attention to. Although it does. Take, for example, the fact that states that once were civilized are now introducing torture to their arsenal of standard and legitimate means of inquiry. Or the fact that a conference to review the implementation of the NPT has been set for 2010, however so far not even the basic necessary steps have been taken, let alone any real research and thinking have been made.»

Hence, it is a general problem that requires global solution – from restoring order in the failed state of Somalia to enhancing cooperation in fighting organized crime networks that ensure the sales of seized goods or render money-laundering services to legalize the ransoms paid to pirates.

Such mobilization becomes even more topical, as many *rogues* may try to fish in troubled waters and benefit from the collapse of the world order, or let say the ruins of the world order which still remain in place after the end of the Cold War. Terrorist attacks in India, new proclamations of Osama bin Laden, impunity of Talibs and aforementioned pirates – who else is going to pop up on the horizon?

«When the global financial crisis starts to abate, the old strategic and geopolitical problems will come to the fore once again, undiminished and possibly even more severe than ever. That is why the current situation is being made use of by the Iranian leaders with their nuclear arms aspirations, by the numerous Marxist radicals and leaders of Islamic terrorist groups, by pompous Latin American caudillos and other political buffoons as well as their sympathizers among Russian politicians, sloganeering about Russia rising from its knees. There are all trying to seize the opportunity and boost their standing both domestically and internationally, while the attention of the world leaders is fixed on the financial crisis,» emphasizes Yury **Fedorov**.

Therefore, we devote this issue of the *Security Index* journal mainly to various soft security challenges trying to predict the potential vectors of global and regional confrontation.

One of the key sources of tensions in the next two decades or more will be water. Russia with its immense fresh water resources may become a lucrative target in a new spin of confrontation. As Sergey **Zhiltsov** and Igor **Zonn** put it in their article,

«Today water conflicts are becoming an integral part of the global geopolitical system since they are about control over an essential resource for modern technological society. Politicians and experts might soon be talking about water pipeline infrastructure, similar to gas and oil pipes. Water conflicts are similar to those over oil and gas splitting producing and importing countries. The only difference is that oil and gas can have an alternative route or supply source, while it is much more complicated and expensive to implement for water. So, water is becoming a global commodity, which in the new century could exceed oil in terms of price.»

One of the reasons for such popularity of the scarce water resources is global warming. Climate change is not a bogus, as some assume. The gravity of the issue has recently been reaffirmed at the UN-sponsored conference held in Poland. General consensus could make this problem a reuniting factor for the international community. However, so far it only divides the nations further. As Jürgen **Scheffran** maintains,

«Whether societies are able to cope with the impacts and restrain the risks of climate change depends on their responses and abilities to solve associated problems. Some responses to climate change may rather aggravate the problem, by inducing additional security issues. For instance, the revival of nuclear power to prevent climate change might raise concerns about nuclear proliferation and other risks for safety and security. The rapid and unsustainable growth of biofuels for carbon emission reduction could aggravate land use conflicts and increase food insecurity. If the military finds a justification in fighting the impacts of global warming, this would hardly be a sustainable solution to the climate problem.»

So here again there is an urgent need for new approaches, since the very survival of the mankind is at stake.

Global warming and fierce search for cheap and available resources discover new geographical areas where rivalry was not typical before. One of them is the Arctic region, the strategic importance of which grows. And it is not only the matter of mineral wealth, but also the problem of new transportation routes. Arctic is in the focus of attention of the European Union and the United States. Some experts assume that the recent directive by the U.S. President is underpinned with the desire to get control over the new Northern route that would make the easiest and shortest connection between the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean. Prof. Alexander **Kovalev**, a well-known expert on international law, claims in his commentary that the goal of the Western nations today is to squeeze Russia out of the region under various pretexts. One of them is socioeconomic degradation of the Arctic zone, another is environmental damage – all this could be a good cause for humanitarian intervention. Hence, the real battle over the Arctic is still ahead.

A significant role in contemporary wars over resources, and wars as such, is played by the media. They become a substantial security factor, sometimes even more serious than weapons. In today's world it is less important to win the war rather than to create a favorable public opinion and to propagate the victory. There are no reports from Kosovo and everyone assumes that everything is stable there and the problem is generally solved, or at least, very close to its solution. There are no reports from Southern Kivu and the world so much concerned about Darfur and Gaza misses another area of humanitarian catastrophe. Let alone the war in South Ossetia in August 2008, which was virtual to a large extent and where news reports about the hostilities were more deadly than the hostilities. And to many, the current economic crisis is a child of the media as well and exists rather in the minds than in reality – after all any collapse at the stock market is always a matter of psychology, trust and asymmetric information flows.

Therefore, PR-support becomes a crucial element of any foreign policy efforts. Yevgeny **Yevdokimov** raises the issue of Olympic diplomacy and dwells on the example of China. After all, the Olympics turned into a political factor long time ago. One can easily remember the Soviet-U.S. confrontation in 1980 and in 1984, or cast a quick glance at the Georgian attempts to block Russia's right to host the Winter Olympic games in Sochi in 2014.

The author states that

«an important step China made was adjusting its *openness* ahead of the Games. These steps boiled down to spreading China's economic, humanitarian and other types of influence abroad, while at the same time limiting foreign influence on the country and ensuring generous coverage of the excellent organization of the Games to spread China's ideological influence. Given the high likelihood of anti-Russian campaigns in the Western media ahead of the Sochi games, Russia should waste no time in developing its counterpropaganda capacity. It should focus on moving away from the confrontational thinking and Cold War logic that are often forced upon Russia by the West. In this regard, it is worth studying China's experience of formulating its measures to counter Western propaganda and defend its national interests using relatively mild wording, such as international *responsibility* and *harmonious world*.»

By the way, China is in the focus of two other articles in this issue. Galina **Pastukhova** studies the role of Beijing in the Iranian crisis, «Iran's oil wealth and China's rapidly growing economy mean that China has important strategic interests in Iran. These interests boil down to ensuring energy security, buying energy resources (so far Chinese imports are not sufficiently diversified), selling arms (to generate income) and participating in multi-million dollar infrastructure contracts in Iran.» She provides a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of Sino-Iranian cooperation and assumes that the countries make a good example of «compatibility of civilizations.»

Yevgeny **Petelin** looks at a similar area – China's attempts to get rid of oil dependence and the influence of energy diplomacy on Beijing's military strategy. In his review of a U.S.-published volume on China's maritime policies, Petelin concludes that more attention should be paid not



only to the efforts of the Celestial Empire in Central Asia or in the Middle East, but also to Beijing's endeavors to expand cooperation with Africa and Latin America in desperate search of diversification of energy supplies.

Finally, even hard security issues require a substantial amount of new thinking. William **Potter** focuses in his commentary on the priority measures for the U.S. and Russian governments as far as nonproliferation and disarmament are concerned. Even though the relations between the two countries are not at their height, there are still good chances for the promotion of new arms control agreements and for strengthening the existing regimes, especially now when the new U.S. administration demonstrates such zeal. And there are practical steps that would not require significant concessions from both parties but eventually would ease the tensions and enhance global security.

Roland **Timerbaev** in his article mostly agrees with such approach and suggests similar recipes. The world will always face an imminent threat unless it reaches *nuclear zero*, whatever tough this road can be. In fact, psychology must be the most complicated issue. «The nations, including nuclear weapon states and large states as such, will have to start thinking anew. They will have to get rid of some obsolete but convenient stereotypes, to find new ways of meeting their demand for raw materials, markets, etc., without resorting to force, especially nuclear force. Now it is not clear how it will happen, but the process may be long and painful, for the most powerful states in particular,» notes Amb. Timerbaev.

The mankind is entering a new phase of its development. The global economic crisis may eventually force the nations to start the search for non-traditional solutions, since the previous paradigms have proved their inefficiency. After all, the longer the great powers stick to the centuries-old mechanisms of greed and selfishness, to traditional recipes of saber-rattling, territorial conquests and protectionism, the further away will they move from truly universal and effective tools to tackle global problems. Probably the time has accidentally come to unite the efforts and seek compromises, in order to save the sinking boat that we are so eagerly rocking? 

Dmitry Polikanov