

GLOBAL PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES



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As a rule, the end of the year is the most responsible time for the most analytical institutions. It is during this period that the results for the year are summed up, in the geopolitical sphere included. All this applies to the current 2020, which has become one of the turning points in modern history. Thus, the main feature of 2020 was the exacerbation of all major world-class problems that have reached a critical level. Most of them are deep in nature and have matured over the years. At the same time, it was in the current year that they acquired a qualitatively new meaning, which was the result of the COVID-19 pandemic and a number of other political and economic factors. Based on the analysis of the situation in the world, as well as the experts' assessments, **the greatest geopolitical problems of 2020** were:

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– unreadiness of leading international organizations to effective work in the conditions of a global crises. This applies to both the UN and the OSCE, as well as the G7, G20 and the EU. With the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, they canceled some of their activities, moved to video conferencing mode, or even withdrew from addressing global and regional security issues. Besides, the pandemic has further weakened the unity of the European Union. This was reflected in differences between EU member states on how to counter COVID-19, in particular on the allocation and distribution of funds to support and restore the European economy.

The decisions of leading international organizations to counteract the pandemic and overcome its consequences were not very effective. In fact, they only temporarily halted the development of the COVID-19 crisis by providing assistance to the most affected countries, but failed to prevent a second wave of the pandemic with even more negative consequences. The world's leading nations have also failed to work together to develop effective medications to prevent and treat the coronavirus infection;

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– aggravation of the confrontation between the United States and China for influence in the world in fact to the level of a new global "coldwar". At this, the rivalry between the parties in the trade, economic, scientific and technical spheres was complemented by mutual demonstrations of force both at the strategic level and in the Asia-Pacific region.

In early 2020, both the United States and China announced plans to strengthen their nuclear and missile capabilities, based on mutual accusations of aggressive intentions and attempts to gain an advantage in the nuclear sphere. At the same time, the United States and China began conducting "symmetrical" military exercises in the East China and South China Seas and around Taiwan. Such measures involve powerful naval groups consisting of carrier strike groups and strategic and tactical aviation;

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– the confrontation between the United States/NATO and Russia has reached a qualitatively new level. The greatest danger is the parties' moving to mutual measures of military pressure in the same regions of the world and in almost the same period of time

with the involvement of elements of nuclear and missile forces.

In 2020, in response to the Russian Armed Forces' SCPE on the western direction, the United States and NATO began conducting their own Defender Europe exercises, working out a range of issues related to repulsing possible Russian aggression (including the redeployment of US troops to Europe).

In addition, as part of these and other measures, the United States and Russia have intensified strategic aviation flights in the Baltic and Black Sea regions with the task of inflicting conditional strikes on enemy targets. At this, the US Air Force carried out such flights over the territory of the Baltic States, Poland and Ukraine with practical bombing at the bombing range in Latvia — in the direction of Moscow. In turn, Russia's long-range (strategic) bombers fly in the airspace of Belarus with practical bombing at the bombing range in the Brest region near the border with Poland. The result is an increased threat of armed incidents between Russia and the United States/NATO, which could escalate into larger clashes between the parties, including with the use of nuclear weapons.

Another critical factor is the measures taken by Russia and the United States to restore and modernize their tactical nuclear potentials, as well as to demonstrate their combat capabilities, which lowers the threshold for the possible use of nuclear weapons. From 2018–2019, the Russian Armed Forces began rebuilding heavy artillery units armed with tactical nuclear munitions, namely the 240-mm Tulip self-propelled mortars and the 203-mm Malka self-propelled guns. In response, in 2020, the United States for the first time conducted exercises to deploy in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, tactical missile systems HIMARS, which can launch ATACMS ballistic missiles up to 300 km. Besides, the United States has announced the possibility of deploying hypersonic missiles in Europe with a range of about 1.6 thousand km;

...Dismantling the international legal basis that ensured strategic stability in the world and arms control...

– dismantling the international legal basis that ensured strategic stability in the world and arms control. Since the early 2000s, the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and

Shorter-Range Missiles (the INF Treaty) have been suspended. And in 2020, the United States withdrew from the Open Skies Treaty, which provides for the possibility of unarmed reconnaissance aircraft flying in the airspace of the signatory countries. The reason for this was called a gross violation of the treaty by Russia;

Significant problems also arose with the prolongation of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START). The United States insists on China's joining the New START because it has strategic nuclear weapons. But Beijing is avoiding it. Besides, the United States is trying to combine the New START with the INF Treaty, which has been challenged by Russia;

...Growing influence of shadow and corruption structures, which become separate centers of influence on the development of the geopolitical situation...

– growing influence of shadow and corruption structures, which become separate centers of influence on the development of the geopolitical situation. A significant problem is the corruption in the highest authorities and political and business (oligarchic) circles of the world's leading

countries. As a result, their policies are beginning to be determined not by national interests but by the personal goals of the corrupt, which is another reason for the destabilization of international relations. An example of this is the corruption-oligarchic system of state power of the Putin regime in Russia, which works exclusively in its own interests. D. Trump's rule in the United States is also somewhat corrupt. For example, D. Trump and his environment have been repeatedly accused of tax evasion and corrupt ties to Moscow. This is exactly what caused D. Trump's "flirtations" with Russia.

Former French President N. Sarkozy was accused of corruption, and a court hearing was held in 2020. By the way, in the autumn of 2008, N. Sarkozy, the President of France's OSCE chairmanship, actually helped Russia evade responsibility for the attack on Georgia. Today, Russia is resorting to criminal schemes to bribe European politicians and political forces in order to influence their pro-Russian policies;

...Exacerbation of existing and emergence of new sources of tension in the world...

– exacerbation of existing and emergence of new sources of tension in the world. Worsening of socio-economic problems in most countries of the world as a result of the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

has led to growing protest moods among their populations. This was evidenced by mass protests in the United States and Europe against quarantine measures.

Besides, further deepening of social inequality between rich and poor countries and different strata of the population in many countries around the world has been the catalyst for another wave of terrorism and various national and religious riots.

The topic of terrorism was discussed in more detail in my previous article, "[The Threat of Islamic Extremism. Reasons and Consequences for the World and Ukraine](#)". I can only add that the outbreak of extremism in Europe in the autumn of 2020 was, in fact, the largest since the USA and its European allies conducted military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya in the 2000s and early 2010s. At the same time, the activities of Islamic extremists in the North Caucasus of Russia intensified.

African Americans' mass protests against violations of their rights have become a significant problem for the United States. In a number of cases, such protests were accompanied by riots, which forced the authorities to use the National Guard to restore law and order. Riots among migrants have also occurred in some European countries. At the same time, the US intelligence agencies have concluded that Russia is behind the above-mentioned events.

A powerful source of global instability is food shortages due to global climate change, which causes significant damage to agriculture. The result of this trend is rising world food prices and shortages of food in a number of countries. To date, this has played an additional role in increased flow of migrants and refugees from poor to rich countries, including the United States and Europe, complicating the above-mentioned problems.

I should also point out the emergence of new and exacerbation of existing conflicts in different countries and regions, resulting in intensified struggle between the world's leading powers for redistribution of spheres of influence, problems related to the pandemic, competition for access to resources and all sorts of internal conflicts.

In this regard, the most illustrative were: armed border clashes between India and Pakistan; resumption of large-scale hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh; mass protests in Belarus against the government's falsification of the presidential election results; another revolution in Kyrgyzstan, which was a reaction to the country's leadership's attempts to falsify the results of the parliamentary elections.

...Time magazine called 2020 "the worst year ever in world history since the end of World War II"...

In general, these processes have significantly complicated the situation in the world, and had a negative impact on the development of the world economy. Thus, according to IMF experts, in 2020 the fall in world GDP is expected at about 3 %.

According to experts of international financial institutions, over the next five years, the world economy may lose about 30 trillion US dollars. With this in mind, the authoritative American Time magazine called 2020 "the worst year ever in world history since the end of World War II". According to analysts of the Time, it can be compared only with the Great Depression of the 1930s.

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Based on these circumstances, experts from different countries draw conclusions about the possibility of a global crisis in 2021. Thus, according to former US Secretary of State H. Kissinger, the situation in the world "similar to World

War I", which is a consequence of the confrontation between the two largest countries in the world — the United States and China. In his opinion, the planet is moving towards a new world war.

In November 2020, a similar estimate was made by the Chief of British Defence Staff N. Carter. According to him, current global uncertainty and economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to World War III. The reason for this is the increase in the number of local conflicts in the world, which creates risks of escalation of armed confrontation of regional and global levels.

The same forecasts are in the Czech Military Intelligence Report on the situation in the world, which was published in November 2020. According to Czech military experts, "the possible global conflict that the world is currently moving towards is still in the first stage of its preparation. The minds of those who can and want to take an active part in it are being formed, and technological tools are gradually being identified in order to manage them". Czech intelligence calls the confrontation in the US — China — Russia triangle the cause for the crisis. This confirms the decline in the importance of international law due to the lack of peaceful dialogue and reduced effectiveness of world organizations in the sphere of collective security.

Finally, according to Executive Director of the UN World Food Program, D. Beasley, in 2021 humanity is facing one of the most serious humanitarian challenges since the end of World War II. In total, 270 million people could die of starvation. In turn, food shortages will catalyze the emergence of new conflicts due to the intensification of the struggle for resources between different countries and groups.

Against this background, in November 2020, during a meeting of the Central Military Commission (CMC), Chinese President Xi Jinping called on the command and personnel of the armed forces "do not fear hardship and do not fear death, to strengthen training under real combat conditions and raise their capability of winning wars".

Of course, these estimates can be exaggerated and in some ways emotional. Besides, after J. Biden's inauguration as President of the United States, he may change US policy toward China in order to make it more constructive. Nevertheless, relations between the United States and China will remain tense, accompanied by continued military confrontation. At the same time, as a result of J. Biden's intentions to take tougher actions to curb Moscow's neo-imperial course, the US — Russia confrontation should be further intensified.

Given the lack of real prospects for a rapid response to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world economy and most countries, complications and all related problems will arise. All this will really lead to an increase in the conflict potential in the world, as well as an growth of threats of wars and armed conflicts.

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These circumstances fully apply to Ukraine, which remains at the intersection of the interests of the West and Russia and, to some extent, China, and is under the influence of all global problems. Given this, all of these problems will inevitably affect our

state. As before, the greatest danger for Ukraine will be the possibility of expanding the scale of armed aggression by Russia. Taking into consideration the changes in the world situation, such actions by Moscow may be aimed at diverting the attention of the Russian population from Russia's own problems, as well as improving its strategic position in the military confrontation with the United States and NATO.

Evidence of this is Russia's outright refusal to resolve the conflict in the Donbas. Moscow also keeps demonstrating force to Ukraine, building up its troops on the Ukrainian direction, and conducting offensive military exercises.

The reality of such threats requires appropriate preparations in Ukraine's defense sector. At this, both the peculiarities of modern armed conflicts (in particular, in Nagorno-Karabakh) and the classical methods of conducting full-scale wars should be taken into account.

By the way, the fact of "the end of the cycle of asymmetric warfare and returning to symmetrical, state-on-state conflicts with equal opponents" is stated in the new program of modernization of the French Armed Forces. This is the basis of their further development.