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"It Is Time for Our Western Partners to Concede that They Have no Monopoly on Truth"

Author: Sergey Lavrov

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



I am pleased to welcome the participants in the First Forum of Young Diplomats from the CIS countries, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. I am confident that we will have an interesting discussion and I hope that you will enrich your knowledge at its close as a result of the exchange of views, plans and ideas. Such meetings will be scheduled on a regular basis and will be a useful venue for young professionals to discuss topical issues of international life and the regional agenda. This is important because you are our hope and our successors. The world situation is not getting any easier, but rather becoming more complicated; there is an objective process at

work in establishing a new polycentric system of international relations.

In these difficult circumstances, the diplomacy of the Russian Federation is seeking to act in a well-balanced manner, firmly defending our legitimate national interests, avoiding any confrontation with anyone whatsoever. The Russian foreign policy doctrine enjoys broad support in Russian society and rests on the key principles that have evolved over the last two decades and have proven their effectiveness in practice.

Our absolute priority continues to be developing across the board cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States space based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests. We have recently been able to achieve good results.

As President Putin has said, our strategic goal is to create, in the future, a unified economic and humanitarian space from Atlantic to Pacific, where all EU countries, the future members of the Eurasian integration process and other nations located in this area could coexist and cooperate to mutual advantage. Then there would not be any unnecessary competition or dividing lines, which some of our Western partners are not only trying to maintain, but are also striving to move closer to Russian borders. Then there would be no imposed false choice of "either with us or against us."

We have repeatedly told our Western partners about the danger of such an approach. Unfortunately, our warnings have come true in what is happening in Ukraine.

I will say that there can be no one-sided demands, yet our partners are still trying to put them forward - primarily I mean the United States of America, which generally has a stunning ability to turn everything upside down. Our Western partners ignored us when we called for tripartite consultations between Russia, the EU and Ukraine to keep Ukrainian society and economy from being torn apart.

Returning to our business in the CIS, we attach great importance to promoting cooperation with the countries of the Commonwealth in the most diverse formats. The Free Trade Area Agreement of October 18, 2011 is an effective instrument for boosting economic and trade cooperation within the CIS space. An important challenge is to increase the effectiveness of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in order to ensure an adequate response to the challenges and threats of our time.

Russia's Role in Fostering International Development

Author: K. Kosachev

Head, Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo)



FOSTERING INTERNATIONAL development, official facilitation of development, assistance to developing countries - these are closely related notions each of which is already recognizable in Russia, being actively discussed within the expert community but not always understandable to our country's citizens. This is why I consider it important to promote a broad public discussion about the way these processes generally evolve in the present-day world and what they mean for Russia as a world power with global interests and its own agenda for international relations.

The shift in priority from aid to cooperation on the international level practically coincided also with the change of Russia's paradigm in fostering international development cooperation. Until recently, Russia had a concept for participation in fostering international development cooperation that was adopted in 2007. Development matters are directly linked to foreign policy and national security issues, as well as to upholding national interests. This accounts for the attention given by the country's leadership to a subject that at first glance is not a priority issue for Russia today but that is directly related to what is happening on the perimeter of the Russian state border. There is a clear understanding that the substantial aid provided by our country to other countries, which makes a significant share of the national GDP, should be adequately valued by citizens in those countries.

The new concept sets the task of prioritizing targeted bilateral aid programs and applying a well-substantiated set of guidelines in determining aid recipient states. These criteria will include the following:

- Improvement of the environment for trade and investment activity in aid recipient states, including by simplifying the procedure of cross-border movement of goods and services; and
- Formation of industrial and innovative potential in aid recipient states.

It is quite obvious that not only the correlation of the volumes of bilateral and multilateral aid should change but also, to a very large degree, its geographic direction (priority to the CIS countries, Abkhazia and South Ossetia), as well as the substance of the relevant projects. Support for international development is becoming a very important fact of integration in the CIS space.

Fostering the development of less developed states helps eliminate preconditions for the outbreak of all kinds of conflicts and crises in those countries.

As is known, Russia has been traditionally helping the development of small states.

A characteristic feature of Russia's revival and strengthening should be its active assumption of the role of an influential regional donor that its partners can count on, being clearly aware of the source of support. Therefore, the mechanisms of fostering international development are designed to become an important component of strategic integration projects, primarily with our immediate neighbors.

Author: N. Efimov

Doctor of Science (Philosophy)



THE STRATEGIC STABILITY CONCEPT was formulated as part of the Soviet-American dialogue on nuclear arms limitation. The term appeared much later in the Soviet-American treaty on the liquidation of medium-range and short-range missiles (1987) and the START-1 Treaty of 1991. Later, the term became an integral part of the political scientists' vocabulary to be consistently used in Russian-American documents and official documents of the Russian Federation.

Since the 1970s, the strategic stability phenomenon has been and remains within the spheres of interest of academic communities in our country and abroad.

Academician Andrei Afanasievich Kokoshin treats the development of the strategic stability theory as one of his priorities: "This is a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary problem calling for a constant attention of state leaders, military commanders, the Russian expert community dealing with the national security problems, and academics working in different fields of scientific knowledge."

In the last forty years, the works by Academician Kokoshin helped elaborate political-military concepts pertaining to the operation and development of the Soviet/Russian "nuclear shield," as well as the strategic stability theory.

Andrei Kokoshin is convinced that a barrier of sorts is the main aspect of stability. If it is overcome as a result of external upheavals the military-strategic "superstructure" will acquire a new quality: it will move away from interactions typical of the peacetime to an interaction described by the fundamentally different military logic which is a prelude to a nuclear war.

This barrier consists of several political-military factors including the correlation between:

- The political and military aims of a war in which nuclear weapons are used in different scopes and different variants;
- The possibilities of using force to resolve crises and the material and technical means used to wage this war;
- Repercussions of the use of these means.

It should be said that Andrei Kokoshin distinguishes between a "nuclear conflict" and a "nuclear war" and points out that the former is much wider than the latter.

By way of summing up I deem it necessary to stress the predominantly applied nature of practically everything that Academician Kokoshin has written so far. His scientific works can serve as one of the sources of scientifically substantiated opinions about the ways to improve the structure and composition of strategic nuclear forces of Russia and their fighting sustainability.

Germany's New Foreign Policy Approach

Author: I. Klassen

Secretary, Consulate-General of the Russian Federation in Munich, Graduate Student at the Comparative Political Science Department, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



AFTER THE FALL of the Berlin Wall and German reunification, Germany has been shaping its foreign policy under unique historical conditions.

Of special note is that Germany was not so much the sole actor as it was the locomotive for the European Union and NATO thanks to its strong contacts with both Paris and Washington. It is precisely the coinciding interests of Germany and its closest allies that have been behind the so rapid successes of its European foreign policy.

CHANGES IN GERMANY'S FOREIGN POLICY were spelled out at the Munich Security Conference early in February 2014. The very format of the conference coupled with analysis of the addresses made by the country's president, the foreign and defense ministers can yield some information about the Federal Republic's updated foreign policy.

According to Joachim Gauck, Germany's contribution to protecting security and stability around the world is much smaller than it should be. He said that politicians are responsible not only for their erroneous actions but for their non-action as well. He stressed that solving problems can cost money but as in the case of the European monetary crisis. Germany is ready to go to great lengths to provide problems solution because doing so is in its own interests.

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier outlined Germany's high-priority foreign policy task - to supply a conceptual input for a common European foreign, security and defense policy. He also stated intention for closer cooperation with the United States under the umbrella of NATO but also in economic matters. With regard to Russia, he said that that despite the differences Germany needed to explore areas of agreement and put Germany's relations with it onto a constructive and cooperative footing and that it would be counter-productive to deliberate Europe's future without Moscow or even in rivalry to it.

THE KEY RISK for the new policy is to rally support for it inside Germany. On the face of it, the current government's positions are more than stable.

Another critical risk for Germany is the possible opposition to its policy by the other powers. The example of Russia, which was compelled to take an independent stance on the Ukraine issue, shows the limits of the economic and political influence of the European Union and of Germany, as its principal locomotive in the East.

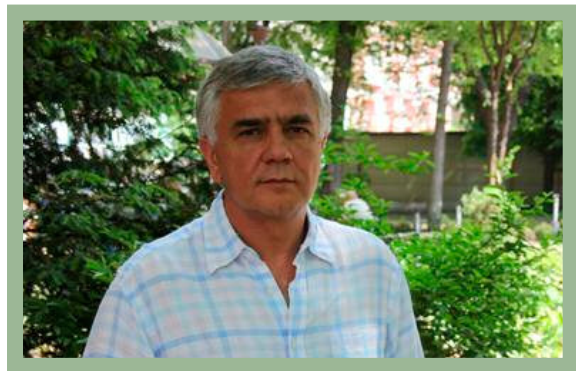
However, competition, economic competition above all, will keep on growing everywhere in the world as the potential of developing nations keeps growing.

On the whole, while the new foreign policy approach is based on Germany's long-standing objectives, it contains a number of fresh accents and aspects which attests to an ongoing process of serious rethinking of Germany's role in the system of international relations. At the same time, the new policy approach had a difficult start owing to the still uncertain situation in Ukraine and the need for striking the right balance between support for the new government in Kiev and the calls for sanctions against Russia which are a more sensitive issue for Germany than for the other nations in the region.

Pope Francis: The First Year in the Vatican

Author: V. Bogomazov

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Candidate of Science (Political Sciences)



A YEAR AGO, on March 13, 2013, Archbishop of Buenos Aires Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected head of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and, therefore, head of the Vatican city-state (officially the Holy See) as Pope Francis. These twelve months were brimming with comments on what had been done and what was expected from the new Pope. The wide range of views and opinions coming from Russia, the U.S., Western Europe, and Latin America stretch from pragmatic and realistic to extremist and radi-

cal.

Here I will place at least some of the commentaries into the context of what the Pope has done so far.

From the first day of his papacy, Pope Francis has been and remains incredibly popular. "Only installed in March, Pope Francis has already become a phenomenon. His is the most talked-about name on the internet in 2013, ranking ahead of 'Obamacare' and 'NSA'. The number of his subscribers in Twitter has topped 12 million.

His opponents refuse to be impressed; they insist that this is of a limited importance for the authority of the RCC and the Vatican.

Telephoning individuals who write to him about their suffering, illnesses and tragedies is his habit which echoes throughout the world: the pope telephoned a single woman, pregnant by a married man who had since abandoned her, to assure her that if, as she feared, priests refused to baptize her baby, he would perform the ceremony himself.

From the very first days of papacy, he has been talking louder and louder that the RCC is very important for the forgotten or rejected - the jobless, beggars, ailing, and old.

As soon as Pope Francis condemned capitalism as "unbridled consumerism" and "a new tyranny," conservatives in the United States accused the Pope of having "gone beyond Catholicism" into "pure Marxism."

The Pope has not failed to call on the Christians to "embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries in the same way that we hope and ask to be received and respected in countries of Islamic tradition."

According to the Italian law and order structures, his anti-corruption crusade has made him a target of the criminal world, mafia in the first place.

He consistently insists on the priority of international legal and moral principles in international life and invariably speaks about this with heads of state and government and prominent public figures. The pontiff has repeatedly demonstrated his devotion to the eternal Christian values yet there are forces outside and inside the Vatican which are trying to influence the Pope so that to readjust his views and ideas.

South Korea's Geostrategic Interests

Author: S. Sharko

School of World Economy and International Affairs, National Research University-Higher School of Economics, Candidate of Science (Political Sciences)



South Korea's Geostrategic Interests and the Future of the Korean Peninsula

THE GOVERNMENT of South Korea, led by new President Park Geun-hye, is critically rethinking the practice of securing the vital interests of their state in the geopolitical and geo-economic space of the Korean Peninsula. Today, when shaping a new system of global governance is the talk of the day, the responsibility of the Republic of Korea, as of any state, for the events occurring in the East Asia region and the world at large increases.

It is important for the South Korean state to reinforce its position on the global stage as an influential actor in world politics and economy.

The country needs to define its long-term strategic direction to build relations with both world powers and neighboring countries, including the DPRK, on the basis of a proactive foreign policy subordinated to coping not only with the narrow-scope economic goals of the day, but also to the long-term geopolitical objectives of the state.

If South Korea is determined to protect and promote its national interests in the international arena, it needs to be a modern global power occupying a key geostrategic position in the new Asia.

THE PATH TO TRUST lies through mutually beneficial cooperation for common prosperity.

In terms of international politics, Park's initiatives in general aim to lead the way for a peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Compelled objectively to be more open and actively participate in the processes of globalization, South Korea has to assume the role of a more vigorous player in normalizing relations with the North.

The foreign affairs initiatives of President Park Geun-hye reveal that national interests have prompted South Korean society to embark on a search for new foreign policy and economic priorities to further the strategic direction of the Republic of Korea. So far, South Korea is slowly gearing up for very cautious contacts with the North: Barack Obama has endorsed Park's strategy to bring the North out of its isolation through trustpolitik and it is coordinated with the general actions of the United States.

Brazil: Soft Power in Foreign Policy

Author: A. Budaev

Consul General of the Russian Federation in Rio de Janeiro



RECENTLY, soft power as an important factor of international relations and interstate communication has come to the fore in international and Russian political discourse.

The recent Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on February 12, 2013 describes soft power as "a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives build-

ing on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy, which is becoming an indispensable component of modern international relations."

A closer look at and an analysis of the theory of soft power and its practical uses in Brazil, the grandee of South American policies and one of the world's leading economies, is especially interesting. The Brazilian political elite has been recognizing more and more fully the importance of soft power as one of the attributes of world powers; this factor is taken into account and used to promote the national priorities at the global and regional levels.

It should be said, however, that the country still lacks a detailed national doctrine even though certain elements of soft power can be easily discerned in its foreign policy. The political establishment is still working on the foreign policy concept for its country; according to available information that document will outline the general trends of using and promoting the soft power politics. In fact, in the last few years, Brazilian political scientists, diplomats and academics have been paying much more attention to soft power.

The Brazilian leaders rely on soft power in their foreign policy moves to create favorable conditions for domestic development, resolve the practical problems of modernization and expand the area of their influence.

All sorts of public, political and cultural events up to and including Brazilian TV serial dramas, hugely popular in Russia, are the best vehicles of Brazilian soft power. The same can be said about film festivals, exhibitions of Brazilian paintings, etc.

We need adequate methodology and criteria to be able to measure soft power of any specific state (Brazil in our case), access its potential and its real impact today and in future. We should keep in mind that soft power is a multi-component phenomenon with consequences of its own and an important place in the system of foreign policy coordinates.

Russia and Ukraine: Together or Apart?

Author: Yu. Bulatov

Professor, Dean of the School of Foreign Relation, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



These are the three traditional indicators that determine any ethnos: language, culture and religion.

In the past, Ukraine was divided: it was a part of Russia, a part of Austria-Hungary, and a part of Rzeczpospolita. In this situation, all processes that related to the influence of particular confessions affected the entire population. Diversity of faiths is a specific feature of Ukraine's population - that is to say, it is not only multiethnic but also multiconfessional.

Ukraine had been part of the Russian state since 1654. Today Ukrainian politicians are calling into question the very fact of Ukraine's reunification with Russia in the mid-17th century.

I am deeply convinced that it is high time to consign the Bolshevik theory of the three fraternal peoples to the archives and to deideologize Russia's ethnic history.

As far as the further history is concerned, how is it possible to separate the people that Russia and Ukraine can be proud of? We are speaking not only about Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol. Take the outstanding galaxy of military leaders of the 19th century who were inseparably connected to Russia and Ukraine. They were all natives of Ukraine, so how are they to be described today? Russian sons of the Ukrainian people or vice versa?

In connection with Crimea, I would like to say this: Historical mistakes must be rectified. In 1954, Khrushchev transferred Crimea to Ukraine. But it is important to understand that Crimea, with its multiethnic and multiconfessional population, is not a "prize fund" of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union Communist Party. It is about human fates that cannot be decided without the consent of the people who have lived on the Crimean territory. And that historical mistake has been corrected. Today, TV news reports provide ample evidence of that. Crimean residents are saying that finally, after 60 years, they have returned home - to Russia.

The "divide and rule" policy imminently leads to the division of big states into small satellite states. However, in regard to Ukraine, it seems to me that within the current or smaller borders, the main goal of the U.S. and its allies is to maintain a high temperature on the Ukrainian issue and do all they can to ensure that the Ukrainian crisis continues for as long as possible. All of this will enable the U.S. and its allies, as they think, to secure firm positions in immediate proximity to the Russian borders.

Some International Legal Positions on the Ukrainian Question

Author: A. Moiseev

Head of the Department of International Law, Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Doctor of Science (Law)



MARCH 18, 2014 saw the signing of an international agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on admission of the Republic of Crimea to the RF and on creation of new subjects within the Russian Federation.

The treaty decision rested on the outcome of a free and voluntary referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on March 16, 2014. It showed that the peoples of Crimea voted in favor of "the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a part of the Russian Federation".

The Crimea referendum took place with the observance of modern democratic and legal requirements, but in the context of the illegal and criminal nature of the regime in power in Kiev.

Emphasis is due on the fact that the population of Crimea has realized the right to self-determination via having, under Chapter 10 of Ukraine's Constitution, an autonomous legal status, juridically pertaining to the rights of peoples.

The Crimea referendum took place on March 16, 2014, with the observance of modern democratic and legal requirements, but in the context of the illegal and criminal nature of the regime in power in Kiev, established after a coup amid the rampage of ultra-nationalists, extremists, and the like.

Leaving aside the geopolitical interests and strategies of certain Western states, it is still astonishing that they assumed the position of non-recognition of the self-evident results of the Crimea referendum, which they allege was illegal and unconstitutional.

There is no need to once again dwell on the negative results of Yanukovich's activity as president, but it is clear that peaceful Ukrainian citizens came out onto the Maidan not out of good life and that lawlessness and poverty in Ukraine did not arise overnight, a situation that the extremists took advantage of.

Maidan and its slogans do not create a legal basis either in relation to recognition of the legitimate status of the new order, or in relation to their decisions and actions. Even armed clashes between Maidan participants and law enforcement units cannot legally alter the situation.

The central question in the crisis of Ukraine, provoked by the anti-constitutional Kiev coup through the armed seizure of power by extremists, involves the legitimacy of the government itself. Those who have seized power in Ukraine by armed force have committed a criminal offense, and their actions cannot have legal force for the Russian Federation.

Author: D. Danilov

Head, European Security Department, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, Candidate of Science (Economics)



THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS has forced NATO not only to readjust its plans but also its aims. Time is short: corresponding documents should be ready by the Wales Summit scheduled for September 4-5, 2014 which "will shape the future of our Alliance." In fact, it has become abundantly clear that the Ukrainian crisis, its political dimensions and its impact on NATO will determine the Alliance's future.

The Ukrainian crisis dotted the "i's": the Cold War has not ended and Russia is blaming the West for it.

The Wales Summit will adopt a new program of stronger collective defense in Europe which will rely on more active military training to invigorate the logic and consolidate the structure of mutual deterrence. NATO has recaptured its old mission - joint opposition to the geopolitical enemy which it tried, after Georgia and before Ukraine, to keep in check by its declaration of "a real strategic partnership" based on mutual respect for the interests of the sides. Very much as before, Russia will proceed from an understanding that this is all about "the relationships between the largest military power and the largest military-political bloc."

The war in Libya has demonstrated that Europe cannot cope with similar conflicts on its own and cannot become Washington's equal partner.

It remains to be seen whether the European pylon of NATO will be strengthened in any way and whether the Europeans are prepared to harmonize with the United States their responses to the new challenges. This can and will be done in the political sphere even if the task will prove to be ambiguous outside NATO: Europe might find it hard to harmonize its responses to Russia with Washington. In fact, some of the European countries will probably be less willing to go ahead with NATO's tough policy.

Everything that NATO is doing is under the slogan "Ukraine should be defended!", meant as an "answer to Moscow." This does nothing to de-escalate the conflict to which the West is calling but perfectly fits the logic of a new confrontation fraught with graver military threat and a gradual slide to confrontation along the new dividing lines. When Russia is practically regarded as an aggressor, more active NATO military training activities with Ukraine's participation and probably on its territory will build up tension in the region and aggravate the relationships between Russia and NATO.

In the context of confrontational logic, NATO's military presence in Ukraine is no longer unrealistic. Today, NATO looks at its assistance to Ukraine as a part of the West's shared responsibility for Ukraine's Euroatlantic choice.

NATO and Russia are drifting toward mutual deterrence which creates serious challenges for their partners outside Europe. It has become abundantly clear that many of them are not ready to accept either the Western position or Russia's responses.

Author: A. Orlov

Director, Institute for International Studies, Moscow State Institute (University) for International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



For twenty-odd post-Cold War years, the United States and its Western allies have been demonstrating perseverance or even obstinacy worthy of a better cause when adjusting the geopolitical map to their military-political, economic and other interests. The changes on the political map of the Old World are a visible and highly impressive illustration of the dynamics of NATO and the EU eastward movement.

Those who still doubt that the Kievan Maidan was carefully planned and realized by the West are either extremely naïve or prefer to look at the world through rose-tinted glasses.

I have written this article in an effort to identify the aim/aims which forced the West to support (without qualms) and fan the Ukrainian putsch which makes Western capitals directly responsible for the immediate and more distant consequences of this infinite tragedy.

We all know that in the West, and in the U.S. in particular, there are forces willing and determined to aggravate the relations with Russia so that to push the world back into the era of global confrontation.

Sooner or later everything becomes clear: today, the (Western) logic of the processes we have been watching for the last two decades has become obvious. Russia which is invariably pushed into the epicenter of these processes has become an object of a multilayer military-political, economic, cultural and even religious pressure. The events in Ukraine, which come second after the Yugoslav tragedy of the 1990s where the number of casualties and the scope of destruction are concerned, were not spontaneous. They were obviously painstakingly planned by egghead analysts and past masters of clandestine operations.

Experienced puppeteers turned the social conflict into a widescale anti-Russian campaign, the repercussions of which cannot be correctly assessed so far. In the twinkling of an eye civilian protesters were replaced with fighters of radical nationalist pro-fascist groups trained by Western instructors. To sum up: What is the West - America in the first place - seeking in Ukraine? The answer suggests itself: a wider influence zone; a NATO and EU membership for Ukraine; and the isolation of Russia. It should be "contained" in the same way as the West boasted of "containing" the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. One can argue that it was the Soviet Union which successfully contained the United States. It seems that the Western, American in the first place, experts have been hardly careful when analyzing all possible repercussions.

The Collapse of the "Ukrainian Project"

Author: Srećko Djukić

Serbian essayist and writer, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary (Ret.)



THE SLAVIC PEOPLES are living through another severe conflict, but history never stops. The so-called Ukrainian project - a dream about Ukraine as a Western toehold (we all know whose) born as soon as the Soviet Union fell apart - is moving toward its defeat. The Ukrainian drama is rapidly approaching its culmination. What really happened in Ukraine in winter and spring 2014? Kiev's painfully familiar policy of blackmail, the favorite instrument of all Ukrainian regimes ("pro-Russian" and pro-Western alike), triggered another political crisis. All Ukrainian presidents, one after another, seemed determined to sit between two stools.

The Serbs, who in the last quarter of a century lived through everything what a country and a nation can endure, remained puzzled by what is going on in Ukraine after the Soviet Union's peaceful disintegration, the fratricidal bloodshed in Yugoslavia and its disintegration. We expected a very different course of events in Ukraine, an Orthodox country and the largest among the European states. We expected to see a European edition of Canada or Mexico. Kiev preferred a different road. I should say that I never hesitated to point to Ukraine's vacillating political course and the wobbly "Ukrainian model" as a whole.

I have written a lot about gas transit across Ukraine and explained why all Ukrainian regimes invariably opted for blackmailing Russia and the West instead of trying a unified approach to become a bridge or, if you like, a "window on Russia" and a "window on Europe." This would have made the North and South streams unnecessary.

As a diplomat I was invariably amazed to see some of my Ukrainian colleagues cringing to Western diplomats in an effort to put themselves higher than Russia, a sad and absurd picture. They groveled to everything to the west of Ukraine and tried to look superior to everything Russian. To tell the truth, I've never seen anything marginally similar among the diplomats and ambassadors of now hostile republics of former Yugoslavia.

It has become abundantly clear that the West has suffered a defeat in Ukraine: it hunted a wolf and caught a fox; it has made its bed and must lie on it.

The anti-Russian government in Kiev burdened by multi-billion gas debts had to seek support from Moscow: gas is being stolen Ukrainian style to avert bankruptcy and economic disaster. We all know that the West and the United States repeatedly challenge Russia and that Putin, fully aware of this, is consolidating its positions.

If the new people in power want to save their country they should create a new Ukrainian statehood (a "new Ukrainian project") which should be very different from the old one.

Author: Armen Oganessian

Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs



MAY 6. Opened a fresh issue of *American Thinker* to look for wise and well-balanced comments on the storms raging in Ukraine, a bird's eye view, so to speak and was badly disappointed: a certain Kim Zigfeld in an article "Putin at Bay" praises "the milquetoast Obama administration" which has risen "to heights of virtual confrontation worthy of Ronald Reagan."

Carried away by her own enthusiasm the author wallows in unbridled bellicosity. She has outplayed Reagan to come close to McCarthy: "There remain among us certain Putin collaborators who still strive to undermine our resolve"; she means Professor Stephen Cohen "who ritualistically propagandizes for Putin" and "former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder... who was engaging in 'provocation' by allowing Putin to host a lavish birthday party for him in Putin's hometown of St. Petersburg." Polish politician Slawomir Sierakowski calls them and their ilk "Putin's useful idiots'."

"East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." This is very true! In Russia, "idiot" is not always derogatory: there is Prince Myshkin of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* and the holy fool from Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. Not infrequently it is only idiots who dare to tell the truth to "wise" guys. "Useful idiots" are much better than "useful" scoundrels of the Right Sector and their ilk.

Today, it is much more important to say that Ukraine might lose its information war: hatred is fanned in the country where the Russian TV channels were switched off and the opposition Ukrainian media closed.

The guilt for everything which is going on in the country is heaped on Russians; hatred is mounting in the minds of Ukrainians. No wonder, a phone call from Crimea, Moscow or Ekaterinburg to relatives in Ukraine draws harsh accusations of the "You, Russians" type borrowed from the local media; not infrequently, Ukrainian relatives are too frightened to accept the call.

This brings to mind the information wars for Ukraine waged in the not so distant past.

Today, the main enemy of the nationalist Ukrainians is beyond the eastern borders; very soon, however, non-Ukrainians, now held responsible, might become outcasts or even hostages in their own country. Very much as usual, the international institutions and Europe, invariably indifferent to atrocities, will habitually acknowledge their impotence.

Russia and the European Union: 20 Years After

Author: V. Chizhov

Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the European Union



TWENTY YEARS AGO, on June 24, 1994, on the Greek island of Kerkyra, also known as Corfu, the Russia-EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) was signed. It entered into force three years later, on December 1, 1997, and is in effect to date. It can be said without exaggeration that at the turn of the century this breakthrough laid down a stable legal foundation for the comprehensive development of the Russia-EU dialogue in various spheres. During the two past decades, Russia and the EU have conducted 32 summits and five meetings in the

Russian government-European Commission format. Interaction has been established on the ministerial level - initially in the form of the Cooperation Council and later, by mutual agreement, in the more flexible format of the Permanent Partnership Council.

I happened to be not only a witness to but also a direct participant in the efforts to implement PCA provisions signed in pursuit of sectoral agreements, as well as the roadmaps on the creation of Russia-EU common spaces that were approved at the Moscow Summit in 2005.

It seems that plenty has been done during the past two decades. Today, the European Union is Russia's largest trade partner.

There is ample evidence that we are inseparably linked to each other. The European continent is inconceivable without Russia while Russia's roots go deep into European civilization. And although disputes have been going on for centuries about Russia being part of Europe, about alternative ways of development for our country, there is no doubt that the peoples of the European continent are inseparably interconnected by millions of the "unseen threads" of Greco-Roman and Christian culture, a centuries-long history and a common legacy of shared values.

This is why the ongoing crisis in Ukraine today is becoming not only a test for the Russia-EU multilevel system of interaction that has evolved in the past two decades but also "a moment of truth" for the entire Euro-Atlantic space.

The EU's stance on the Ukrainian crisis has proved, to put it bluntly, far removed from the spirit of partnership and cooperation as conceived by the authors of the 1994 Agreement.

Against the backdrop of the Ukrainian events it becomes clear that Russia-EU relations are definitely in need of critical rethinking. Ukrainian events have shown that our EU partners have misinterpreted this concept from the very outset. They believed that Russia - purportedly due to a lack of any other civilizational alternatives - would sooner or later follow the EU policy course, and that its interests, including those in the post-Soviet space, could thus be ignored.

We hope that sober-minded forces will eventually prevail in the European Union, aware of their responsibility for the maintenance and consolidation of peace on the continent, hard won by our predecessors.

Aiming at Dialogue and Strategic Cooperation

Author: P. Zavalny

President of the Russian Gas Society (RGS), Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Energy



The "Russia-EU Energy Dialogue: Gas Aspect" conference is a joint event held for many years by the Russian Gas Society and the European gas industry association Eurogas with the participation of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy.

The European Commission confirmed EU interest in the conference and its importance for the development of relations between Russia and Europe in the field of energy.

But the final stages of the run-up to the event were already affected by the situation in Ukraine, which had significantly strained Russia-EU relations. At the end of April, we were told that neither EU Energy Commissioner Gunther Oettinger nor the current head of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy, Dominique Rostori, would take part in the conference precisely for political reasons.

I find it difficult to understand this position. Clearly, today it is necessary to solve arising problems taking into account Europe's heavy dependence on imported energy resources, and not only on Russian gas and oil. Europe imports coal from America, Russia and other countries. At present, it cannot be self-sufficient in any kind of energy resources. Among the purposes of the conference was to discuss these problems.

Other questions on the agenda included the prospects of our cooperation, European demand for gas, renewable energy sources, and various scenarios for the development of the gas market. In my opinion, the conference was most constructive despite the absence of leading politicians and heads of energy companies.

During the current crisis, Europe has reviewed the problem of providing its economy with energy and realized that it cannot do without Russia. Whatever the scenario, Europe needs Russian gas.

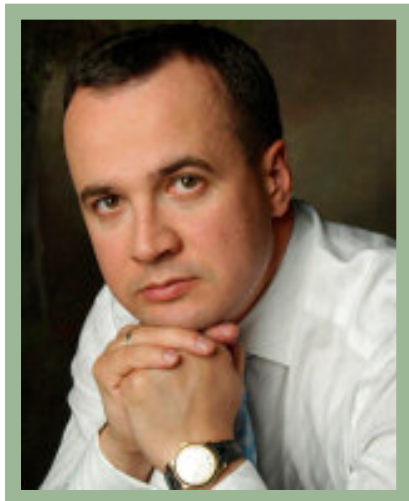
I know the situation in the American market very well and I think that American LNG cannot compete with Russia.

The importance of the Chinese contract for the development of our country cannot be overestimated. It means tens of thousands of jobs, better capacity utilization in our construction sector and other industries, and a new impetus to the development of territories.

Global Problems in the Emerging Multipolar World

Author: O. Karpovich

Head, Center for Comparative Legal Studies, Institute for the U.S. and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Professor, Doctor of Science (Political Sciences)



TODAY, the world is living amid global changes in which political realities "are shaped, to an increasing degree, by global political instability, a product of erosion of the Westphalian system and increasingly chaotic international relations. They provide the background against which a new multipolar world order is being shaped." The system of international relations is gradually slipping toward anarchy amid the mounting crisis of the idea of a "democratic world," the pivotal concept of the unipolar world.

Global changes are gaining momentum: in twelve months, Western political technologists pushed Northern Africa, a stable and prosperous region, into an abyss of a cruel civil war and made it a seat

of international terrorism and radical Islam. Syria, the Middle East and Iran, America's main irreconcilable foe, will follow suit.

Engaged in "peacekeeping by force" and "democracy enforcement," the United States does nothing to remove the causes of political conflicts; in many cases, it adds tension and scope to conflicts and pushes them to a higher level.

We remain incorrigible optimists while global problems and global challenges are piling up. We still believe that the world is becoming better even if plunged into a boundless chaos while sliding into an abyss of conflicts and wars. Many people remain devoted to the myth that the paradigm of conflicts ended together with the Cold War and that the world has ascended a higher and better development level with much lower conflict potential everywhere across the world.

The Libyan war demonstrated and the Syrian armed conflict confirmed that in the context of the rapidly intensified power struggle among the world leading powers regional conflicts promptly spill over their initial limits to evolve into large-scale clashes up to and including global wars.

"Soft power" more and more frequently discussed by the Russian political community has come to the fore in the leading powers' foreign policy. There is an increasingly clear understanding that soft power is the most efficient instrument in the world living amid mounting political turmoil and gradually sinking into a "manageable chaos." Soft power is an instrument of recognized world leaders and an indicator of whether a state is or pretends to be a world leader.

In these conditions, Russia should acquire not merely a modernized foreign policy adjusted to the specific circumstances of global development.

This is extremely important: Russia has found itself absolutely alone when insisting on a peace settlement in Ukraine; Russia's only ally in its opposition to the West is China.

Sovereignty Within the Polycentric World Order

Author: E. Solovyev

*Sector Head, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences,
Candidate of Science (Political Sciences)*



THROUGHOUT the last three decades, the system of international relations has changed beyond recognition. Classical bipolarity has become a fact of history while the world has become aware of paradoxes of globalization and transformation of world politics. On the one hand, the human community has become an indivisible and interconnected whole. Globalization suggests cooperation in the face of common problems; adoption of common norms and rules of conduct in world politics; improvement of the old and creation of new efficient international institutions.

In the course of bipolar confrontation, the United States was actively involved in building up a system of international norms best suited to its interests and values. By the times the Berlin Wall col-

lapsed, the U.S. had already scored incredible victories: it legitimized and institutionalized its claims to power and domination mainly by demonstrating the viability of its political and economic model.

At all times, the dominating countries invariably insisted that the world needed a set of values and norms of conduct. An explanation is simple: any leading power with inadequate legitimacy invariably runs into active or passive opposition.

The United States and its closest allies have armed themselves with double standards; they act ad hoc or by precedence in certain contexts as part of their world regulation model. It should be said in all justice that they were the sole beneficiaries of the universal legal vagueness.

We can hardly expect that the United States and its political elite are or will be ready for rational self-limitation and well-substantiated cooperative strategy.

Serious systemic risks are not far away. This explains why experts concentrate at discussions of new interpretations of the concepts of sovereignty and new norms like the responsibility to protect.

The humanistic message of the "responsibility to protect" concept is obvious; its hidden political motive is likewise clear. At the turn of the 21st century, the United States displayed a lot of enthusiasm since this concept offered a clear ethical and political justification of Washington's interventionist practices in all corners of the world.

In the 21st century, however, when the gigantic scope of the coming changes in the system of international relations has become clear, the abstract idea of sovereignty will remain a lodestar in the world of politics for billions of people and a large number of politicians; this does not mean that they have moved to "the wrong side of history."

Strategic Communication in International Relations

Author: E. Vinogradova

School of Political Science, Lomonosov Moscow State University, detached study graduate student



THE DEVELOPMENT of information technology is changing the principles and methods of management and training; it has also been at the heart of the revolution in the field of international relations and in military affairs.

In this regard, one of the biggest challenges facing the modern states and their militaries is the use of information to manage any conflicts, since information can influence the perception of people.

A correct information strategy can assist in winning a military conflict. Work with types of information such as the Internet and other new media is a different way of conducting modern warfare.

It is no coincidence that in the U.S., and then in a number of other countries at the beginning of the 21st century a new approach has emerged to the examination of the role of the mass media in public policy, which received its concrete expression in the concept of "strategic communication" (SC).

A number of military analysts note with concern that, while states are debating on how to work correctly with strategic communication channels, terrorists have already learned how to use them. The SC activity aims not only to influence a target audience in order to win an information and psychological war, but also to improve the image of a country using SC much like opponents and allies by means of technologies such as image making, branding, cross-cultural communication, reputation management, and spin doctoring.

U.S. military expert Craig Colucci has rightly observed that in order to effectively influence public opinion, SC must focus not on conflict, but on managing it.

AN IMPORTANT TASK before modern states developing strategic communication is to know how to work with its channels, which in recent years have increased thanks to Internet technologies.

Unlike electronic media, the main advantage of social networks is the international factor: general accessibility. An electronic publication has its own target audience. Social networks bring together everyone through international status. That is why they have begun to influence not only international target audiences but also strategic communicators.

In our view, the efficacy of strategic communication is hindered by such factors as the lack of a clear-cut approach in strategic communication activities and the underestimation of the importance of cross-cultural communication and of the new media when working with selected target audiences.

Author: A. Varfolomeev

*Assistant Professor, National Research University - Higher School of Economics, Nizhny Novgorod,
Candidate of Science (Political Sciences)*



DESPITE SIGNIFICANT EFFORTS by the world community, the problems of new challenges continue to define the agenda of today's international security, and the key non-state threat - international terrorist activities - remains a primary concern for all major countries and international organizations.

In this article we want to focus attention on the political-legal component of the drive against international terrorism. Without detracting from the significance of the aforesaid technologies to counter terrorism, we shall note that the political-legal thrust here plays a special role. First, this is due to the very nature of terrorism, which is a kind of politically motivated crime. Secondly, speaking of interna-

tional terrorist activities, one has to say that in a whole series of historical cases individual governments have "flirted" with terrorists and tried to use them to promote their own narrowly defined political objectives, in particular to destabilize the situation in neighboring countries, and with other aims contrary to the spirit and letter of international law.

While paying tribute to the key role of the UN Security Council, we have to admit that in our days States continue to assume the main responsibility for countering transnational terrorist activities.

National legal systems apply the standard penal code to this kind of international crime, and typify its specific manifestations as common felonies thereunder. In addition, domestic anti-terrorism measures are applicable under constitutional and administrative law, but they are mostly institutional in nature.

There is a certain antagonism of the approaches to dealing with international terrorist activities pursued on national and international levels. Meanwhile, the picture should be quite different: they ought to complement each other, thereby increasing the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures.

We believe that it is necessary not to seek a replacement to law enforcement at the national level, but instead to increase its effectiveness, including through the planned development of international anti-crime cooperation and the adoption of foreign advanced expertise and best practices. The idea about the use of universal jurisdiction against terrorists as the right of any State to capture these criminals and bring them to trial in its courts - by analogy with the fight against pirates - is perhaps not.

We think it's important to make one more clarification. As part of our discussion, we have introduced a binary classification of international terrorist activities as if this were a consecutive process.

It is very difficult therefore to overestimate the significance of the political-legal technologies to counter international terrorist activities. Their successful application will, to a significant extent, determine the result of the fight against the main non-state threat to international peace and security in our time.

The Bosphorus-2 Project as Viewed From the Kremlin

Author: V. Zanina

Attaché, Historico-Documentary Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, postgraduate student at the Diplomatic Academy



"BOSPORUS' TRAFFIC will be reduced to zero," Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey stated in April 2011 as he spoke to a thousands-strong Turkish audience, suggesting as an alternative to the current Bosphorus a new "grandiose project," the Bosphorus-2 (the official name being Kanal Istanbul).

The Turkish side has not given clear explanations about the status of the Bosphorus-2, having only announced a number of proposals for its use.

If it is solely about the construction of an additional marine bypass route from the Sea of Marmara to the Black

Sea, without a ban on navigation through the Bosphorus, then it is logical to raise the question of the extension of the Montreux Convention to the Bosphorus-2.

The USSR, being "locked" in the Black Sea, unable, moreover, to pass its fleet through the Straits to defend itself from outside threats, had indeed to raise the issue of the need to revise the Convention.

The entry of Turkey into NATO in 1952 became the next step in its "historic mission" of strengthening its role in the region, inextricably linked to the control of the Straits.

The reason for the Turkish manipulations is that it is difficult to change or cancel the Convention. This requires a lengthy process of negotiation through the diplomatic channels.

In the context of today's political fragmentation of the world and the region, the likelihood of any new options to replace the old Straits arrangements that are acceptable to all parties concerned, is extremely small.

Even though Turkey is pushing environmental considerations as justification for the closure of the Bosphorus and the opening of the Bosphorus-2, there are also possible military-political aspects to the initiative. For example, the strategic plans of the Russian Empire did not separate the issue of the Straits from the issue of the status of Constantinople. The Bosphorus Strait has a direct relationship to providing security for the former Turkish capital. Plans are to dig the new strait more to the west, banning regular navigation near Istanbul itself.

Meanwhile, strengthening the Russian presence in the Mediterranean is currently a top priority due to threats of economic sanctions and international legal actions against Russia.

Historically, the policy of the United States was to "neutralize" the Straits because it began to expand into the Middle Eastern region later than other powers and did not have necessary influence on political events. In view of this, it appears that the purported goals of Turkey and the United States in respect of the Straits differ slightly. Turkey's erosion of the Straits agreements aims at expanding its powers. Along with this, however, it wants to retain its rights under the Montreux Convention. Meanwhile, the United States' plans seek complete removal of the agreements limiting military navigation of non-Black Sea countries.

Russia and Syria: A Special Historical Relationship

Author: Riad Haddad

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Russian Federation



The Syrian leadership has been calling for a political settlement of the crisis through a comprehensive national dialogue with the participation of all representatives of Syrian society. We are continuing to work in this direction.

We proclaimed the same approach at the Geneva Conference, and the Syrian delegation, the only representative of the Syrian people, was sincere and serious in the course of the negotiations. At the same time, the presentation by Secretary of State John Kerry at the opening of the Geneva-2 Conference was provocative and

destabilizing. In response to that, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem stated that no one has the right to decide the fate of the Syrian people except the Syrians themselves, reminding Kerry and his allies about the UN Charter and the principles of international law prohibiting interference in the affairs of independent states.

As far as Syria's chemical disarmament is concerned, the country has acceded to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the Russian-U.S. initiative in order to get rid of its chemical stockpiles. It is essential to note that Syria is facilitating the OPCW's work. However, armed groups and those standing behind them are trying to prevent the implementation of the plan.

The Syrian government is providing places in shelters to all citizens who had to leave their homes as a result of criminal actions by armed groups, supplying them with food, clothes and all the necessities.

The Syrian government is using all available options to get into contact with the refugees; in particular, a commission has been set up to provide assistance, but neighboring states have refused Syrian officials entry to their territory. There are reports that, for example, in Turkey refugee camps have been converted into facilities for killers and the training of terrorist armed groups to be sent to Syria to fight.

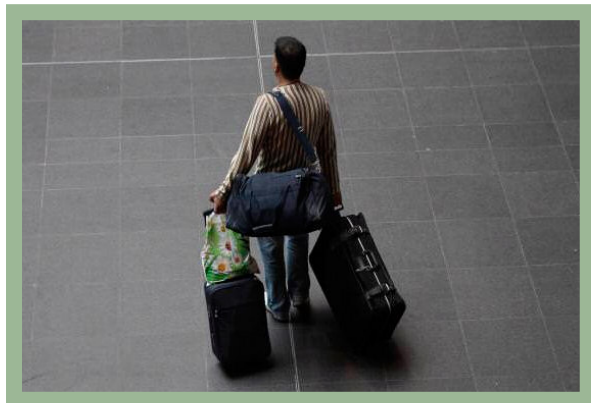
It is important to note that the Syrian government has always urged its citizens to return to their motherland, promising to provide them with the necessary assistance. But sadly, neighboring states are forbidding Syrian refugees to leave their camps, which have in effect turned into detention facilities.

Syria is grateful to Russia for the provision of humanitarian aid. I can say with confidence that Russia's sincere and consistent position has restored balance to international relations and gives nations hope for an end to the era of unipolarity and American hegemony in world politics. It has given hope for the establishment of a new world order based on international law and the UN Charter.

Migration Experience in France and Russian Reality

Author: V. Anisimova

Attaché, Third CIS Countries Department of CIS Countries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



Russia and France face similar tasks in regulating the flows of migration. The foremost tasks are to stem the decline in population and attract the necessary labor resources.

A special law regulating immigration was passed in 1945. It contains nine chapters and 40 articles defining the processes of entry into and subsequent stay in the country. There are more than 40 amendments to this law.

In order to maintain its population size, Russia needs to let in at least 700,000 immigrants annually; in order to maintain its number of working-age population, it needs to attract at least one million of them every year.

In the middle of 2000s, developments in France showed that liberal naturalization aimed at unrestricted multiculturalism did not produce due effect. Under the pressure of problems related to immigrants and of demands of the indigenous population, the French government opted for a forceful assimilation policy assigning primary importance to social stability and unity of society based on the observance of legislative as well as cultural and ethical norms which are uniform for the given multiethnic population of the country.

We will not go into detail of Russia's migration policy and legislation. Let us instead try to identify common features of the migration situation in Russia and France. There are of course things specific to each country and they cannot be ignored.

Nowadays, the ethnic composition of migrants entering Russia has changed dramatically. Most of them are members of titular nationalities of Transcaucasia and Central Asia. From the socio-economic and cultural-religious points of view, this category is fairly comparable with French immigrants from North Africa. The Russian Federation migration policy is now focused on demographic aspects and employment primarily of low-paid workers (same as in France).

Analyzing similar problems in their own country the French authorities have opted, in the context of their current "forceful assimilation" framework, for a tactic of selecting immigrants with appropriate education and occupational skills. This approach can work only in the conditions of careful government regulation of demographic processes, supervision over demand for manpower in the economy and effective struggle against illegal immigration.

Selection of migrants in Russia is hindered by its open borders with many former Soviet republics and its liberal migration legislation.

Quite obviously, all states, during certain periods in history, address migration processes in their distinctive ways depending on specific combinations of factors ranging from those of geography to ethnicity, culture and religion.

Ireland: An Old Nation and a Young Country

Author: Eoin O'Leary

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ireland to the Russian Federation



IRELAND is a young country, only achieving independence in 1922. However, it is the home of an ancient culture.

The theme of my address gives me a wide scope. In the case of Ireland, of course, it is impossible to understand the contemporary scene without understanding the deeper history.

And Ireland's history is a rich and textured one. It has seen the best and the worst of

times. Between the fifth and ninth centuries, Ireland, a pastoral and pagan society on the edge of Europe, inhabited by warring Celtic tribes, suddenly became a centre of Christian faith and scholarship, an Island of Saints and Scholars. One book describes this era as "How the Irish saved Civilisation."

Of course, modern Ireland is very different to the images many have of Ireland. The days of the primarily rural economy and society are behind us. Modern Ireland is urban and economically developed.

In recent years, Ireland has been building a reputation for excellent research and supporting significant academic-industrial collaborations, including with Russia.

Our foreign policy is shaped by our position as an open, export-oriented democracy. Our membership of, and active participation in, organisations such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe has allowed us to pursue our interests on the world stage, taking our responsibilities to international peace very seriously and yet not compromising our country's military neutrality.

Russia is the closest of the BRICS economies to Ireland both in terms of distance and GDP per capita, and is possibly the most familiar to us, culturally and socially. Many Irish people with experience of working with Russia and Russians point out how similar we are once the initial ice is broken and the language barrier overcome. This is surely supported by the very impressive trade figures for exports to Russia which have doubled over the recent past.

220 Years of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alaska

Author: Metropolitan Kliment

The interview was conducted by Yelena Studneva, International Affairs ' commentator. Metropolitan of Kaluga and Borovsk Kliment (GM. Kapalin), Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchy Publishing Council, Rector of Kaluga Theological Seminary, Candidate of Science (History)



In the 1980s, I served as a bishop in the United States and Canada. I visited Orthodox churches in Alaska and observed a unique phenomenon: 120 years after Russia sold Alaska and the region changed culturally and politically, it became Americanized but most of the local people still adhered to Orthodoxy and said that their faith was Russian.

The presence of the ROC in America amounted to the presence of Russian culture, which continued to influence Alaska's natives, countering the American supranational English-language culture. More than that, the active Russian

Church imparted to all of America the basic values of Russian civilization.

All these present-day realities in Russia remind us about America of the 19th century where our Church, our bishops and clergy were gaining experience under similar circumstances. After the sale of Alaska in 1867, the Russian Church for the first time found itself in another country, in conditions of freedom of religious views and equality of religious organizations before the law, without support from local and national governments. At that time, there remained in Alaska thousands of native residents of Orthodox faith.

The churches are visited by people of different generations, including children and young people. This is the main piece of evidence that Orthodoxy in Alaska is not dying out.

Of great significance was that the natives volunteered in spreading Orthodox customs, organizing and maintaining church activities. The greatest zeal was shown by toyons, or chiefs of tribes, who pulled weight among their members. Russian fur hunters, followed by the Russian-American Company and missionaries, relied on them in their activities.

Since the end of the 19th century, Church activities began picking up in the rest of America. It was Saint Innocent who wrote about a big potential of the Orthodox Church in this country.

Yet another important thing is to establish the historical truth even if its presentation is inevitably subjective. It often happens that owing to the scarcity of sources, ideological considerations or some other reasons historical events get misrepresented. I believe it is very important to reconstruct the true historiographical picture in all instances where previous researchers failed to study facts sufficiently well, omitted them or commented on them with partiality.

My new book on the propagation of Orthodox faith in Alaska is currently being prepared for publication. The first volume is intended to establish as accurately as possible facts pertaining to this process and the chronology of events. The book focuses on interconnections in this process and studies the ways it was being influenced by the Russian state, the Holy Synod, Orthodox missionaries, local residents, and missionaries of other faiths.

In the Camp of the Defeated Enemy

Author: D. Safonov

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



UNDER AGREEMENT between the great powers, victors in World War II - the USSR, USA, Britain and France, - the entire territory of defeated Germany was to come under their control regardless of whose forces liberated which part of Germany from the Nazis. The Soviet forces that occupied the greater part of Germany were to hand over a considerable portion of that territory to their allies.

With this in mind, the leadership of the Soviet Union decided to send to Germany, right after the end of the war, a special team to scout the territories that were to be handed over, for possible useful technological innovations the Germans had always been good at.

All members of the team were given military ranks in order not to look out of place in Germany, which was yet to cool down after the heat of war, and in order that not only Germans but our own military personnel reckoned with our opinions.

The team was split into two groups: the one I was placed in was to scout in Berlin which also was to be divided up between the victorious allies. The second group was to supervise the "comb-ing" of industrial and research facilities in the other areas slated for handing over to Western allies. Already working there were special military units which sought our advice and recommendations.

Right after the end of the war, the leadership of the Soviet Union decided to send to Germany a special team to scout the territories that were to be handed over, for possible useful technological innovations.

During our inspection tours around factories and organizations, we roamed about every corner and basement looking with interest at places where Berlin residents must have sheltered themselves against bombing raids and artillery shelling. We picked up things left lying around in the hope to find clues to what their former owners experienced during those agonizing days and hours. For some reason, we did not give much thought to chances of getting blown up in the process. We did not think either of chancing in those basements on a fanatic who thought the war was not over. Some unfamiliar fancy objects could also pose mortal danger.

Returning to Moscow all of us "civilians-turned-officers" returned our side arms to appropriate authorities but for some reason we were allowed to keep the uniforms to remind us of the one month we were military officers.

The Mansion of the Mustoufie

Author: M. Konarovsky

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, leading researcher at the Center for East Asia and SCO, Institute for International Studies, Moscow State Institute (University) for International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



SOVIET RUSSIA was the first to hail the proclamation or, more precisely, the restoration of Afghan independence in 1919. After her having in 1921 signed a bilateral political agreement with Kabul, so did Persia and Turkey, and, by the end of the same year, London reluctantly set up formal relations with the country. In this connection, a story is still current among Turkish and Iranian diplomats in Kabul that the Afghan reformist Amir, Amanullah Khan, made a handsome gesture towards Moscow, Ankara and Tehran by offering a part of his royal gardens, next door to the Victory Arch complex, for their embassies.

The first building of the Soviet embassy stood opposite the mosque, on the other side of the river. Previously, the manor belonged to a wealthy grandee during the reign of Amirs Abd al-Rahman and Habibullah in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

A two-story house with small columns, a traditional massive wooden entrance gate, a wicket gate likewise built of timber, and with tall façade windows - all in the style of Kabul architecture of the early 20th century. In the backfront of the picture, an extensive garden and some other buildings were clearly discernible.

According to eyewitness accounts, in the middle of the large embassy courtyard - Chaman - there once stood an old Oriental plane tree, on one of the strong branches of which the mustoufie an embezzler was allegedly hanged. By the irony of fate, his son later became a prominent Afghan politician, a famous poet and historian. THE DOCUMENTARY FOOTAGE of the Soviet embassy compound in the movie "Mission to Kabul," released on Soviet screens in 1970, has long become history, and the compound no longer exists, although the new compound, more modern and practically built anew, is much like the previous one. Moving the embassy in 1964 into the new compound, situated on the wide avenue of Dar-ul-Aman, at the end of which on sunny days one could see the outlines of the eponymous grand palace, became a huge holiday for employees. With the expansion of economic and trade relations with Afghanistan, the embassy took a lease from Kabul authorities of an additional plot adjacent to the main one, for a compound for the staff of the economic adviser. It also became the site for a new medical station which gradually evolved into a full-fledged clinic with several hospital beds, where even surgical treatment in case of emergency could be provided.

The Russian embassy only resumed work in late 2001, after the Northern Alliance, supported by international coalition forces, drove the Taliban from the Afghan capital. Almost immediately after arriving in Kabul in early 2002 as Russian ambassador, I inspected the compound in Dar-ul-Aman, or rather, what was left of it. We had to decide how and where to accommodate the embassy and staff in the future but meanwhile we rented several small two-story houses in the neighborhood of Wazir Akbar Khan, little fitted for the normal activities of the embassy...

Author: A. Zaitsev

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Russian ambassador to the Republic of Iceland in 1998-2002, Candidate of Science (Economics);



DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS between the USSR/Russia and the Republic of Iceland have a long history, rich in important events and facts. Many of them became known to the broad readership only now from Russian and Icelandic archival documents (a significant part of them have been published for the first time) in a special collection prepared by the foreign ministries of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Iceland.

The publication of this collection was timed to coincide with an important jubilee - namely, the 70th anniversary of the establishment of direct diplomatic ties between our two countries. It happened on October 4, 1943, at the height of World War II, before the independence of the Republic of Iceland was proclaimed (June 17,

1944).

The process of the establishment of direct diplomatic relations between the USSR and Iceland began in the middle of 1942 with contacts in London between Soviet Ambassador I.M. Maisky and Icelandic Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary Petur Benediktsson. The analysis of the positions of the USSR and Iceland made through their mediation confirmed their mutual interest in the establishment of direct diplomatic relations.

The situation of the government and the country at that time remained complex and uncertain. The diplomatic recognition of Iceland by such an influential world power as the Soviet Union, one of the first to immediately respond to the appeal from the newly independent republic at the height of World War II, was highly appraised in Iceland as important and concrete support for the fledgling Icelandic state.

In preparing to proclaim its independence, Iceland was highly interested in ensuring international support for its future status, primarily on the part of the three world powers - the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain, regarding them as a guarantee of the preservation of its state sovereignty.

Moscow's move was perceived as the recognition of the role of Iceland, which had noticeably grown with the outbreak of World War II.

Located at the junction of oceanic routes between the American continent and Europe, that island state, by virtue of its special location, proved to be an object of an intensifying struggle for control over the strategic sea communication lines in the Northern Atlantic between anti-Nazi coalition and Nazi Germany.

In December 1955, the diplomatic missions in Moscow and Reykjavik were promoted to embassies.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Rus' in Istorichesky vestnik

Author: E. Pyadysheva

Executive Secretary of International Affairs, Candidate of Science (History)



On May 22, the Russian Foreign Ministry saw the presentation of an issue of the journal Istorichesky vestnik [Historical Herald] entirely devoted to Lithuania, Russia and Poland in the 13th and 14th centuries. The ceremony was sponsored by the journal and the Association of Russian Diplomats.

The present volume of Istorichesky vestnik covers relationships between Rus', Lithuania and Poland during a period which fundamentally altered the map of Eastern Europe. The emergence of the Golden Horde, an apanage of the Mongol Empire, led to the emergence of new political centers. One of these centers was Moscow next to which there emerged another Rus' - the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Rus'. Most of its population called themselves "Russians" or "Rusyns" [Ruthenes] rather than

"Muscovites."

The present volume is a collection of studies done by researchers who looked from various angles at the unique Lithuanian political system and factors that caused two major states of Eastern Europe - the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Muscovy - go their separate ways. Istorichesky vestnik presented the views not only of Russian historians but also of their counterparts in Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and Poland which regard themselves as successors to the medieval state of the Gediminids.

It goes without saying that this topic is very relevant today, especially in the light of what has been happening of late.

The main criterion for selecting the articles for this issue was their objectivity based on historical documents.

In his remark on the subject of the present issue, the journal's chief editor A.E. Titkov said that the contributors from different countries had primarily focused on what was shared by those medieval nations.

Chairman of the Council of the Association of Russian Diplomats I.V. Khalevinsky described the issue as a milestone in the world of academia and a valuable source of facts for diplomats.

Istorichesky vestnik is an integral part of the ANO Runivers Publishers global project. According to Runivers President M.V. Baranov, the project's main objective is to provide free access to authentic documents, books and texts related to Russian history, which were previously stored in major libraries and state archives. There is a problem which should be given special attention. The fact is that Russia's presence in Internet is rather fragmented. It has no key documents in Russian related to history.

The authors argue, for example, that "studying relations between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is one of the most important areas of study in Polish historiography.

It should be also mentioned that this special issue of Istorichesky vestnik reproduces a number of some historical documents and images of historical characters.

Great Britain Today: Modernizing the Country of Traditions

Author: I. Kovalev

*Deputy Dean, School of World Economy and International Affairs, National Research University-
Higher School of Economics, Doctor of Science (History)*



THE COLLECTIVE MONOGRAPH "Dilemmas of Great Britain: Looking for Development Options" published in the UK-Russia Cross-Cultural Year marked an important event in Russia's academic life. The monograph is much more than a result of fruitful cooperation between the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) and the Institute of Europe. Russian Academy of Sciences, or even than another work about another country. It is a comprehensive, profound and exhaustive analysis of the pivotal problems of economic, constitutional and political modernization of the United Kingdom carried out in recent years.

The authors have paid special attention to constitutional reforms, modernization of state governance, evolution of the party and political system, in short, the problems which have been and remain prominent on the agenda of the political establishment and the expert community. Nobody doubts any more that the constitutional legal foundations, the responsibility spheres of central and local organs of power, the organizational structure and programs of political parties should be sorted out and adjusted to the changed social and economic realities.

The chapters dealing with the evolution of the party and political system of Britain which tries to respond in time to the changes in the social and economic model and to correspond to public expectations form the monograph's core. Having analyzed the trends of the recent decades, the authors discovered certain new features. Prof. Peregudov analyzed the British political cycles after World War II and came to a conclusion that "starting with the mid-1970s social and class relationships no longer constituted the main structuralizing factor of the British party system" (p. 117).

The authors have analyzed in detail what the two latest cabinets have accomplished and where they failed. Elena Ananieva, head of the Centre for British Studies of the Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, who has contributed the chapter "Gordon Brown's Labor Cabinet" justly believes that it failed because of objective circumstances, the world financial and economic crisis in the first place, as well as due to a fairly great number of the prime minister's own blunders.

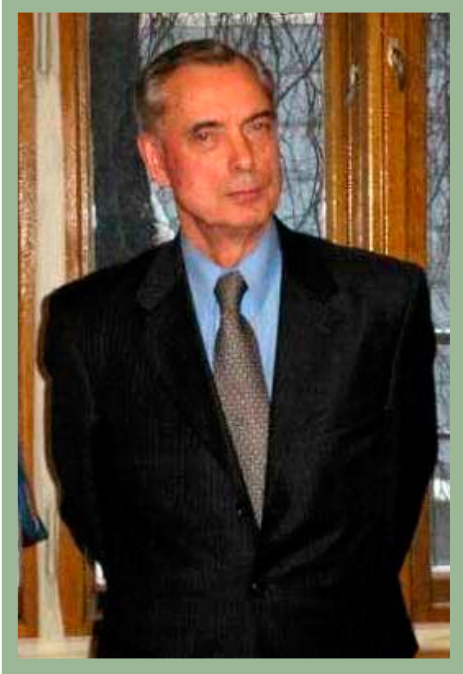
Alexei Gromyko remains convinced that this new situation "perfectly fits the trends of the recent decades: the UK political system is moving from majority to pluralist model of democracy in which coalition governments are a norm rather than an exception" (p. 152).

On the whole, wide and profound scholarly analysis of varied problems; well-balanced assessments and professional evaluation of facts have made the book an important source of information and deep-cutting expert opinions on the United Kingdom. It seems that today this is highly important since the events in world economy and politics openly demonstrate that the role and significance of nation-states have grown against the background of an obvious inability of regional and global institutions to promptly and adequately respond to the challenges of our time.

In Memory of a Friend, Viktor Sukhodrev

Author: B. Pyadyshev

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Distinguished Worker of the Diplomatic Service



Viktor Mikhailovich Sukhodrev has passed away.

Nothing so changes everyone as the years, but differently for different people. For some, mercilessly; for others, mercifully. Viktor, until the very last day, was a center of attraction for people of the most diverse interests, occupations and passions. His range of communication and friendship was astonishingly wide - politicians and diplomats, artists and performers, art critics, filmmakers and salon owners. But they all were certainly personalities.

Viktor Mikhailovich Sukhodrev received most favored treatment from time and fate. He lived, no, rather flew through more than eight decades of years, and he neither lost his talents nor his friends and admirers on the long road of life. But he could not live without his wife, Inga Dmitrievna, who left this world a few months ago.

Viktor Sukhodrev was an almost legendary personality in Russian diplomacy. The childhood and youth spent in England, among his English coevals, awarded him an invaluable prize: English as the second mother tongue. However, there had yet to be the ability to use this wonderful gift. Viktor used it to the maximum.

His interpreting was artistic, in a perfect literary language, if that is at all possible in politics. The way he rendered standard language clichés made them colorful, more accurate and figurative.

After Khrushchev's departure from the political stage, Viktor Sukhodrev was as much in demand with the new leadership. Fate threw him together with Leonid Brezhnev for a long time. As far as I remember, not one of the major foreign tours of Brezhnev took place without.

USSR Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin also held him in great esteem. For example, Sukhodrev as his interpreter was present at the historic 1966 Tashkent meeting, during which the Soviet premier tried, and nearly succeeded, in reconciling the President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, and the Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri.

Less than a couple of years later, in April 1968, Kosygin and Ayub Khan met again, though this time in Pakistan. Kosygin went to Pakistan on an official visit. So Sukhodrev flew too. I was also in the delegation.

The appearance of the legendary Sukhodrev caused a furor.

Inga Dmitrievna and Viktor Mikhailovich Sukhodrev are buried together in the small village graveyard under the canopy of century-old trees not far from their home on Nikolina Hill, where they spent the last 20 years of their happy life.

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Editor-in-Chief: **Armen Oganessian**
Head of Internet & Multimedia projects: **Valentina Zlobina**
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Internet: <http://en.interaffairs.ru/>
E-mail: journal@interaffairs.ru
Editorial Address:
105064, Moscow, Gorokhovskiy lane 14, Russia
Phone: +7(499) 265-37-81
Fax: +7(499) 265-37-71