

# **The Trends of Russia-US Relations and Their Impacts on the Relations of Russo-China, Russia-India, and Russia-Kazakhstan**

**By Xu Hongfeng**

In May 2008, Medvedev took office as President and Putin was nominated as prime minister, Russia's two top leaders completed their "power shifts".

During the eight years of Putin's presidency, Although the development of the multi-polar world has offered Russia's diplomacy more cushioning space and times , on the whole, the international situations facing Russia have increasingly become rigorous. The geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West has advanced from Central and Eastern Europe to the CIS region, even into Russia's own territory. And so how to deal with, by Russia's improved national strength, such diplomatic and security difficulties, will be one of the most important problems which Medvedev has to face after he came into power.

## **I . The Contradictions and Conflicts between Russia and the US**

During the later period of Putin's presidency, the diplomatic difficulties facing Russia were mainly from the West. Particularly, the contradictions and conflicts between Russia and the US are the primary problem Medvedev has to solve in improving Russia's diplomatic situations. And such contradictions and conflicts not only lie in the strategic field but also in the policy field.

### **i . Strategic Field: Differences and Discrepancies of the Strategic Positioning**

**1. Different Plans of Constructing an Uni-polar or a Multi-polar World.** During Bush's presidency, the US concept about the future international order has gradually taken shape, that is, given the fact that the US had won the Cold War and America's super national strength, the Bush administration believes the future world should be the US-led uni-polar world, and the future international political order should be the order in which the US will be the only hegemonic power. Besides, the Bush administration believes America should contain any nation which has the potentiality of challenging the US super power status in the future, and Russia should be one of the nations which America will closely guarded against.

However, at the same time, with its national strength restoring and its great power consciousness arousing, Russia has begun trying, joining with the EU, China and other world powers, to construct a multi-polar international pattern. Russia believes the future world should be a multi-polar world which is participated by such great powers as Russia, the US, the EU, China, India, and advocates the "collective leadership" of the international community, calls upon to play the active role of the multilateral diplomacy.

**2. Different Positioning of Each Other's Role in International Affairs.** 1) Positioning of the future Russia. On one hand, Russia hopes, with its national revival, to be "one of the most important polars" in the future multi-polar international pattern, and to be a great power capable of

making influences around the globe. On the other hand, however, America believes the future Russia should only be a “middle-class common European state”<sup>①</sup>, whose influences should only be confined to Eastern Europe; 2) Positioning of the future America. Given the fact that the U.S has won the Cold War, America believes that he should play a leadership role which is characterized by the US only hegemony in the international politics. Nevertheless, Russia is opposed to America’s uni-polar hegemony and holds that the US should only be one of the “important polars” in the multi-polar world.

## ii. Policy Field: Structural Competition of Specific National Interests

**1. Dilemma in the Military and Security Field: Struggle of the Missile Defense System in Eastern Europe.** The struggle of the missile defense between Russia and the U.S can be traced as early to the 1950s, in the Cold War era, Russia and America both viewed each other as its own major strategic adversary. The development of the new strategic offensive weapons in one side would instantly engender the adjustments of the strategic defensive forces, and thus the circulating contests of “offensive missiles and the defensive missiles” had been regular states of the Soviet-US armed forced competition. In July 1974, the Soviet Union and the US signed “the Protocol of the anti-Ballistic Missile Restriction”. Nevertheless, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty had not have effective restrictions to the R&D of missile defenses of the Soviet and the US From Reagan administration’s SDI, Bush administration’s GPALS, Clinton administration’s BMD, to junior Bush administration’s withdrawal from the AMT, the struggle of the missile defense between Russia and the US has been continuing.

Since 2004 the US has begun to negotiate with Czech, Poland, Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria to persuade these countries join its missile defense system. In January 2007, the US formally declared during the periods from 2011 to 2013 he plans to set up a radar station in Czech and Georgia which will be used to trace and intercept the possible missiles from Iran, and to establish a military base in Poland, all of which will form together the whole missile defense system in Eastern Europe<sup>②</sup>. And thus, the missile defense issue has once again become the focus of contentions between Russia and the US.

The US has been trying to make Russia believe the goal of his deployment of the missile defense system in Eastern Europe is to guard against the possible missile raids from such “rogue states” as Iran and terrorists. However, Russia has always been believing that the US true intention is to change, by taking the advantage of Russia’s decline, the current military and security pattern in European Continent, to seek military strategic predominance, and thus to make military preparation for its future unilateral actions. At present, the struggle of missile defense in Eastern Europe between Russia and the US almost became a deadlock, Medvedev will have to deal with this problem in the future.

---

<sup>①</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American primacy and its geostrategic imperative*, trans. the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Press, 1998),p.110.

<sup>②</sup> Judy Dempsey, *Europe: Poles And Czechs To Talk With U.S. About Missile Defense System*, the New York Times, January 24, 2007.

**2. Dilemma in the Geopolitics Field: Third Round Eastward Expansion of the NATO.** The NATO's eastward expansions demonstrates the contradictions and discrepancies between Russia and America of Europe's geopolitics: by NATO's eastward expansions America hopes to squeeze Russia's geostrategic space into the Eastern part of Europe, and thus to reconstruct the Europe's geopolitics balance, to prevent Russia from expanding its influences again in Europe; Nevertheless, Russia believes that the end of the Cold War should imply the end of the geopolitical confrontation in Europe between Russia and the West, and Russia hopes to construct a "grand Europe" expanding from London to the Urals, with "our Europeans managing ourselves". During the past decade, with the advancing of NATO's eastward expansions, conflicts and contentions on this issue between Russia and the US has become more and more serious.

In March 2007, the US Congress passed the bill which agrees the two CIS states Georgia and Ukraine to join the NATO. America's such act received Russia's strong criticism. In March 2008, when newly-elected Russia president Medvedev stated that "no any states will be willing to see some of its neighboring nations to join the military bloc which he does not belong to. Russia is contented with the situation of Georgia and Ukraine because its will damage the present security mechanism in Europe seriously."<sup>①</sup> Russia tried, by this way, to press the NATO not to agree the joining of these two states in the Bucharest summit which was to be held in April. In April 2008, the NATO summit postponed to decide list of the candidate states of the NATO's third eastward expansion until the end of the year 2008, at that time, the conflicts between Russia and the US on this issue will definitely escalate again.

**3. Dilemma in the Economy Field: Extremely Low Degree of Economic Dependence and Conflicts of the Energy Strategy.** One of the important reason for the instability of Russia-US bilateral political and diplomatic relations is that the degree of economic dependence on each other is so extremely low that economic development can't be a factor which could have a effective influence on the Russia-US bilateral political relations.

During the ten years since the dependence of Russia, although the degree of economic dependence of Russia and America on each other has increased on the whole, such increase is merely a kind of quantitative change, rather than the qualitative change. The two countries' degree of economic dependence on each other is, compared to their own GDP and their important status in the international economy, still very low. In this background, the bilateral economic relations between Russia and US has been, to a great extent, subjected to such factors as international politics, security and geo-strategy.

In addition, Medvedev also have to face the complex situation of the energy cooperation and competition between Russia and the US. During Putin's Presidency, The energy cooperation between Russian and the US had more or less strengthened, nevertheless, compared to Russia's energy resources and large amount of energy reserves and the large demand of the US for energy,

---

<sup>①</sup> Judy Dempsey, Europe: Poles And Czechs To Talk With U.S. About Missile Defense System, the New York Times, January 24, 2007.

the energy cooperation between the countries is far from satisfying, and Russia and the US still has more cooperation potentialities to be explored<sup>①</sup>. Putin required “Russia to take 10 percent of US total oil import market share in five to seven years”. To realize this goal, Russia has a long way to go.

Besides, how to deal with the contradictions and conflicts between Russia and US of their energy strategy is also the problem medvedev have to resolve. With Russia being one of the largest energy production and export states and America being the one of the largest energy-consuming states, there have fundamental discrepancies in the two states’ energy strategy such as energy prices, energy security, energy trade, and energy investment. In the future, energy problems around the globe will probably become more and more serious, hence, the role of energy in international politics will possibly become more and more important, and the contradictions of energy strategy between Russia and America is likely to be the major conflicts of the bilateral relations<sup>②</sup>.

#### **4. Dilemma in the Democracy and Politics Field: the Competition of Different Democratic Models and Diplomatic Struggles under the Veil of Democracy.**

With the advance of the “New Bush Doctrine” which declared to “promote freedom and eradicate tyranny”, in Bush’s second term, the Bush administration dramatically readjusted its policy toward Russia, which changed from temporarily ignoring Russia’s domestic politics in order to get its anti-terror cooperation in Bush’s first term, to readopting a hardline policy towards Russia and interfering with and condemning Russia’s domestic politics in Bush’s second term.

During Putin’s presidency, the contradictions between Russia and America on the issue of the democracy and politics implied two kind of meaning: One was different choices and competition of the national development paths and models. And the other was America’s diplomatic struggle, under the veil of democracy, with Russia. In Bush’s second term, the US strengthened its democratic supports for Russia, so as to prepare for the “Color Revolution” in Russia and help Russia’s pro-US leaders to come into power<sup>③</sup>.

---

<sup>①</sup> Take the example of oil, at present, America is the largest oil import state in the world. Russia is the second largest oil export state, however, the oil import amounts of America from Russia merely accounts for 2 percent or 3 percent of the total amount of US oil import from all over the world. Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy. <http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/hist/mtimus1A.htm>

<sup>②</sup> Xu Zhixin, “The New Changes Rose in Russia’s Diplomatic Strategy”, in Xing Guangcheng and Xu Zhixin ,eds., *The 2007 Yellow Book of Russia, Eastern European, and Central Asian Countries*, Beijing: the Documentary Press of Social Sciences, 2008.

<sup>③</sup>The total amount of the democracy aids which has offered by the Bush administration in 2004, 2005, and 2006 was \$ 63.13 million, \$ 62.95million, \$ 78.53 million.

U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperation Activities with the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union FY 2004 Annual Report, U.S. Department of State, January 2005.

U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperation Activities with the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union FY 2005 Annual Report, U.S. Department of State, January 2006.

U.S. Government Assistance to and Cooperation Activities with the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union FY 2006 Annual Report, U.S. Department of State, January 2007.

On one hand, for the US, after having penetrated into the eastern and central Europe, into some CIS countries which are bordered with Russia, Russia's own territory is the logic expansion and ultimate target of its geo-strategy; on the other hand, however, for Russia, America's penetrating and subversion policy toward Russia is thought to have damaged Russia's national security and survival, which are core interests that Russia must not give up. This structural contradiction between Russia and the US is doomed to be another diplomatic problem that Medvedev will be faced with.

## **II . Faced with the US Strategic Squeeze, Russia is Meant to Make Such Great Powers in the Asia-Pacific Region as China, India, and Kazakhstan to Be Its Strategic Partners which can be Employed to Balancing the US.**

During putin's presidency, compared to the US-Europe, US-Japan alliance, Russia had always had difficulties in finding, in Europe and Asia ,the strategic allies which not only has the capability but also was willing to unite with Russia to balance the US influences: such CIS states as Belorus and Kazakhstan, and China, India had their own geostrategy plans and had their own specific national interests, besides, the national strength of these nations was more or less limited, and so it was almost impossible for these states to develop a kind of comprehensive strategic alliance relationship with Russia. These states were merely Russia's general strategic partners.

**i . The Relations between Russia and Belorus, Kazakhstan.** Of all CIS states, Belorus and Kazakhstan has kept the most closed relations with Russia, and Russia also intents to make these two states become Russia's strategic allies who may unite with Russia to balance the influence of the West. Belorus and Kazakhstan have participated in almost all the important cooperation mechanisms between Russia and the CIS , and these two countries have played an active role, by closely cooperating with Russia, in process of the CIS unification which has all long been dominated by Russia.

Nevertheless, during putin's presidency, for various reasons the development of the relations between Russia and Belorus, Kazakhstan was not so smooth. In Medvedev period, if Russia hopes to make these two states be its close strategic allies, there are some problems to be dealt with.

**1. Balancing Between Economic Interests and Security Interests.** In the past decade, Russia has been offering Belorus and Kazakhstan economic interests in exchange for their security and diplomatic support for Russia, which has been the important contents of bilateral relations between Russia and the two countries. Due to the traditional economic relations with the Soviet Union, Belorus and Kazakhstan have kept their close relations with Russia during the process of economic transition and depend heavily on Russia's energy and market. Nevertheless, on one hand, Russia is not willing to sacrifice more economic interests in return for the establishment of an alliance relationship with Belorus and Kazakhstan, and on the other hand, there are conflicts and contradictions of specific economic interests between Russia and these two countries.

**2. Different Positioning of Russia's Role.** Since got its independence from the Soviet Union, Russia has always posed a stance of great power in its relations with Belarus and Kazakhstan, viewing itself to the leader of the CIS countries. However, Belarus insists Russia should develop the bilateral relations with it on an equal footing, and Kazakhstan even has been seeking the leadership in Central Asia.

**3. The Diversification of the Geo-strategy of Belarus and Kazakhstan.** Although Belarus and Kazakhstan both put Russia as the top priority in their diplomatic strategy, considering their own national interests, the two countries don't have Russia as their only choice and reliance, but rather have adopted the diversified diplomatic policy in order to balance between Russia and the West.

ii. **The Relations between Russia and China.** Since the dependence of Russia, although the Sino-Russia bilateral relations has undergone different development phrases, the two country has always been remaining the close cooperation on the issues which involves the common interests of the two sides, for example, the two country offered supports to each other on the Taiwan and Chechnya issues; the two country jointly opposed to the US deployment of the missile defense system in Asia and eastern Europe; the two country advocated jointly the establishment of the multi-polar international order, and condemned the US unilateral actions in the Kosovo War and the Iraqi War; the two country objected to the US "double standard" in the anti-terror war, and supported morally in the striking of the "East Turkistan" terrorists and the Chechnya terrorists; the two country united, by mechanism of the SCO, to oppose the US military stationing and geopolitical intervention in Central Asia; the two country supported mutually in each other's entry into international economy community, and recognized the each other a market economy; the two country stressed jointly the UN authority role in settling the international disputes, interfered, within the framework of the UN, with the hot issues, and thus dedicated to the establishment of an equal, democratic, civilized new international order.

Although the two country has always been keeping the close cooperation in various fields, both Russia and China tend to be more mature in their attitudes toward the bilateral relations between them. The two country have their own relatively dependent diplomatic strategy, particularly the strategy toward the US. They both put their real national interests as the top priority of the diplomatic strategy, and their policy towards the each other is becoming more and more realistic and specific, the two country's unconditional support for each other, in exchange for the damaged relations between itself and the third country , will be dramatically reduced.

In Medvedev's tenure, its predicted the strategic coordination relationship between China and Russia will continue, and the transformation of the relationship into the comprehensive strategic alliance is almost impossible.

iii. **The Relations between Russia and India.** India is the only great power with global influences in the region of south Asia and the Indian Ocean. Faced with the US pressing squeeze, Russia hoped to get India's strategic support, and Putin ever even spoke of India as " the supporting forces of the strengthening of Russia's global influences". Nevertheless, in Putin's

tenure, the China- India bilateral cooperation mostly focused on the trade<sup>①</sup> and military<sup>②</sup> fields, and their strategic cooperation was not so satisfying: although Russia and India have paralleled or common interests in such international issues as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran nuclear crisis, the middle-east peace process, India has made no comments on the US deployment of the missile defense system in east Europe; besides, in order to avoid its overdependence on Russia in the armed weapons, in recent years, India has hastened its process of purchasing arms and weapons for the US, and its cooperation with the US on the unclear and military technology has been expanded.

It should be said that China, Russia, and India all is not a nation which has completed its process of revival and resurgence, they all had ever undergone the low ebb of the development in the different phrase of history, they all has the tradition, more or less, of the confrontation with the West, and thus they has the same consciousness in this aspect. In the late 1990s, the Russian former premier Primakov ever proposed to establish a China-Russia-India triangular alliance relationship, however, considering the development situation of the bilateral relations between Russia and China, India, this proposal is becoming more and more unrealistic. For Russia in the future “Medvedev-Putin era”, China and India may be the strategic partner of specific international affairs, but its nearly impossible for the two country become the comprehensive strategic ally of Russia.

In the future ,In the struggle with the US on different issues, Russia needs to find different “strategic stakeholders” to unite with and to support mutually, and should not expect China, India, and Kazakhstan to offer, with the cost of damaging their relations with the US, it unconditional support and cooperation. How to find, create, and cultivate more paralleled and common interests with China, India, and Kazakhstan, and to get the supports of these great powers in Asian-Pacific region is another diplomatic problem Medvedev has to face.

### **III. The Impact of Future Russo-US Relations on the Russo-China, Russo-India and Russo-Kazakhstan Relations**

**i . The geopolitical rivalry and military competition between Russia and the United States in the areas (the Commonwealth of Independent Countries, Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia) between the four countries of Russia, China, India and Kazakhstan will be intensified.** The United States is pressing hard its strategy of squeezing Russia, and Russia is pursuing an increasingly tough foreign policy, so the conflict and contention between Russia and the United States is likely to escalate within the tenure of President Medvedev.

Faced with America’s strategic squeeze, Russia has come to realize that the United States “has set

---

<sup>①</sup> According to Russia’s statistics, in 2006, the Russia-China bilateral trade amount is \$ 3.9 billion, and in the first six months of 2007, the bilateral trade amount reached \$2.1 billion, increasing by 38 percent. Besides, the two country have set the goal of \$10 billion of the bilateral trade in 2010.

<sup>②</sup> Russia’s arms exportation amount to India accounts for about 30% of its total arms exportation amounts, and more than 70 percent of India’s arms equipments is provided by Russia.

up a containment zone along Southern Russia, which begins from Turkey in the west and ends in Mongolia in the east. This containment zone runs through Iraq (a conquered country now), Iran (a possible target of US military invasion), Afghanistan (a tame country) and Central Asian states with membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Such a strategic division of the Eurasia is nothing else than driving a wedge between Russia and China and between China and India, thus exposing these countries to increasingly serious military threats. In addition, based on this strategic move, the United States can, in economic terms, control the oil and gas region in the Caspian area and influence, in political terms, situations in Siberia and some Far East areas in Russia, some sensitive autonomous regions in China, and the whole Caucasian region.”<sup>①</sup>

Through the eastward enlargement of NATO, the color revolutions, and the eastward moving of the deployment of the Missile Defense System, the United States has pushed the front line of geopolitical contention between Russia and the United States to the western and southern borders of Russia. In the near future, the geopolitical contention and military competition between Russia and the United States will be focused on the areas between Russia, China, India and Kazakhstan, and a standoff is likely to be seen in the Commonwealth of Independent Countries, Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia.

**ii. The strategic cooperation between Russia and Belarus, Kazakhstan, China and India will become more pressing, more down-to-earth and closer.** In the late years of the Putin administration, the United States began to implement the geopolitical strategy in Eurasia and the geopolitical situation in Eurasia underwent some changes. As a result, Russia, China, India and Belarus find that they now share a common geopolitical strategic interest, which is gradually taking shape. As far as Eurasia is concerned, the United States has been strategically squeezing Russia and its CIS allies such as Belarus and Kazakhstan from east to west by making use of the mechanism established by NATO; as far as the Pacific area is concerned, the United States has been taking advantage of the U.S.-Japan-Australia alliance and posing strategic threat to China from west to east; as far as the India Ocean is concerned, the United States has been containing India strategically from south to north by upgrading the strategic status of its military base in Diego Garcia. As a result, the United States has formed encirclement around Eurasia in the area between Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, China and India, which poses direct geopolitical security threats to the above countries. Moreover, in 2001, the United States launched the war on terror and American troops entered Afghanistan; in 2003, the United States occupied Iraq after the war aimed at toppling down Saddam Hussein; in the same year of 2001, the United States took the advantage of the war on terror and stationed its troops in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; in 2005, the United States formulated the so-called “the Great Central Asia Policy” in the “post-post 911 period.”<sup>②</sup>

---

<sup>①</sup> On May 20, 2005, representatives from the Russian academe and officials from such key ministries as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense held a round-table conference entitled “Improving the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” in the Institute of Far East Studies, Russian Academy. The participants reached the above conclusion about the purposes and consequences of the “color revolutions” supported and engineered by the United States.

<sup>②</sup> S. Frederick Starr, “A ‘Greater Central Asia Partnership’ for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors”, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Report, March 2005.



These movements taken by the United States have directly driven wedges into the inner part of the geopolitical spheres of Russia, China, India and Kazakhstan, thus making these countries feel an increasingly acute sense of geopolitical crisis. Under such circumstances, the strategic cooperation between these countries is being strengthened and deepened.

In June 2005, foreign ministers of Russia, China and India held an informal meeting with each other in Vladivostok, marking the official start-up of the all-around cooperation mechanism under the trilateral framework of Russia, China and India.<sup>①</sup>In July 2005, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) dominated by Russia and China decided to grant India “the status of observer within the SCO.” In July 2006, leaders of Russia, China and India, as proposed by Russia, held a meeting during the G8 summit in St. Petersburg, during which they discussed such issues as energy cooperation and combating terrorism. Such trilateral summit meeting of Russia, China and India was unprecedented. In January 2007, Putin, during his India visit, observed that “the cooperation mechanism between Russia, India and China is practically significant and very beneficial.” In February and October 2007, foreign ministers of Russia, China and India held official meetings in New Delhi, India and Harbin, China separately and issued communiqués, which give guiding principles to such issues as the democratization of international relations, the promotion of multi-polarity, the strengthening of UN authority, the cooperation between the three countries in such fields as energy, environment, economy and trade. In the section relating to Eurasia, the three countries indicated that “Asia faces such outstanding problems as imbalanced development and untraditional security threats. The three countries will strengthen their cooperation in all fields, including the coordination within regional organizations and the framework based on a mechanism of dialogue.”

Within the tenure of President Medvedev, the United States will continue its strategic squeeze on Russia by making use of the mechanism established by NATO. As a result, Russia’s neighbors, such as China, India, Belarus and Kazakhstan, will have an increasingly acute sense of crisis. The threat to the geopolitical security of Russia alone before will gradually become a threat common to Russia, China, India, Belarus and Kazakhstan. It can be said that the support given to Russia by China, India, Belarus and Kazakhstan before was out of the consideration that they were exchanging certain strategic interests (with Russia). In the future, China, India, Belarus and Kazakhstan will face the same geopolitical security threats, so they will protect their own geopolitical interests along with Russia and the strategic cooperation between Russia and China, Russia and India, Russia and Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan will become more pressing, more down-to-earth and closer.

---

<sup>①</sup> The Vladivostok meeting was the fourth informal meeting held by the foreign ministers of Russia, China and India. Unlike the three informal meetings before, this meeting was not a side show of an international conference but a designed arrangement, so this meeting signified that the strategic cooperation between the three countries of Russia, China and India entered a new stage.