

B. Obama vs. V. Putin **(Comparative analysis of political discourse and foreign policy)**

Political discourse attracts attention of scholars. Political discourse is a number of speeches delivered by statesmen in the sphere of politics and oriented to certain audience and made at a certain time.

Political discourse is functionally shaped by ideology of a certain group and it performs definite functions. It is clear for understanding and has a clear purpose. One of the major functions is persuasion, because verbal influence is a goal of political communication. It also presupposes evaluative meanings. We are convinced that political discourse can be called evaluative discourse which is composed of evaluative strategies.

Structural components of political discourse are ideological statements that are abstract, but clearly shaped notions. They are easy to remember, for example: “axis of evil”, “Arab spring”, “orange revolution” etc. Within time they become set phrases. Components of political discourse are stable words and word combinations that are rational. They shape goals of politicians.

Analysis of political discourse logically presupposes analysis of speeches made by politicians. The speeches are key mechanisms of conveying information, influence on the audience, powerful means of informing and persuasion of people.

Texts of political speeches are well structured and semantically loaded. Speeches considerably help politicians to sound their political goals (for instance to win elections).

Political speech is purposefully-oriented which is to change status quo – change balance of forces. It is a means of political struggle (either for or against the influence on the state bodies, social opinion, institutions etc). Speeches reflect social and political phenomena are directly related to events and political subjects.

We interpret political speeches as the forms of political reports, process of communication and as a specific kind of social action. Political speeches are oriented to a wide range of social groups (parties or organizations), therefore they are supposed to have a high degree of social influence. The main context of political speeches is to

formulate purposes, values and strategy of a political group oriented to voters and against political opponents.

Every political speech is pragmatically oriented, i.e., it has strategic and tactical tasks¹. Its' basic instrumental function is struggling for power. It performs the function of integration and differentiation. Integration can be demonstrated during the period of "cold war", when speeches of American presidents assisted unification of American people in confrontation with the enemy, the former USSR. Function of differentiation contributes to separation of hostile elements in foreign policy. Political speeches perform the functions of interpretation and orientation, because in the process of speech delivery, politicians explain importance of the events, analyze their causes, correlation with other events, make conclusions and estimate the political situation. Speeches also do the function of control, it means that a politician tries to set basis for unification of behavior, thoughts, wants and feelings of people.

Political speech serves as means of manipulation as far as the purpose of the speaker is not only to get audience support, but also to cause responsive reaction, which could be implemented later on.

Political speeches of American presidents are tough, pragmatically oriented to facts, events, analysis of political situations which lay basis for adequate generalizations.

They are characterized by evaluative scales and notions. Major conceptual notions of reality interpretation include certain categories, such as: 1) system of opposition: 'good' – 'evil', 'we' versus 'they'; 2) hierarchy (political, military, social etc); 3) progressive – regressive complexes (interpretation of reality as progress or regress)².

Analysis of speeches, delivered by American and Russian presidents indicates that there are models of the world, rooted in the minds of American and Russian politicians. Speeches include the most effective models of influence: 'justice' and 'good' sooner or later win according to set ideas of American and Russian people about 'good' and 'evil'. 'Good' are the USA or Russia and the rest of the countries are 'evil' depending on the circumstances.

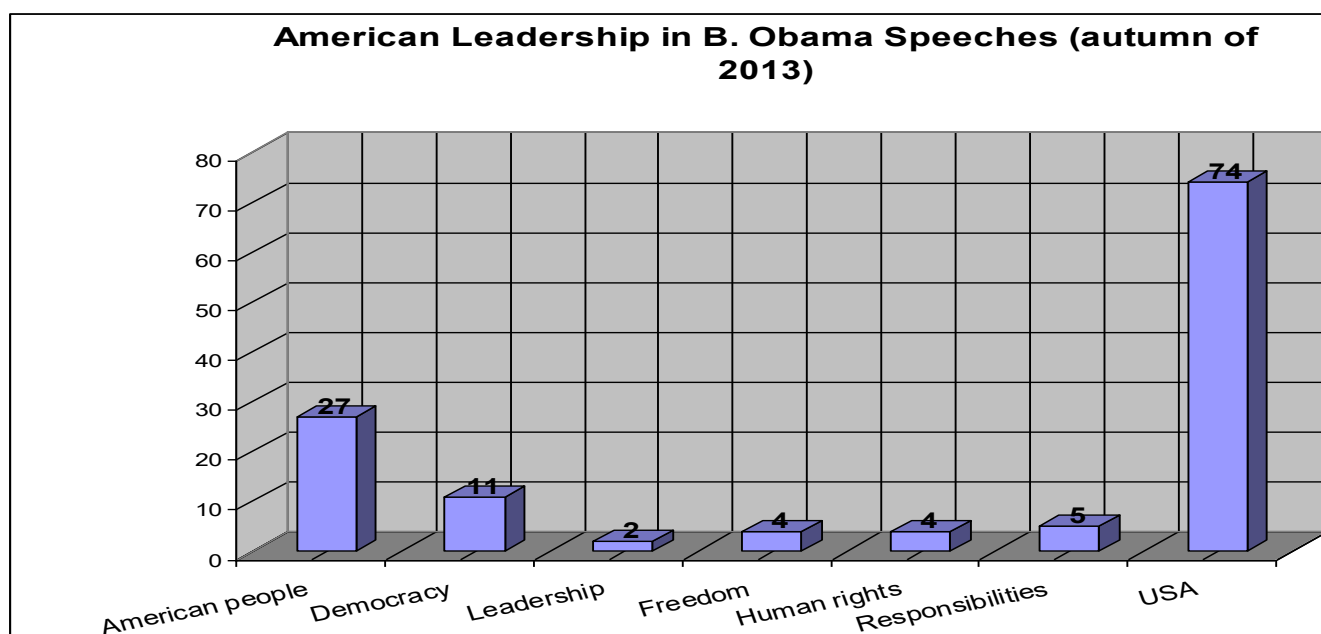
¹ Алтунян А.Г. Анализ политических текстов. – Москва: Университетская книга; Логос, 2006. – С 15.

² Ibid [С. 45].

Traditionally presidential speeches are structurally composed as the pattern as it follows: President (hero) + negative circumstances (obstacles) in political sphere → efforts (foreign policy) = Result /Changes (reward).

The main idea of foreign policy program of B. Obama is renewal of American leadership: “We can neither retreat from the world nor try to bully it into submission. We must lead the world, by deed and by example. Such leadership demands that we retrieve a fundamental insight of Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy. The security and well-being of each and every American depend on the security and well-being of those who live beyond our borders. The mission of the United States is to provide global leadership grounded in the understanding that the world shares a common security and a common humanity”³.

Table 1.

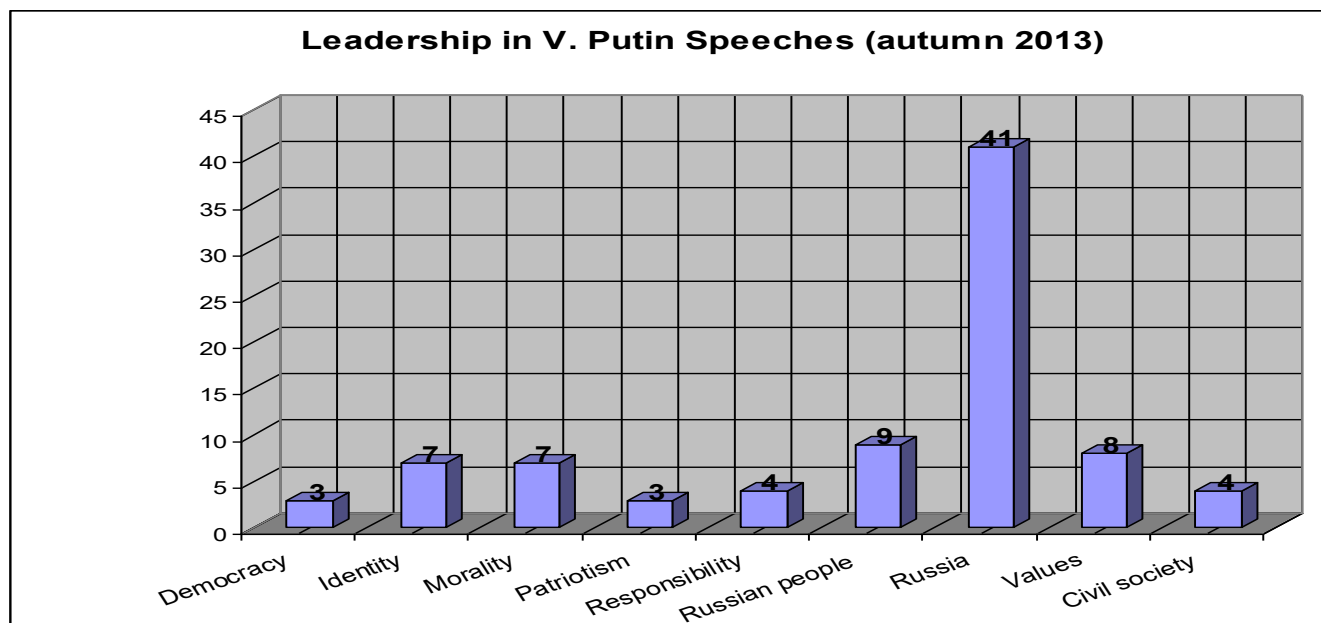


The dominant notions, distinguished in B. Obama rhetoric are ‘the USA’, ‘American people’ and ‘Democracy’. They reflect mentality and the style of thinking of American President.

In contrast to B. Obama, V. Putin frequently uses the notions of ‘Russia’, ‘Russian people’, ‘values’ and so on. From his point of view ‘leadership’ is connected only with Russia and its status.

³ Renewing American Leadership by Barack Obama / July-August 2007: 3.

Table 2.



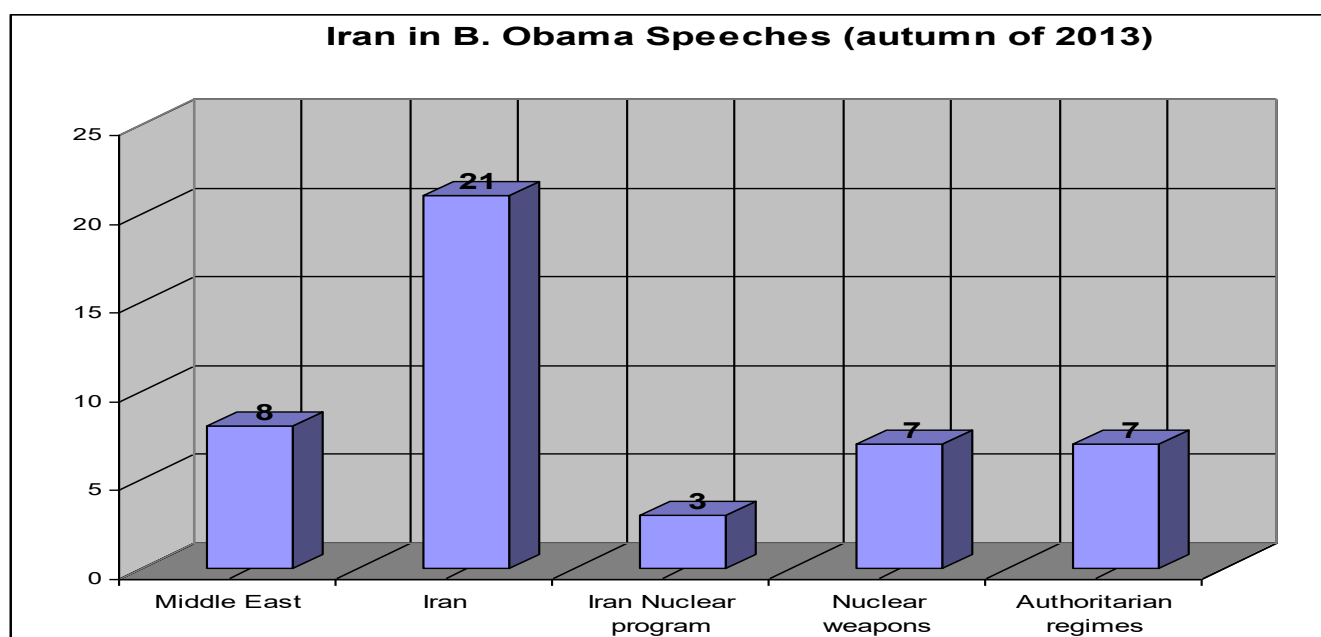
We should mention that President Obama is more consistent not only in rhetoric, but also in his foreign policy course. He calls to expand American values, stands against abuse of power and force. Only in this case the United States, proving the unique character of American system, can pretend to the role of the world leader.

B. Obama makes political steps from the strategy of hegemony to the strategy of leadership and his purposes are quite pragmatic. Washington has to cooperate with allies and partners, confronting international threats and global problems. Statements on the events in Egypt, Syria, Sudan and Libya, made by B. Obama were made simultaneously with statements of European leaders. Such an approach is reasonable because it reduces criticism from the world community, but doesn't reduce the importance of the United States as a world leader. Presidential rhetoric proves the idea of "global leadership of the United States".

We have to give his due to B. Obama, who in a short period of time started 'reloading' of relations with Russia, renewed cooperation with the UNO, withdrew troops from Iraq, strengthened American positions in the Central and Western Europe. His political efforts are supported by statements about 'responsibilities'. Obama speeches are strong means in the process of social opinion formation. They affect world community, because they renew trust to the United States, improving its image after G. Bush-junior presidential term.

At the same time there is a stumbling block on his road and it is the Middle East. Position of the State Department towards Iran under Obama guidance hasn't changed in comparison with previous administration. Exception may be the idea of having direct dialogue with Tehran. Events over the last week indicate that policy conducted by the USA towards Iran was successful.

Table 3.



Iran is frequent in B. Obama rhetoric. It is logical due to the attempts of this Middle-East country to get nuclear weapon.

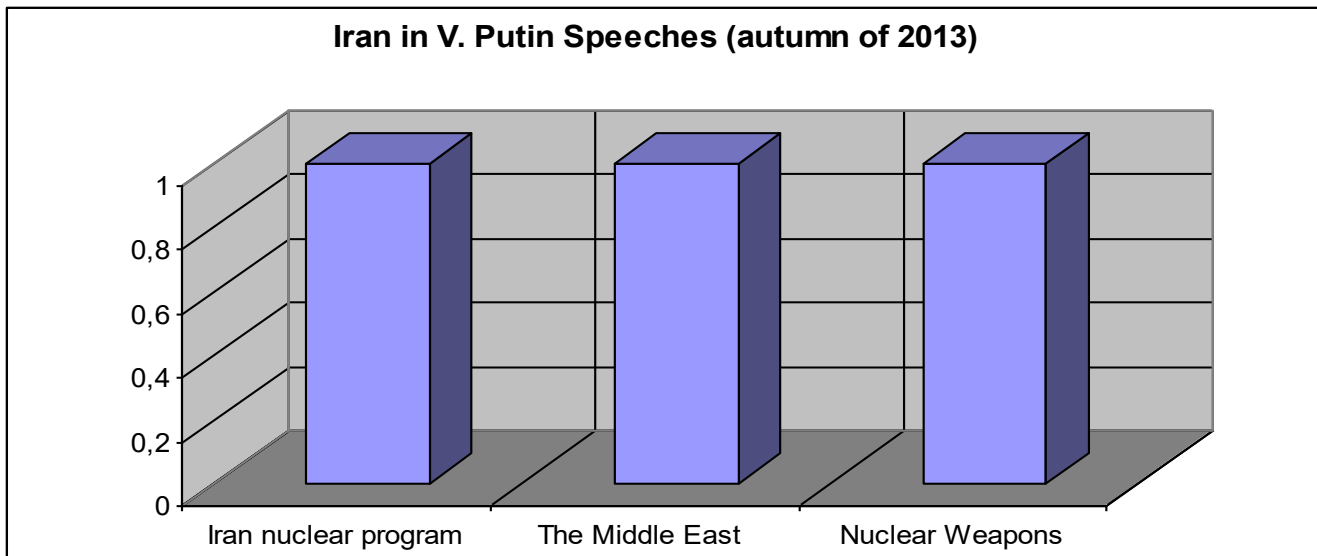
Efforts of the United States and other European countries in reducing nuclear program of Tehran were successful. Iran had invited inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency to visit a heavy-water production plant in Arak, in central Iran.

In a speech in Vienna, the agency's director general, Yukiya Amano, told reporters that it was "for sure" that inspectors would accept the offer⁴. In return for that and other curbs on Tehran's nuclear program, the powers promised a limited easing of the international economic sanctions that have crippled the Iranian economy.

Russia protects Iran because the countries have long-term economic and military relations. Iranian politicians visit Russia and, in its turn, Russian politicians support Tehran in foreign policy course seeing it as a counterweight to Israel in the Middle East. But, comparing rhetoric of two presidents it is obvious that Iran is less frequent in Putin's speeches.

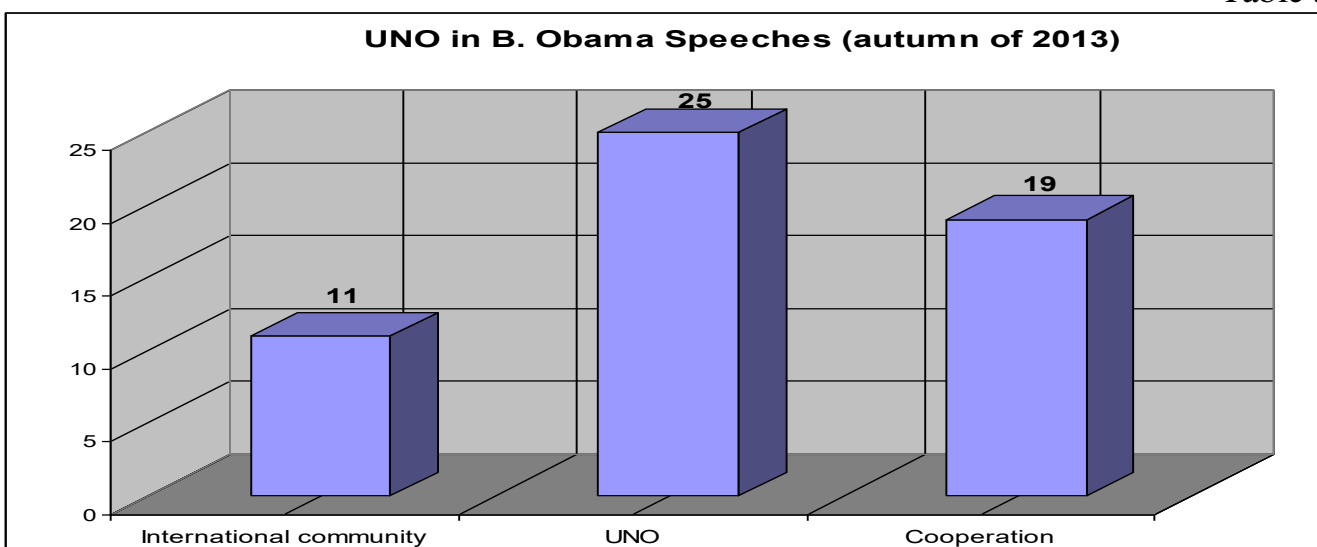
⁴ Cowell Alan. U.N. Nuclear Inspectors are Invited to Iranian Facility / NYT, Nov. 28, 2013.

Table 4.



In contrast to his predecessors B. Obama focuses more on the role of the UNO that is a positive sign in his foreign policy course. Cooperation with the international organization legalizes foreign policy activity of the United States, sets barriers for Washington to apply force in American interests illegally. It improves cooperation with Western countries, the Russian Federation, increases trust of the world to America, which was undermined by mistaken steps made by G. Bush junior. B. Obama rhetoric demonstrates attempts of the president to find balance between the powers of the world. Table 5 illustrates the importance of the UNO and other notions distinguished in his speeches. The number of the above-mentioned notions increased and it means that the weight of the international organization was taken off.

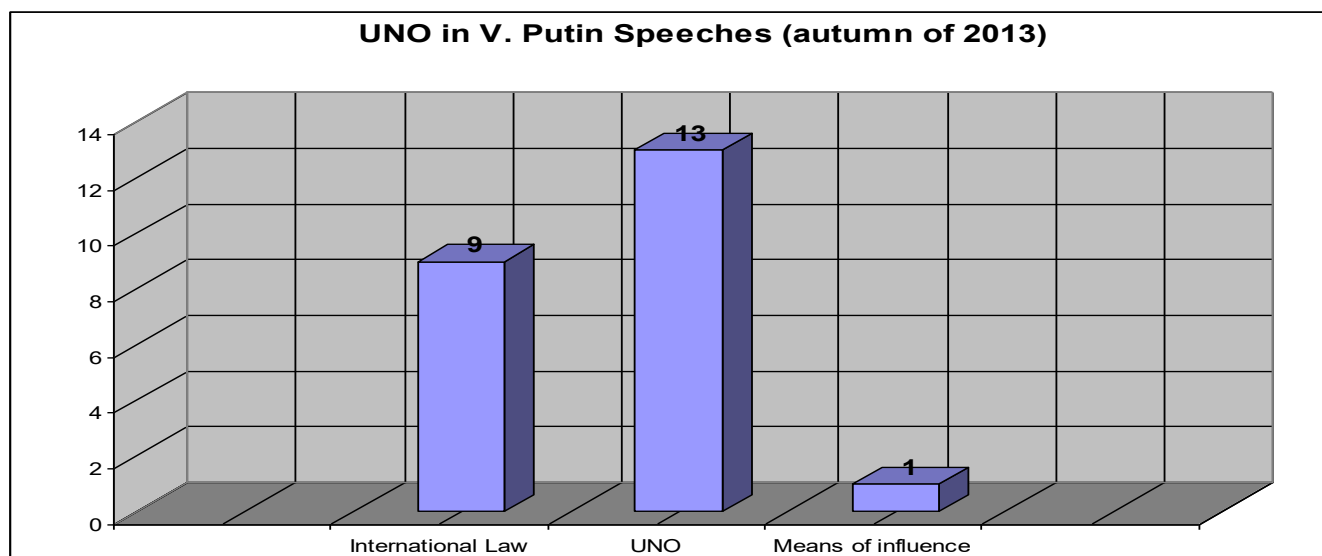
Table 5.



As you can see B. Obama frequently mentioned the notion of the United Nations Organization and the international community. Content analysis proves importance of the

role of the international organization in international relations. In reality the president only softened foreign policy course by some concessions and diplomatic statements.

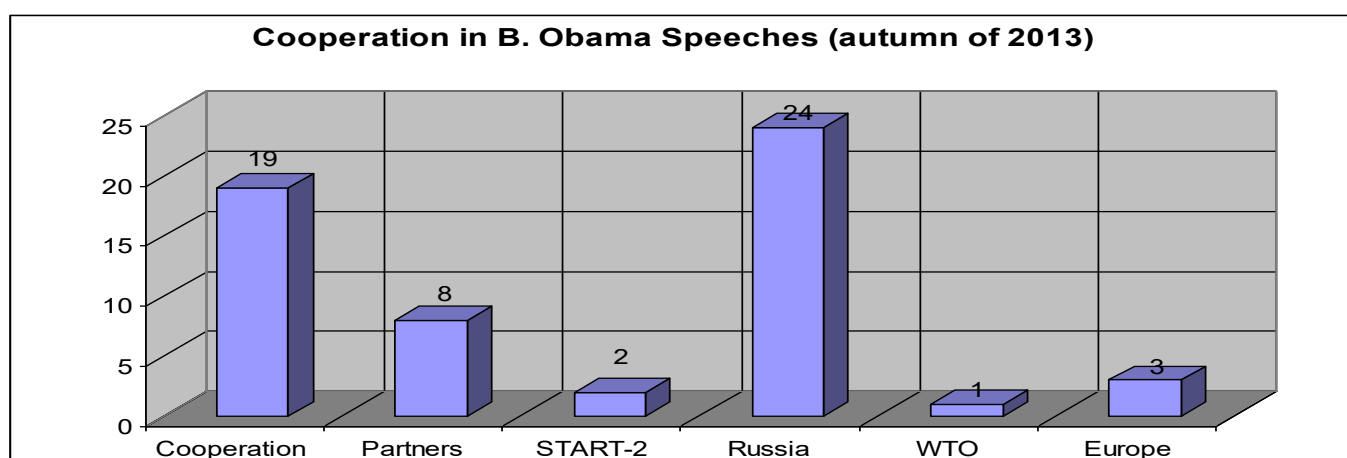
Table 6.



V. Putin does not use the notion of the UNO as often as B. Obama does. Russia quite often used the veto in the UNO in order to avoid punishment for Iran for the development of the nuclear program.

Delivering speeches president Obama focuses on the “reloading relations with Russia”. The goal of this strategy is to strengthen American positions in Afghanistan. White House is interested in getting support from Russia on the issue regarding nuclear ambitions of Iran through Russian support of economic sanctions against Iran. We have distinguished notions in the speeches on the topic of ‘cooperation’.

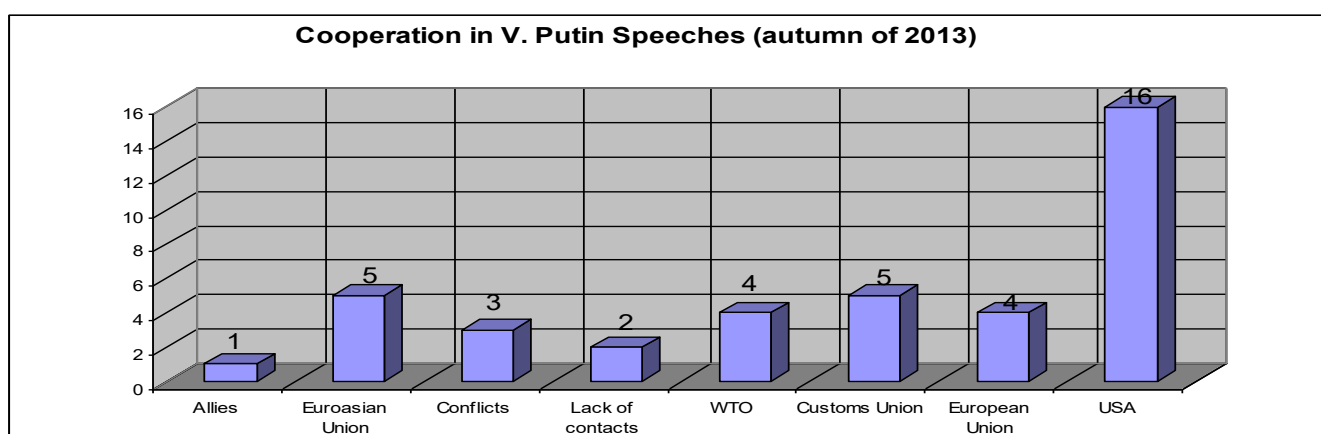
Table 7.



The notion of ‘cooperation’ in the political discourse of B. Obama is accompanied by the notions of ‘partners’ and the notion of ‘START’. Nowadays it is more and more important for the United States to develop relations with other countries. Weakened

positions of Washington in Europe and in Asia, tense relationships with the members of the NATO, hostility from Islamic countries as well as other factors made Obama more flexible in his foreign policy course. He had reconsidered the role of allies not only in domestic, but also in foreign policy of the country. President Obama is more open to dialogue and cooperation with Russia and other countries than President Putin in his rhetoric. Foreign policy steps prove it. Flexible rhetoric of B. Obama softens tough position in international relations.

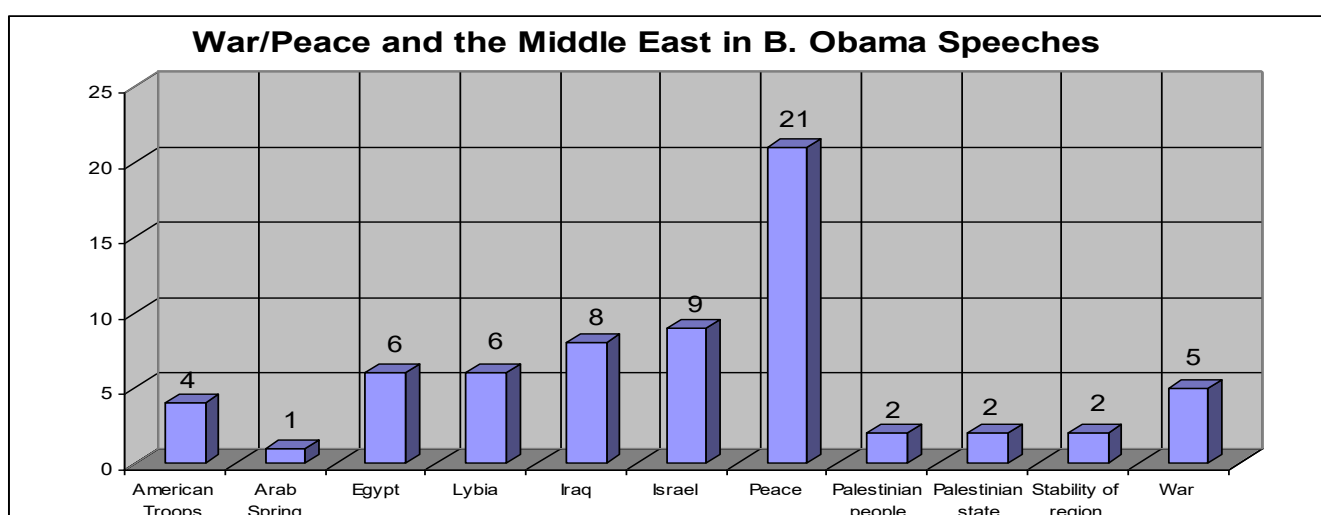
Table 8.



V. Putin is less cooperative than American leader. We suppose that mentality of the former KGB officer is strong enough and it affects thinking and acting of the Russian leader. From Russian point of view the RF doesn't need any partner in international relations because Russia is strong and powerful to solve political problems on its own.

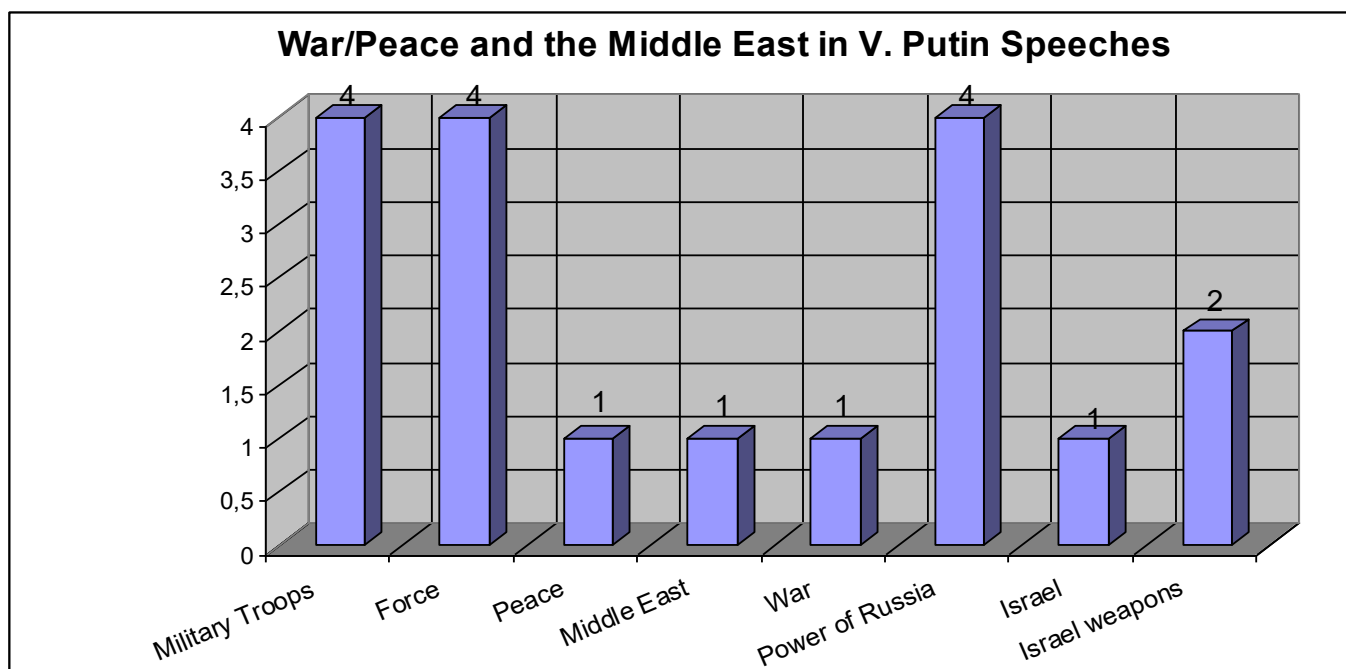
In their political discourses both presidents mention 'war' as a key notion in world affairs.

Table 9.



In political speeches B. Obama frequently focuses his attention on ‘peace’, countries of the Middle East, especially those which suffered from revolutions. The notion of ‘peace’ belongs to the basic concepts of democracy in mentality of American politicians. Statements about threats and dangers justify politics of Obama administration, American interference in domestic affairs of Pakistan, Syria, Libya, Egypt etc. Israel as an American partner in the Middle East attracts attention of American President. Other notions are less frequent depending on the threats they possess.

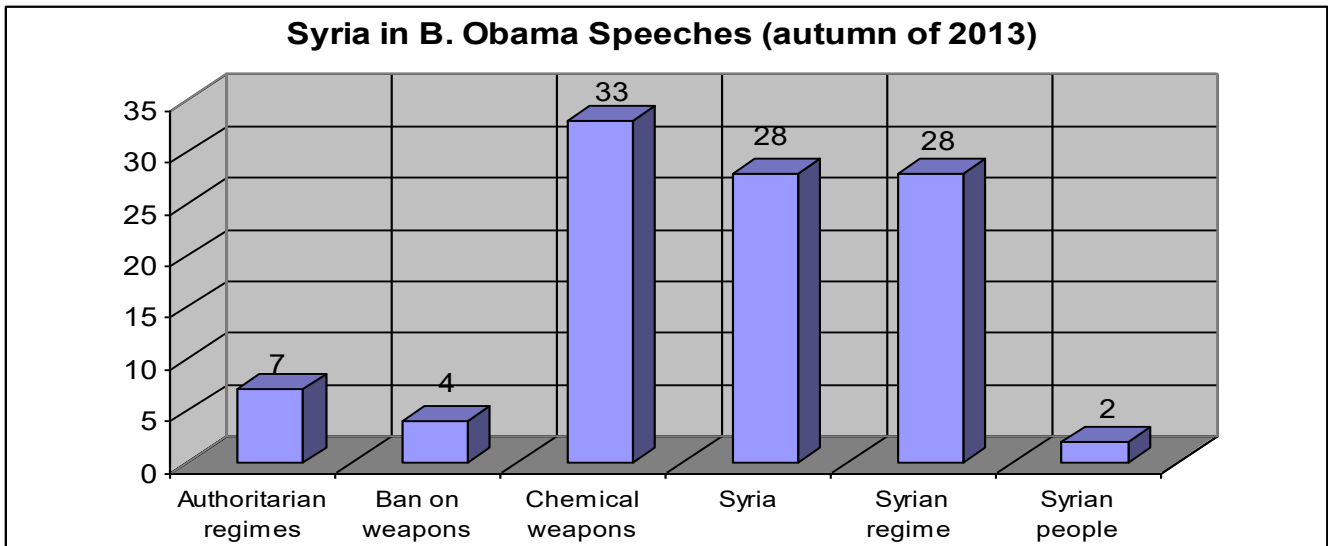
Table 10.



V. Putin position on the Middle East is much more different than of the USA. First of all, because of Moscow interests there. Iran was and is Russian trade partner. Moscow regularly sells weapons Middle East countries and change of status quo seriously undermines Russian positions in the region. Israel serves as a rival in the competition for the leading positions.

Another stumbling block for both countries is Syria which attracted attention many countries of the world especially over the last few months.

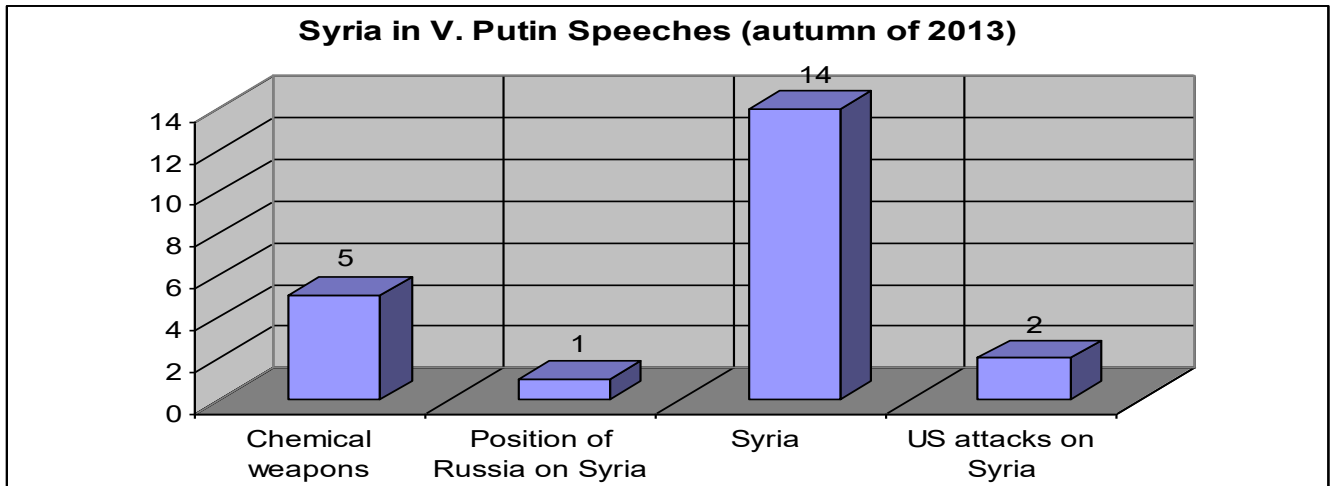
Table 11.



Rhetorically American President brands 'authoritarian regimes'. Syria in its efforts to control the situation in domestic affairs is close to it. It is logical if to take into consideration the number of chemical arsenals located on the territory of Syria. But, on the other hand, more than 159 countries in the world possess chemical weapons and frankly speaking Syria is not alone in the list of dangers. Selective approach in international relations is effective mechanism of social opinion manipulation whether we are talking about American society or world community.

Obama raises the issues of Syrian regime and danger of chemical weapons the regime holds. Such an approach supports the image of American President as a leader. Obama leadership skills were demonstrated by the pursuing and killing of Osama-bin-Laden. President Obama and former minister of Defense L. Panetta made a lot of efforts in order to conduct special operations against Osama bin Laden. His death increased rate of the president especially before the presidential campaign.

Table 12.



Syria worries Putin because of different reasons. It is Russian partner in the Middle East. Syria buys Russian weapons and makes concessions. The Russian Federation has up to 14 military bases on the territory of Syria for navy and ground forces. So Moscow is not interested to lose Syria in the Middle East game. It explains the fact why Russia vetoed American initiatives to attack Syria.

If to talk about foreign policy of the United States then we have to mention that B. Obama makes decisive steps on the world arena. Robert Kagan, American analyst from the center of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace writes that “...in Afghanistan Mr. Obama substantially increased the military component of the struggle. The Obama administration has sharply increased the number of drone attacks on targets in Pakistan, with 53 such attacks in 2009, compared with 36 in 2008. Indeed, the Obama administration carried out more drone strikes in its first year than the Bush administration carried out in the previous five years combined, and these strikes produced a record number of enemy casualties.”⁵

Despite flexible rhetoric of American president some promises haven't been kept. For instance:

- not all problems in the Middle East are solved peacefully and the situation with Syria proves it;
- war in Afghanistan is not finished and the administration doesn't know how to deal with corrupted regime of Hamid Karzai;

⁵ Kagan R. The Need for Power // The Wall Street Journal. – 2010. – January 20.

- Obama refused to build European system of anti-air defense systems of G. Bush-junior. Instead, he substituted it by a global one.

Analyzing political activity and rhetoric of B. Obama we should consider a set of facts. From the practical point of view Obama's approach is traditional, because it is not much different from activity of his predecessor. During 2009 and 2010 among important issues such as extension of the NATO to the East there was a tendency to leadership and dialogue in international relations. In 2011-2012 his politics changed and the USA started to deploy elements of anti-air defense systems in Europe, worsening relations with Russia and strengthening its influence in Asia.

There are reasons to think that Obama tried to transform foreign policy course and this approach was partly successful.

There's misunderstanding between two countries on the issue of the Middle East.

Rhetoric of Putin on Syria is evidently anti-American. VI. Putin's article, published in New York Times, proves it. It was called "A Plea For Caution From Russia"⁶. Russia has advocated peaceful dialogue enabling Syrians to develop a compromise plan for their own future. Russian president says that he is not protecting the Syrian government, but international law. Putin says: "We need to use the UN Security Council and believe that preserving law and order to keep international relations from sliding into chaos. The law is still the law, and we must follow it whether we like it or not. It is alarming that military intervention in internal conflicts in foreign countries has become commonplace for the United States. Millions around the world increasingly see America not as a model of democracy but as relying solely on brute force, cobbling coalitions together under the slogan "you're either with us or against us."

President Putin studied Obama's address to the nation and he would rather disagree with a case on American exceptionalism. He said that "...it is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord's blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal" – says Mr. Putin.

⁶ Putin Vladimir. "A Plea For Caution From Russia". – September 11, 2013.

US President B. Obama stated that he was reassessing the tense relationship with Russia because of a growing number of issues on which the two countries differ. He called on Russian leader Vladimir Putin to “think forward as opposed to backward” and abandon a Cold War mentality. The comments came just days after Obama cancelled a planned summit with Putin next month after Russia granted asylum to intelligence leaker Edward Snowden.

Obama said Putin’s return to the Kremlin last year had brought “more rhetoric on the Russian side that was anti-American, that played into some of the old stereotypes about the Cold War contest between the US and Russia”.

But the US president played down suggestions that he and the Russian leader do not get along: “I don’t have a bad personal relationship with Putin. When we have conversations, they’re candid. They’re blunt. Oftentimes, they’re constructive,” he said.

His comments came as secretary of state John Kerry and defence secretary Chuck Hagel ended talks with their Russian counterparts that were intended to try to repair some of the damage caused by differences such as those over Syria, Russia’s domestic crackdown on civil rights and anti-gay legislation, a US missile defense plan for Europe and other issues⁷.

For decades, Moscow and Washington went at it -- diplomatically, militarily, economically, you name it -- until the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union changed the equation. Yet anyone following officials biting back-and-forth in recent days on what to do in Syria could reasonably surmise the two world powers are at it again.

What this means for what unfolds in Syria, for relations between the two nations, and for world politics generally remains to be seen. At the same time, he acknowledged, "anti-American" rhetoric has ramped up since Putin returned to the presidency in May 2012. And, Obama added, he'd had "mixed success" trying to get "Putin to think forward, as opposed to backwards" on some issues.

The atmosphere changed noticeably after Putin, a former KGB operative, resumed the top position in Russia's government. There were diplomatic flare-ups on everything from espionage to human rights to the adoption of Russian children.

⁷ Lee Matthew. Obama criticizes Putin over Anti-American Rhetoric.

One point of strain has, in many ways, the potential to have the biggest global impact: what to do about a civil war in Syria that has left more than 100,000 dead and 2 million refugees, especially given allegations from both sides about chemical weapons use.

Moscow and Washington have been at odds since 2011, when the Damascus government first cracked down on protesters. Since then, the dispute has spiraled into a full-fledged civil war pitting Syrian government forces (who, at times, have lost control over large tracts of territory) against an opposition fighting force that ranges from moderates to Islamist extremists.

Sure, both Russia - a longtime ally of Syria and its president, Bashar al-Assad - and the United States have been part of international efforts to forge cease-fires or a political solution. But all such attempts have failed. The issue of chemical weapons has raised the stakes, and the tensions.

In April, U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel accused al-Assad's government of being behind deadly use of the nerve agent sarin. Putin and other Russian officials, however, have been skeptical of such claims from the United States, Britain and France.

Obama hasn't been making the case for military action alone. Kerry has been a key part of that effort not just in diplomatic circles, but also while testifying this week before Congress.

But Putin is not convinced. The Russian president said the top U.S. diplomat's answer to Congress regarding the presence of an al Qaeda-linked group in the Syrian opposition "is not nice."

"It was unpleasant for me to see it, because we communicate with them based on the assumption that they are decent people," Putin said of U.S. authorities. "(Kerry) knows he is lying. It's sad."

Diplomatic disagreements are part of the territory, but calling another country's official a liar is something else, and it struck a chord in Washington.

Yet, some U.S. officials argue, Russia has been partly responsible for preventing international efforts to do something to halt the Syria bloodshed. Moscow repeatedly has exercised its veto power on the U.N. Security Council to block resolutions on the crisis.

Samantha Power, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said Thursday,

"Russia continues to hold the council hostage and shirk its international responsibilities, including as a part to the Chemical Weapons Convention," the U.S. ambassador said⁸.

Still, it seems unlikely that one development in recent days - the acerbic spat between Russia and the United States will help bring the Syrian crisis any closer to a peaceful end.

We share opinion with Ian Bremmer, a journalist from Reuters that Russia embarrassed the United States, by harboring its most high-profile dissident, Edward Snowden⁹.

On Syria Putin has made Barack Obama look bad. Russia has taken the lead on negotiations, minimized America's military motivation, and undermined Obama's foreign policy standing.

Vladimir Putin has been attempting to consolidate power over the Russian people and on the international stage so as to continue to govern effectively.

Conclusions

Political stereotypes serve as important components in strategies of politicians. Analysis of foreign policy of the USA and rhetoric demonstrate the 'soft influence' directed to pursuing world leadership in the system of international relations. Presidential rhetoric proves the idea of global leadership of the USA.

Moscow and Washington wage a badly masked rhetoric war for the influence in Europe. Officially American politicians are for the cooperation with Russia while unofficially Pentagon and CIA develop plans to weaken their Russian competitor.

Despite the efforts from both sides to make steps in order to better the relationships political discourse of both presidents is harsh. Both countries – the Russian Federation and the United States are slowly approaching to the times of the 'cold war'. To avoid the complications, they have to make mutual steps and get rid of global ambitions that serve as obstacles on the road to understanding and trust.

⁸ Botelho Greg. War of words between Russia, U.S., on Syrian crisis heats up. – September 6, 2013.

⁹ Bremmer Ian. Putin is winning on Syria, Snowden and Sochi...but so what? – September 19, 2013.

End Notes

1. Алтунян А.Г. Анализ политических текстов / Алтунян А.Г. – Москва: Университетская книга; Логос, 2006. – 384 с.
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