

# Russia and the World. History and Geopolitical Analysis. “What Would Happen to Russia Without the United States and Europe?”

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*Approximately a year ago, August 2021, **Dr Andrey Kortunov**, Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) wrote an opinion article in which he rhetorically asked What Would Happen to the World Without the United States. That article was and still is an informative, thought provoking and food for thought. It offers an insight into the need for global cooperation, peace and solidarity. It brings into memory the Communist slogans: the world without nuclear, peace and development, friendship and international solidarity.*

After the historic fall of the Soviet era, Russia really dreamed of raising its status by joining international organizations. Over the past three decades, it became a member of many global bodies, participating actively at the United Nations. In addition, Russia created the Greater Eurasia Union, BRICS – a group of states comprising Brazil, India, China and South Africa – and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). With the current changes taking place, Russia has exited some of the foreign organizations including, Group of Eight (G-8), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). These have also generated hot debates whether to let it go out of the Group of Twenty (G-20).

Reports have categorically stressed that the course of geopolitical events is becoming irreversible. According to one report:

“Russia does not intend to tolerate the subversive actions carried out by the collective West towards setting up a rules-based order to replace international law trampled upon by the United States and its satellites.”

But today it seems we are almost close to the beginning of nuclear war. The world’s economy has been shattered, with skyrocketing prices, deficit in supplies of oil and gas to some parts of the world. The world has all the untapped natural resources to make people’s lives sustainable, but now an estimated half of the global population is under unbearable

fear and deep strain, majority struggling to make a living.

*This article seeks to focus specifically on Russia and the world. We attempt to imagine What Happens to Russia Without the United States and Europe. Unbelievably relations have soared these few years and almost at the verge of collapse completely. Another Cold war indeed, is at the door reminiscent of the previous ideological confrontation between the East and the West. We imagine Russia today without the two global powers; the United States and Europe.*

*What Would Happen to Russia Without the United States and Europe? In his article published on RIAC website last August 2021, Dr Andrey Kortunov, the Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) offered the definition or the description of the United States as often referred to as an "indispensable nation."*

The term was first used in January 1997 by President Bill Clinton during his second inaugural address. And thereafter, Madeleine Albright would mention it in her speeches and writings on numerous occasions after that. The underlying idea of "indispensability" here is that it suggests it would simply be impossible to maintain even relative order in the world – let alone resolve fundamental global and regional issues – without the United States. "It is likely no coincidence that the coinage came about and gained traction at a time when we were living in an almost completely unipolar world, when U.S. influence and authority around the globe had risen to never-before-seen heights over an incredibly short period of time," he wrote in his article.

The situation is now evolving differently and how indispensable are the United States and Europe. Can we do, due to some typical circumstances, without them today? Russia, over the past few months exited out of a number of international organizations, and therefore moving into self-isolation. Russia is globe-trotting to make alliances against the United States and Europe. It leads new alliance first for defeating unipolarism, and second for creating a new world political and economic order. But, what would happen to Russia if the Federation Council and the State Duma (both organs of the Russian Federation) legislate to prohibit the use of Western and European languages, for instance English and French, due to the absolute hatred for these two powers' hegemony. What if Russia has to prohibit the use of English, especially in its educational institutions, halt English-taught programmes throughout the Russian Federation. What happens if the Skolkovo project, considered as Silicon Valley, kick out all foreign residents there?

Russia-Europe-United States' cultural and educational cooperation have ultimately collapsed. It has crippled and ridiculed the work with civil society. Russia has closed the British Council, the American Educational Council with its **Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) programme**, and Alliance Française and Goethe Institute. These are the largest cultural networks of Britain, the United States, France and Germany. While Russia struggles with its own non-profit NGO Russkiy Mir primarily tasked to popularize Russian language, literature and Russian culture around the world, but on the contrary found it necessary to halt non-political and non-profit educational branches of western ones that operated under their diplomatic missions in the Russian Federation.

The FLEX programme, created as the best way to ensure long-lasting peace and mutual understanding between the U.S. and the countries of Eurasia, enables young people, over 35,000 students who compete annually, to learn about the United States, and to teach Americans about their countries, mostly from the former Soviet republics. These educational

and cultural centers have practically helped thousands of Russian students, with government-sponsored grants, to acquire comparative knowledge in various academic fields abroad. While some, after the training programmes, still remain abroad, others returned to contribute their quota in sustainable development in Russia.

## **What Would Happen to Russia Without the United States and Europe?**

The United States corporate business engagement is simply not comparable to Russia's economic footprints in the United States. On April 29, 2021, President Vladimir Putin held videoconference with leaders of several corporate French companies-members of the Franco-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI France-Russia) to discuss some aspects of Russian-French trade, economic and investment cooperation, including the implementation of large joint projects as well as the prospects for collaborative work in the Russian Federation.

From the historical records, France was described as a key economic partner for Russia, holding the 6th place among the EU countries (European Union is made up of 27 member-countries) in the amount of accumulated investment in the Russian economy and 5th place in the volume of trade. Over 500 companies with French capital are operating in various sectors of the Russian economy. Despite a certain decline in mutual trade in 2020, the ultimate figure quite acceptable at US\$13 billion. But French investment in Russia was hovering around US\$17 billion, while Russian investment in France, very tiny at US\$3 billion.

There are EU countries such as Britain, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy and Spain playing significant economic roles in Russia. Their level of business are far higher than that of Russia in the European Union. Undeniably, Russia is only an energy supplier, but its economic involvement is comparatively little. Many Western and EU companies are suspending their business operations. The Kremlin and Russian authorities say the United States and European Union bloc are taking systematic and well-thought-out measures to destabilize the economy of Russia. Several "systematic, very serious measures corresponding to the extraordinary unfriendly conditions that were placed upon us by unfriendly actions (of other countries), well thought out measures," are being taken, Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said during one of his media conferences.

'United Russia' - the largest political party in Russia, which supports President Putin's policies - has proposed to nationalization of the enterprises of those Western companies that refused to operate in the Russian Federation. On March 7, Secretary of United Russia's General Council Andrey Turchak said that the state legislative commission approved the initiative providing for the possibility of nationalizing the property of foreign corporations leaving the Russian market.

On the other hand, Dr Andrey Kortunov proposed to take a thought experiment: imagine if the United States were to completely depart from world politics, break all the international agreements to which Washington is a party, renounce all the obligations the country has undertaken, withdraw from all global and regional organizations, close the borders, shut down the embassies and consulates, freeze immigration and put all communication with the outside world on hold until things are looking better, focusing all its attention on building its biblical shining city upon a hill.

Dr Andrey Kortunov's question: "What Would Happen to the World if the United States were erased from the map?" To begin with, there would only be one nuclear superpower left in the world, and that would be Russia. Accordingly, the last foundations of bilateral U.S.-Russia strategic arms control will collapse. It is unlikely that other nuclear powers would be particularly interested in entering into negotiations with Moscow on nuclear weapons, as the gap between Russia and all the other players is simply too great. It is even less likely that Moscow will agree to relinquish its unique nuclear advantage over the rest of the world. However, unconditional nuclear superiority does not automatically mean that Moscow would be able to freely dictate its will in global politics. The nuclear arsenals of other countries would continue to be effective deterrence instruments, and a war between the members of the "nuclear club" would be just as implausible as it is today.

That said, nuclear proliferation is likely to significantly aggravate. In the absence of the "extended deterrence" of the United States, many of its former allies and partners would think about acquiring nuclear weapons of their own. This primarily implies countries in East Asia (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) and the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt). The idea of building up a nuclear arsenal may also take hold in Germany. Some five or six new nuclear powers could appear in short order.

While it is unlikely that nuclear proliferation in East Asia would lead to a sharp escalation of military and political risks, the emergence of new nuclear states in the Middle East would be fraught with dire consequences – both for the region and for the international community as a whole. That said, we should acknowledge that the threat of nuclear proliferation exists even today, and this can in large part be put down to the approach of the United States to resolving issues related to the Iranian nuclear programme.

The question is: Would NATO be able to Survive in a World Without the United States? Theoretically, yes, but only if the European great powers – the United Kingdom, Germany and France – put the maximum political, economic and military effort into it.

The remaining countries in the bloc will have to increase their defence contributions by more than the two per cent on which Washington insists today to some four or five per cent. Even this, though, would not offset the losses that NATO would incur as a result of the U.S. withdrawal. Without American leadership, NATO would likely turn into a regional military and political instrument of the European Union – while London's role in the organization would be unclear seeing as it is no longer in the EU – and NATO would have a far more modest role in world affairs than it has today. Without the United States, it is unlikely that NATO would continue to pursue its current global ambitions, and the remaining members may be rather reluctant to endlessly expand the organization's zone of geographic responsibility.

In a world without the United States, China would almost automatically become the undisputed leader in global technology. Although Europe, Japan, India and Southeast Asian nations would likely have greater incentive to join forces to challenge China's hegemony in this area. With this in mind, it is hard to say whether it would be possible to create a global technological ecosystem that would be independent of Beijing without the United States. This would largely depend on how rigid or flexible Beijing's hegemony would actually turn out to be as well as on the extent to which China would manage to avoid monopolizing the new technologies that are fundamental to the global community at large.

Dr Andrey Kortunov wrote that the euro would inevitably become the main reserve currency once the dollar exits the global financial system. The Chinese yuan is not entirely

convertible, which means that it would be a long time before China could compete with the European Union in the financial sphere. Other global currencies – such as the British pound, the Japanese yen and the Swiss franc – could gain in importance. European and Asian financial centres (London, Frankfurt, Shanghai, Singapore, etc.) would receive additional powerful incentives for development.

International financial institutions (the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund), where the United States has traditionally played a leading role, would undergo sweeping – and likely very painful – reforms. As a sidenote, we shall argue that the United Nations would also suffer a profound institutional crisis, losing both its current headquarters in New York and approximately 22 per cent of its base budget, as well as the U.S. contributions to individual UN departments and programmes. The Arctic Council would suffer less, as the American sector of the Arctic is far smaller than that of Russia and Canada. What is more, the United States has not yet ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which somewhat complicates Washington’s position in the Arctic Council.

The absence of the United States on the world’s energy markets could lead to a temporary revival of OPEC and a strengthening of Russia’s positions. The “green” and “shale” revolutions will continue unabated, however. Washington’s departure from the global arms and foodstuff markets would also result in a significant restructuring of these markets. Even with the joint efforts of the remaining players, the gap left by the United States in the arms market would be extremely difficult to fill.

With Hollywood no longer the centre of the global film industry, cities that used to hold that position – primarily Paris and Rome – would have the chance to revive their former cinematic glory. However, European filmmakers would face tough competition on the global entertainment market from filmmakers of Indian and, in particular, Chinese origin. The disappearance of New York from world fashion would give a second wind to Paris and Milan, while the United Kingdom would probably become the centre of musical life for a long time to come.

According to Dr Andrey Kortunov, the departure of Apple – and its iPhones and MacBooks – from the portable electronics markets would create a vacuum that a dozen of the biggest electronics giants in China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan would fight to fill. America’s self-imposed isolation would send shockwaves through higher education and science markets globally to reverberate for decades to come.

Quite naturally, the world would not lapse. It would survive the departure of the United States just like it survived the extinction of the dinosaurs and woolly mammoths. It would be difficult and extremely uncomfortable at first, especially for those international players who have been hiding in the shadow of the American superpower for decades. The withdrawal of the United States would lead to a number of crises and conflicts and a long period of instability and uncertainty as the struggle for the “American legacy” would inevitably be long and tense. Somehow, we would still get through it! Plus, the world already had a preview of Washington as an unpredictable and unreliable partner during Donald Trump’s presidency. It will actually be easier to resolve certain problems without Washington, since the U.S. is often part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

According to Dr Andrey Kortunov, the world would miss the United States. “We would miss the American optimism, the American energy and the American drive. We would miss the

high-rise buildings of Manhattan, the narrow streets of the French Quarter in New Orleans and the expansive prairies of the Great Plains. We would miss the country music, the Chicago-style steaks and the Californian nutmeg chardonnay. We would miss Halloween, Thanksgiving and, perhaps, Independence Day. Just like the entire world would miss Russia, Argentina, Ethiopia and New Zealand. Every single country is unique and indispensable in its own way. In this sense, the United States truly is an indispensable nation," he asserted in his conclusion.

European Russia accounts for about 75% of Russia's total population. But demographical documents further indicate that 1.8 million Russians live in the European Union (majority in Britain, Germany and France), 1.3 million Russians live in the United States (majority in New York and Washington) and in Canada. Both the United States and Canada, and European Union have provided better living conditions for Russians more than for American, Canadian and European citizens (in fact very small number) who live in the Russian Federation.

But then, the rhetorical questions are: What Would Really Happen to Russia Without the United States and Europe? Can Russia lead the emerging global economic order? Is Russia ready to support developing countries where the United States and Europe have failed? Is Moscow a financial hub and host to international organizations' representation offices as in New York and Washington, and in Europe? Can Russia turn into superpower with hegemony characteristics, and provide the same conditions for foreigners as obtained in the United States and Europe? Is this the end of Russians' American and European Dream?

Dr Andrey Kortunov's distinctive question is: What Would Happen to the World Without the United States? Special gratitude for food-for-thought and thought-provoking question from Dr Andrey Kortunov, the Director General of RIAC. The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) is a non-profit academic and diplomatic think tank that was established in February 2010. The RIAC makes strengthening peace, friendship and solidarity its direction of activities, and works closely with the state, academic community, business, and civil society in an effort to find foreign policy solutions to complex diverse issues.

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***Kester Kenn Klomegah***, who worked previously with Inter Press Service (IPS), is now a regular contributor to Global Research. As a versatile researcher, he believes that everyone deserves equal access to quality and trustworthy media reports.

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