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“We Are Relevant, Influential and Respected”

Sergey Ryabkov,
Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation

Armen Oganesyan, Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs: Sergey Alekseyevich, over the past several months, the pace of international life has become extremely intense and evidently fast. What would you single out as the most important thing amid this mass of events?

S. Ryabkov: The pace has certainly accelerated. I have no doubts about that. The most important thing for us is the continued strengthening – and I mean it – of Russia’s positions on the international arena, in spite of all the attempts to portray the situation as if Russia is in isolation, all alone. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are relevant, we are influential and we are respected everywhere.

To get down to the facts, in April, Russia’s BRICS presidency got off to a flying start. Within two and a half months, a number of major BRICS related events took place in Russia. Furthermore, a major nonproliferation forum took place, a review conference in New York from late April until late May. This event is held once every five years. And I should also mention perhaps a series of very important, intense and constructive contacts at the top and other levels with the leaders of Latin American countries. This sets the current year apart from the previous year and the year 2013.

Q: *Since you are responsible for the U.S. track at the Foreign Ministry, what is the cause of such an obvious cooling in Russian-American relations?*

A: The principal cause is the failure of Washington and, on the whole, of the U.S. political elites across the country to accept Russia’s policy, Russia’s independent course, our firm and consistent opposition to any attempts of other countries led by the U.S. to impose behavioral models and value systems.

There are lots of examples and there were also plenty – let's put it this way – even in the "pre-Crimean" period. I will mention only three. First, it was the unacceptable practice of the adoption of our children in the U.S. A large number of tragic situations prompted us to respond to that. That is to say, in a certain sense, a war of measures and countermeasures began during that period.

Second, it was the situation where NSA contractor Edward Snowden decided to seek asylum in the Russian Federation. Needless to say, the decision to grant him such status aroused a storm of indignation in Washington, and they started

tightening the screws on Russia. There were many other situations, including on the regional level, which cooled our relations even further.

That came to a head – this is the third example – with Crimea and Sevastopol. Our relations went downhill from there, but through none of our fault. The sanction leverage that the U.S. administration is using doesn't produce the desired result, but the U.S. course is not being corrected anyway. This is why we have what we have. Indeed, today is one of the most difficult periods in relations between our countries.

The sanctions that the U.S. introduced against us last year are arranged so that they do not hinder the more or less normal development of trade.

Q: I recall that President Barack Obama's administration was hurt by President V.V. Putin's article in the U.S. press, where he spoke about the exclusiveness of the American nation.

A: In that article, the Russian president – if you remember – says that God created all people equal. This came at the end of the article. It proved difficult for the Americans to argue this point so they gave way to emotions. It seems to me that the Americans talk about the equality and exclusiveness of countries and nations only within their close circle. When, however, those who they do not regard as equal dare to question American exclusiveness this is resented or taken as an insult. The Americans have a system of unwritten taboos, their own PC laws as to who may and who may not speak out on particular issues. For our part, we believe that the democratic nature of international relations that is advocated by the Russian Federation (I would like to stress that this is not in conflict with the concern about sovereignty, the need to ensure non-interference in

internal affairs or our consistent demands to respect all principles of international law) presupposes the freedom of expression, including opinions that are in some way or other unpleasant to the Americans. With democratic international relations, everyone can and should express his opinion. If it hurts somebody we believe that there is no need to resort to mentorship and moralization; it is better to get to the bottom of the problem.

Incidentally, addressing another aspect of our relations with the US, we recently published a commentary on the State Department's report on the implementation of international treaties. Some people, who see the situation in our relations as difficult, perhaps artificially politicized and affected by leftover phobias, will say that this document, our commentary was made on the "you are another fool" or "you lynch Negroes" principle. This, however, is a primitive view of what is going on. For a normal dialogue to develop and for countries to communicate and achieve results, it is impossible always to agree with one another. Thesis and antithesis produce synthesis. Natural discourse – call it what you will – consists in that a country upholds its views but at the same time listens to what its opponents have to say. This is precisely how Russia acts.

Unfortunately, it is difficult for the Americans to have a debate or simply dialogue about the U.S. "exclusiveness," messianism, its vision of its role, questions such as why the country's image that has evolved there over decades and centuries is that of "a city upon a hill" or "a beacon of democracy" that lights up everything around it. A legitimate question arises: Does the U.S. have grounds to say that it is indeed ahead of other countries in some respects? The answer is: Yes. However, this is not a reason for making the next step and insisting that it is better or, as they say now, "cooler" than everybody else. It is simply necessary to communicate normally and search for compromise solutions and common denominators with those who do not think so. So far the Americans are not very good at this.

***Q:** According to some reports, during the year of sanctions, Russia's trade turnover with the European Union has fallen, while its trade with the U.S. has grown. How could this happen?*

A: Unfortunately, we do not have a coordinated customs statistics methodology with the U.S. This, by the way, is a shortcoming that we inherited from the previous era. We lack certain basic, framework documents in the economic sphere. U.S. statistics and our statistics differ con-

siderably. We see growth, while the Americans see a certain decline. In any case, however, there is an approximate balance, or basically the same level. It points to two things. First, there is a demand for American products, including machinery and technical equipment. Second, the sanctions that the U.S. introduced against us last year are arranged so that they do not hinder the more or less normal development of trade. I am not talking about the entire range of economic ties. I am only talking about bilateral trade. We are not against it, but we do not want to shoot ourselves in the foot. We have always said that sanctions are not our method, not our path, not our choice. So, if, despite the sanctions and the general sharp cooling in bilateral relations, trade is developing, we can only welcome this.

What is happening in our relations with the European Union is a separate question. I think that the sanction scheme that is being used against Russia on the U.S. initiative contains approaches and mechanisms that are hurting Europeans, European economic operators more than they are hurting U.S. operators.

***Q:** How would you assess the prospects for the resolution of Iran's nuclear issue? Will an agreement be signed on June 30?*

A: What has already been done, achieved, accumulated, and committed to paper significantly, definitely outweighs all of the unresolved problems. We are presently half a step away from a final agreement. At the same time, we see how active the opponents of the agreement have become – what's more, not only in the U.S. and Iran, i.e., the countries that are involved the most closely in the negotiating process, but also in other states, including those that do not participate in the talks. Curious things are happening. You may have paid attention to reports about the malware that was used at the talks and detected by Kaspersky Lab. I believe that by June 30, we will at least know for certain whether any serious problems have arisen or whether we are ready to sign an agreement. Plus or minus two or three days does not make much difference. This is a generally accepted diplomatic practice. There is even this term "stopping the clock." Then, after midnight, more time is provided for talks.

In Lausanne, there was also a certain deadline: March 30. In reality, however, this negotiating period ended on April 2. Nobody is dramatizing this situation. On the whole, I believe that we will reach an agreement now and there will not be a dramatic turn for the worse.

Q: How serious is the force known as ISIL (the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant)? Some describe it as a terrorist organization like al-Qaeda, while others elevate it to the status as a caliphate, i.e., a full-fledged state. How is this phenomenon seen in the United States and Russia?

A: This danger cannot be underestimated. Of course, it is a terrorist organization and the fact that it makes such claims indicates that these people are quite sure of their strength, are self-confident. Evidently, they have capabilities to continue to recruit extremists into their ranks. It is common knowledge that militants from dozens of countries are fighting on the side of the ISIL.

This is disturbing, as the global network of the recruitment of mercenaries for terrorist groups and, even worse, fighting on the side of the ISIL on ideological grounds, is fraught with unpredictable consequences for many countries and regions. We are drawing attention to this.

Regarding our agreement or disagreement with the U.S., of course, it would be desirable if the Americans did not try to divide terrorists into good and bad, friends and foes, which, unfortunately, still happens to be the case. Meanwhile, Washington's political preferences in the Middle East, in relation to the regional governments that have to deal directly with the ISIL, are affecting the common goal of fighting this organization. Yes, the U.S., together with its coalition, is delivering airstrikes on ISIL positions in different countries, but the legal foundation for doing so is extremely flimsy. I am not even talking about the fact that there is not a relevant UN Security Council resolution. This is a separate question. The U.S. does not coordinate its actions even with countries on whose territory such strikes are delivered. A case in point is Damascus, Syria, where we are seeing a direct threat on the part of the ISIL, but nevertheless, as far as we know, there is no interaction on this issue between the Syrian government and the U.S. administration. Reality should put everything in its place and conclusions from this should be made in favor of a universal, unified approach toward combating the terrorist threat.

Q: In early July, a summit of BRICS countries will take place in Ufa, Russia. Can any breakthrough decisions be expected, considering that international tensions are rising?

A: BRICS is moving forward very confidently. Everyone in the world reckons with this association. There is a high interest in it. You can launch

a computer program and see hashtag and word citation statistics from year to year, although such a mechanical approach is not particularly welcome. However, judging from the number of events in various countries, even from the number of critical publications, whose authors are not sympathetic, say, toward a multipolar world order, it is clear that BRICS is strengthening, and there is no doubt about that. BRICS is asserting itself. Documents that are being prepared for the Ufa summit are at an advanced stage of coordination. In Ufa, BRICS will make a major step in its economic activity. When all the decisions are made and all the countries ratify the documents not only on the New Development Bank but also on the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, it will be essential to take our economic partnership to the next stage.

The BRICS political segment is developing. Over the past several weeks alone, a series of consultations on space security and the Middle East took place in Moscow. A meeting of high-level BRICS representatives for security issues took place in Moscow. All of these topics are discussed in a friendly, collective spirit without any attempts to impose decisions or artificially accelerate this process. It is also important to preserve the BRICS character as an association working on a positive agenda, where there is no "gradation of members" (this is simply impossible) or attempts to impose one's approaches on others.

Q: I would like to ask a question concerning your personal impressions. You often meet with your foreign colleagues, other diplomats. Are they really hostile toward us or do they simply follow the official line of pressure on Russia as a matter of form?

A: First of all, this depends on the countries that our diplomatic colleagues represent. There are plenty of states that not simply do not share a hostile approach toward Russia but on the contrary, believe that we are acting correctly in the present situation. This is becoming an incentive for our further rapprochement. As for the U.S., the EU and other countries that – let's put it this way – are aligned with the U.S. and the EU, the situation cannot be described as an open-and-shut case, to put it mildly. Diplomacy, like military service, above all, involves strict discipline. Nobody deviates from his instructions and everything is done thoroughly and meticulously. On the other hand, it is one thing to follow instructions but quite another to act in line with your convictions. Here, nuances are possible, but I would not exaggerate them because... Well, simply

because people who are in conflict with the policy that they have to follow cannot last in a diplomatic position for very long.

Q: What you are saying now in describing a diplomat's work brings up this question: The world is becoming more complex; problems are become more wide-ranging and processes are accelerating, among other things due to IT development. In this context, what requirements are set on the diplomatic service today?

A: The main distinctive feature of our times is perhaps the pace that has sharply accelerated due to the general dynamics of international processes and the globalization of information flows. In our profession, we always pronounce the word "reaction" with a certain measure of skepticism, because we were taught that policy should not be reactive but that it should be proactive, well-thought-out, realistic and forward-looking.

Q: They also said, "assertive."

A: Assertive, absolutely. It seems to me, however, that reactivity, the reactive type of behavior is characteristic of diplomatic services in all countries to a greater extent now than before. In some situations, this becomes almost the main motive force of politics. In this case, I am not talking about Russia. That's first. The second thing that is required of the diplomat at present is the ability to address a great number of problems more effectively than before, since their interdependence and interconnection has strengthened and the situation, say, with regard to climate change or a national disaster in some part of the world inevitably has an impact on international venues, where diplomats should know exactly what is going on, know the background and the evolution of positions on an issue at hand. For example, fresh water reserves in the world are shrinking, migration flows are growing and conflicts may arise.

The role of the public, NGOs and the nongovernmental factor, which has a direct influence on politics, has grown significantly. Foreign policy is increasingly losing its status as an elitist occupation of people sitting in offices behind closed curtains, in frozen postures, and writing, if not with a goose feather, and typing on a keyboard something that is understandable only to themselves and their bosses. They need to liven up, to be more resourceful.

Q: *Word has it that U.S. medium-range missiles could be deployed in the UK and other European countries. What is this, putting out a feeler or a real intention?*

A: Armen Garnikovich, you have mentioned the UK. I would like to say right away that we watch very closely, analyze and evaluate everything that official representatives of NATO countries, including the UK, say on

this issue. It would like to point out that the way the corresponding signals from the UK foreign secretary were presented in the media is the worst possible example of distortion, bias, quoting out of context, and so on.

Having said this, I should stress immediately that I am not thus trying to "defend" the policy of the UK, the U.S. and other NATO member countries in the nuclear sphere as a whole or specifically with regard to what I would describe as half-threats, which are directed at us and are related to the possible decision to deploy on European territory something that is prohibited under the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles between the USSR and the U.S.

The prehistory to this issue over the past several years adds up to that the U.S. accuses us of actions violating this treaty. We deny this, saying that to continue the discussion of the issue we need more information, more data from the U.S. to see the grounds on which it makes such claims. Meanwhile, for many years – regardless of the Ukraine crisis and these intentional information leaks from the U.S. – for many years, ever since the 1980s, we have been saying that we have a problem, for example, with the fact that the U.S. uses the so-called missile targets in conducting test launches of missile defense systems. Their parameters fall under the provisions of the treaty under consideration. In the course of such missile target launches, elements of medium-range systems, prohibited by the treaty, are being developed.

We also have other concerns. To continue the dialogue, we need more factual material from the United States. We need to hear something else besides the groundless accusations from the Americans. Instead, we are being told: "So, you are rejecting the dialogue? In that case, we will have to take military-technical measures to restrain Russia." And so, each time,

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this screw is tightened further. Now they have started hinting more clearly at the possible deployment of “something” in Europe. This is a reflection of a policy that is doomed. It is impossible to come to agreement on this basis. Nobody ever comes to agreement under pressure. We have not withdrawn from the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles; we understand and recognize its value. The American claims are unacceptable to us. They are groundless.

Q: They cite the deployment of our Iskander class missiles in Kaliningrad.

A: This does not match reality. Iskander missiles do not fall within the range banned by the Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, and this has been discussed repeatedly. Incidentally, the same goes for our well-known R 500 missile, which is periodically addressed in special publications. The Americans have no problem with it either. They are talking about some other violations.

Q: Without specifying them.

A: They provide no specifics so that this could be addressed professionally through a substantive dialogue between experts.

Q: Even before, the G20 was an influential format. What is its role amid the current events in the world?

A: It will continue to expand. The Turkish presidency at the G20 this year and especially the Chinese presidency next year – taking into account the character of our relations with China – provide a sound foundation for that. Generally speaking, we have no illusions about any format in which we participate. We believe that playing in multiple registers and participating in various organizations is the sought-after means of ensuring Russian interests and influence on the decision-making process. At the CSTO, we do one thing; in the G20, our focus is different; at East Asian summits, it is something else, and at BRICS, our focus is different again. And all of these are complementary processes. The G20 is a non-politicized format. It has preserved the attributes of an informal association and the character of an anti-crisis tool. It emerged as a format in response to the severe crisis of 2008-2009 and has in part remained that way.

However, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the implementation of certain decisions that are made at the G20 runs into difficulty. This applies, among other things, to the reform of Bretton-Woods institutions – international finance and financial regulations institutions that have existed since the postwar period.

The IMF is in need of reform, and BRICS has addressed this issue within its framework. Corresponding decisions were made in the G20. We will continue to work on this in the future. I believe that the introduction of a political agenda to the G20 format will also become inevitable – if not now, then with time. The G8, in its time, turned into a purely political platform, because essentially, the entire economic agenda went to the G20. At present, the G7 is predominantly a political format, I believe. I have read the G7's Elmau Summit declaration. It is interesting, curious. But it lacks flavor, spice. You can leaf through it and put it down.

Q: Do you believe that Latin America and the Caribbean can become major collective players in the polycentric world that Russia upholds and defends?

A: They have already become one – there is no question about that – what's more, regardless of what kind of integration associations they have to coordinate and harmonize their positions with. The Latin American and Caribbean groups are strongly asserting themselves at the UN, at platforms like the IAEA, and at various organizations in Geneva. Regarding Latin American associations, it is a case of unity through diversity. There is the Pacific Alliance and there are ALBA, MERCOSUR, UNASUR, and CELAC. We seek to develop pragmatic cooperation with all of these organizations.

In March, when S.V. Lavrov visited Central America, a relevant joint document was adopted. We are in talks on permanent observer status in the Central American Integration System, one of their most important associations. Similar work is underway to formalize our ties with CELAC, but the point is that Latin America is opening up and moving toward the rest of the world. I am sure that there will be enough room for all. We do not engage in the geopolitical games of rivalry or quasi-rivalry. We believe that non-politicized efforts to promote relations with all those who are interested in this ensure better results than the attempts to cause division or set one party against another.

Q: You have mentioned MERCOSUR. Is there a chance that a free economic zone agreement will be reached between the Eurasian Economic Union and the MERCOSUR association, or is it more logical to sign bilateral agreements with each Latin American country individually?

A: We are past the stage when we signed such agreements – say, not free trade agreements in the direct sense of the word, but agreements on a preferential trading regime, i.e., something in between WTO standards and a free trade zone in the full sense of the word – individually on a bilateral basis. Following the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union and the transfer of a significant share of national trade policy, tariff regulation and other powers to the level of the Eurasian Economic Commission, this commission now conducts talks on behalf of Russia and other EAEU countries.

This also applies to MERCOSUR. The work is in progress; the required results have yet to be achieved. So, at this point it is difficult to say whether this will be a free trade agreement in the full sense of the word, like the one that we recently signed with Vietnam, but I would like to stress that the Latin American economies and the EAEU economies complement one another very well and there is a lower risk of undesirable competitive consequences arising for various sectors. Regarding tariff free trade, for our part, we – the Foreign Ministry as a government agency responsible for foreign policy – see fewer dangers and risks in Latin America. But of course, this should be assessed by experts – our economists and trade policy specialists.

Q: What is Russia's view of the position of the Latin American and Caribbean Basin countries that act more independently of the U.S. in domestic policy and on the international arena, advocating for a multi-polar world?

A: The fact that the U.S. has reviewed the policy of total blockade against Cuba, which has been pursued since the 1960s, and started forging a rapprochement with Havana, speaks for itself. Cuba was officially removed from the U.S. List of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Generally speaking, I believe that the decision to put it on this list was absurd.

Washington and Havana are in dialogue about the conditions for resuming the activity of their diplomatic missions. All of this goes to show that realities are changing, and this is acknowledged by all, includ-

ing our American colleagues. "The independent political course of Latin American countries" is probably not quite a correct term. It is more preferable to speak about self-reliance and confidence in following a foreign policy. After all, "independence" implies a certain measure of "dependence," albeit on a subconscious level. Meanwhile, we say that politicians, especially new generations of politicians in Latin America, are more open-minded in their worldview and their assessment of what is needed, what is required for their countries. Of course, it is pleasant and encouraging that Russia, like China, has popped up on the Latin American political and economic radar screens. There is mutual, reciprocal interest, which naturally leads to a bridge to multipolarity.

Q: Our diplomacy has become more active in Latin America. However, in my opinion, specific joint projects could develop more dynamically. For example, what is impeding the development of our trade, economic, investment, cultural, and tourist projects with Latin American countries?

A: Geographic remoteness, a lack of information and a shortage of resources that can be used to stimulate our exports there and to guarantee investment. None of this can be denied. Indeed, there are certain constraints, including the monocultural character of export and import flows. I am satisfied to say that we have moved away from the practice of the recent past, when trade with Latin America could be reduced to the "fertilizers for bananas" formula. However, even now, the share of deeply processed products, both imports and exports, is insufficient. Nevertheless, there are some positive examples that stand out prominently against the backdrop of what is happening in our relations with other countries. I am referring, for example, to the resumption of our motor vehicles supply to Latin America. In the past, all of this was associated with our Lada and Niva cars. At present, these are Kamaz trucks and Russian buses, demand for which is growing. This shows that their quality is good, and now there is talk about assembly facilities.

Our manufacturers of power and technical equipment, primarily of power generating equipment, are reentering these markets. Several tenders have been won, some of them very important. I would like to hope that this is not a "one swallow does not make a summer" case but the start of a period of steady growth, if not of a new stage.

Incidentally, Latin America is the only part of the world where gross trade turnover and Russian exports rose last year – what's more, in value

terms, not only in absolute volumes. Again, this goes to show that we do not live off of oil products and fertilizers alone. Tourist flows, as well as imports, are impeded by differences in the exchange rate, which is visible, and naturally, the distance is also a factor. Nevertheless, all of this is on our radar screen; we are working on this. I believe that the Latin Americans also understand that they need to make greater efforts in terms of promotion and the provision of information about the opportunities there for vacationing, and not only on beaches but also for ecological tourism, for visiting historical landmarks, among other things. In short, it is definitely a unique region. I am sure that within the next several years, Russian citizens will really discover Latin America for themselves – in terms of business, tourism and contacts, including educational and any other contacts.

Q: Constructive dialogue between Washington and Havana has become a major factor of Latin American politics today. Things are headed toward a normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations, which, in the present-day conditions, cannot but impact on the relations between Russia and Cuba. What is the Russian forecast for the possibility of a Cuban-U.S. rapprochement?

A: I do not think that we have ever allied ourselves against any country, nor will we do so in the future. Raising the question in terms of “who are you with – us or them?” is counterproductive, and this has been corroborated by history. Furthermore, in today’s world, this approach is not always taken seriously, including by those who grew up within this system of coordinates in the past. However, these are only general observations. More specifically, I would like to say that we have supported – including publicly, and I am pleased with the opportunity to do so once again – the ongoing normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations. It includes the restoration of historical justice and putting an end to one of the most odious examples of the use of unilateral, illegitimate sanctions in international relations.

What will happen next, this is a question for Havana and Washington. I believe that both sides have calculated the risks involved, reputational and other losses. There is no reason to believe that this issue has not been treated seriously enough, especially given that there have been several decades for consideration. During this time, a very large number of analytical reports and memos could have been written.

We should proceed on the premise that opportunities for our bilateral interaction with Cuba and our contacts with Cuba in all areas of interest to us are expanding, not narrowing. This also goes for political issues, but I will not go into detail here.

In the economic sphere, too, today, we have new decisions that we have sought for years – regarding the Mariel special economic zone and our participation in the modernization of the Cuban metallurgical industry, among other things. We should work in a focused and concentrated way on deepening our relations. On the international arena, Cuba is a most reliable ally and partner, a very influential country in the Non-Aligned Movement. We greatly value our cooperation and are sure that our mutual support at the UN and other platforms will continue.

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***Q:** Where can the new generation of politicians, which will replace Raul Castro and his team, lead Cuba?*

A: Armen Garnikovich, I cannot speculate on some prospect, as this is simply unethical. We see a very coherent system of political decisions and views that are communicated to us by the Cuban leadership, by Cuba's top officials and representatives on all other levels of government. There is simply no reason to look for some gaps or think in terms that you have suggested.

We are confident that the reform course that is being implemented under Raul Castro's leadership and is being very effectively followed by the Cuban government will continue. It is producing results, among other things, in the economic sphere. This, in turn, strengthens the country's influence and its international positions.

***Q:** As is known, Russia has used diplomatic methods to facilitate a preliminary agreement between Iran and Western countries on the lifting of sanctions in exchange for the absolute transparency of Iran's nuclear program. Your mediation has been noted. However, could the lifting of sanctions on Iran affect the Russian economy?*

A: There are two aspects here. First, I proceed on the premise that it is better to participate in a process that has a direct bearing on us than not to participate in it. I suspect that without our participation, the pending deal with Iran would have been worse from the viewpoint of Russian interests than with our participation.

Second, we have already achieved what U.S. President Barack Obama has described as breakthrough and historic agreements in Lausanne on April 2. These are indeed serious agreements, which have laid the groundwork for the agreement that I hope will materialize by June 30. However, let's look at oil quotes. Have they plummeted since April 2? Let's consider how much should be invested in Iran's infrastructure before the Iranians can boost the volume of exports to the "pre-sanctions" period.

Generally, I understand that the global hydrocarbon market has become extremely volatile and dependent on psychological factors, panic on stock exchanges, the expectation of something, etc. Furthermore, this market today is far more dependent on nontraditional suppliers, including the United States, who are consistently building up shale oil supplies and starting to move toward exporting liquefied gas to world markets. We should look at the volumes: What country supplies what and how much. If Iran adds, say, 1 million barrels a day, with the global consumption of 97-98 million, how will this affect oil quotes? I do not know, but at the same time I am sure that the lifting of sanctions – for a start, the easing of the sanction regime, including the lifting of the arms embargo, as a priority measure once the agreement is signed, will have a direct positive effect on Russian suppliers in these spheres. So everything is relative.

Key words: BRICS, Russian-U.S. relations, sanctions, Iran's nuclear program, Latin America.