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Superpower Status: An Outgoing Phenomenon in the 21st Century?

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WITHOUT EXCEPTION, the tectonic shifts now taking place in the infrastructures of today's world under the conditions of globalization and the information and telecommunications revolution are together leading toward a radical change in the place, role, and influence of nations and peoples in the system of international relations. It is therefore natural to expect a gradual rethinking of the traditionally understood categories of world order, hegemony, dominance and submission, the places and roles of small nations, the character of the configuration of geopolitical forces, and so on. Of special relevance are the status of and outlook for the superpowers, and the phenomenon of superpower status itself. As is well known, against the backdrop of the triumph of the West and the United States, there was originally the conviction that a so-called unipolar world order had arrived, at the summit of which Uncle Sam was enthroned in splendid isolation.

In recent decades, it has become apparent that the phenomenon of superpower status is gradually undergoing great transformations in terms of the true capabilities of single nations to impose their will on others.

It is noteworthy that under the conditions of globalization and the information and telecommunications revolution, they are being transformed qualitatively. There is now widespread diffusion of property, technology, knowledge, science, information, military and political might, and so on. There is thus an accelerating pace of the redistribution of the relative and absolute geopolitical power of the main dramatis personae of world politics.

ONLY A COUNTRY'S organizational and mobilizational abilities, and - no less important - the political will of its leadership with regard to formulating and defending real and not false national interests, give concrete form and sense to its power, regardless of its material resources.

In the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar world order, Washington became the main cause of unrest in the world arena. To an even greater degree, the gap between destructive potential and a constructive beginning is narrowing in American foreign policy.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, it would seem hegemonic powers and the stability they bring are becoming relics of the past - artifacts of the history of international relations.

In the bipolar world order, the boundaries between the two blocs - or poles - remained relatively clear, and were more or less strictly defined.

Clear and unequivocal identification of historical threats, and their association with a particular country or group of countries, is now problematic.

According to the laws of geopolitics, the rules of the game in the international arena are created by victors, so it is they who reformat the grand chessboard - metaphorically, the entire world - and the rules of its game to suit themselves.

Trumpism and International Relations: At the Threshold of Deideologization

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ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP and his active efforts to undermine the foreign and domestic policy course inherited from the Obama administration sent waves of concern across the Western analytical community. His inaugural address had a bombshell effect on Western mainstream media. His close to perfect populist speech was nationalist at the brink of "isolationism." He looked like a perfect right-wing populist and no exception to the common rule: clearly defined problems and real and urgent questions never supplied with clear (or rational) answers.

AS A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN and confirmed nationalist, Trump is a fairly rare combination for us. Recently, experts started talking about Trumpism as a phenomenon and a combination of deideologized foreign policy, trade protectionism and a fresh attempt at reindustrialization of the American economy.

The American president did not look quite consistent on the international arena either but he showed himself a tough politician. The powerful strike of Tomahawk missiles at Shayrat airfield made clear what Donald Trump had had in mind when holding forth about negotiations from the position

of strength. Considering his far from simple relationships with the intelligence community and his (probably ad hoc) siding with the military, he has chosen reliance on strength as his foreign policy style.

DONALD TRUMP'S COMING to power in the United States launched serious transformations in the system of international relations, in what is called the "liberal ideological consensus" of the West and the role ideology plays in world politics in general.

It looks as if in the context of uncertainty and vagueness of the basic norms and rules applied today in world politics, the current turbulence created by the mounting pressure of the revisionist powers and resistance of the absolute leaders of the past will push the world back to rational realism free from ideological biases.

After Trump is either gone or "tamed" by the two-party American political establishment, it will be hard for the elite "to turn the wheel of history backwards."

Jamaica in the Bundestag?

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PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS on September 24 were a sad experience for Germany's political heavyweights, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Each of them suffered the heaviest defeat in its history. The Christian Democrats hadn't done so badly since 1949, and the Social Democrats got fewer votes than they had during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm in 1913. According to a survey, more than 60% of Germans said that they couldn't understand why they needed the SPD at all because there was no difference between its platform and the postulates of the CDU.

Throwing aside all political correctness, 51% told pollsters outright that they wanted Merkel to go. Bavaria's Christian Social Union (CSU) got much fewer votes too. The CSU, which had been the main party in Bavaria, got 38% of the vote compared with its result of 48% in the previous elections, and so it lost even more support than the CDU.

The Greens and the Left performed the way they had done at the previous elections of 2013, the former garnering between 9% and 9.5% and the latter 9% of votes. But effectively, they did worse than in 2013 since the turnout was higher last September than four years ago.

The Free Democratic Party (FDP) won twice as many votes in the 2017 elections as they had done in 2013, and that can be considered a victory.

Alternative for Germany (AfD), a new political power, achieved more than receiving seats in the Bundestag and becoming the country's number-three party after winning 13.5% of votes (in the 2013 polls, it got too few votes to be represented in parliament).

The scared mainstream parties hurried to stick brown-tinged labels on their inconvenient rival, dubbing it a radical right-wing or even neo-Nazi group. But what do dry statistics tell us? At September's elections, more than a million of what had been consistent supporters of the CDU voted for the AfD, while the SPD lost 500,000 and the Left 430,000 voters to the new party.

The explanation is quite simple: the former East Germans were fed up with being treated as second-rate people by western German parties.

Moreover, statistics suggest that the east and west of Germany remain different from each other economically and socially. At least, that's the way the majority of former East Germans feel.

In this context, it's understandable, albeit seemingly paradoxical, that it was in the east of the country that Merkel, formerly a citizen of the GDR and a member of its communist youth organization, Free German Youth, has been getting hissed and showered with less-than-fresh vegetables. "Traitor, traitor!" indignant people have been yelling at her. Millions of eastern Germans accuse Merkel of betraying her past, and hence of betraying them.

A couple of years ago, no one would have imagined that members of the right-wing conservative CSU and the progressive Greens could sit in the same Cabinet. So, a Jamaica coalition may not materialize, after all, and Germany may have repeat elections for the first time in its history.

Hence, the collapse of talks on a Jamaica coalition and repeat elections would spell disaster for all would-be members of the proposed alliance.

And it is for this very reason that a Jamaica coalition may become a reality. It's not love but desperation that would bring it into being. But that coalition would produce a Cabinet paralyzed by internal controversies, calling to mind a fable by Russian author Ivan Krylov in which a swan, crayfish and pike get harnessed to the same cart and pull it in different directions.

And this means that Germany may still have early elections.

The Minsk Process and the Settlement of the Ukraine Conflict: **Dances of Interests**

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THE MINSK PROCESS, a string of diplomatic efforts to settle the conflict in southeastern Ukraine, has gone into its fourth year. By and large, it has been given less than enthusiastic assessments from day one.

Apparently, there is a potential for conflict in any country. There can be all kinds of reasons for domestic conflicts - ethnic, religious, cultural, ideological, social and economic differences, various kinds of inequality, etc. Moreover, any country with any self-respect has frictions of some kind with its neighbors and partners. This sad fate has not bypassed the sovereign, free, and independent Ukraine. A range of factors confronted Ukraine with a difficult choice between the friendly West and brotherly Russia. The

European Union's signing (or not signing) an association agreement with Ukraine was an economic factor that proved to be the last straw.

In this article, we do not dwell on any of those factors. Nor do we try to find out who, by fair means or foul, "helped" Ukraine make its choice. We just look at the outcome, a net result that partly reflects the saying that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. The weakest link happened to be within Ukraine, in its southeast, where a conflict broke out between the central government and the "separate territories of the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk."

States not only has the clout to bring about adjustments to the general Western position on Ukraine. It can also wield enormous influence over the Ukrainian government as one of the parties to the conflict, although the United States is not directly represented either in the Trilateral Contact Group or in the Normandy format, in other words, it is not a formal participant in the Minsk process.

RUSSIA STANDS for a direct dialogue between the Ukrainian government and the authorities of the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk. Moscow has repeatedly called for it at various levels.

Both republics needed to keep their economies going, and before being able to restore their relations with the rest of Ukraine, they had no other option than external administration for enterprises that were cut off from their owners who were based in the other part of the country. Moscow explained. Russian officials have often condemned Ukraine's economic, banking, transportation, and energy blockades of the Donetsk and Lugansk republics, pointing out their effects on living standards in the region and their overall adverse humanitarian consequences for the local population.

The American adage that it takes two to tango is increasingly often used in reference to political situations. But the Minsk process is not a tango, not a dance for two. It's more like a group dance, a vibrant and dynamic folk circle dance, something where unity and mutual understanding are essential. We ought to make sure it doesn't amount to going around in circles, though.

Russia's Position on Territorial Conflicts in East Asia

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RUSSIA'S POSITION on territorial and border conflicts in East Asia arouses great interest. Most of these conflicts have deep roots in and are consequences of the Cold War, primarily stemming from legal gaps in the system of interstate borders that is based on the San Francisco Peace Treaty.

Russia is involved in only one of East Asia's territorial disputes, one with Japan, and is just an observer in the rest of them. Russia's line on those conflicts is very important

from the point of view of its political and economic interests, which are determined by its trade and investment relations with the countries that are parties to those disputes.

It was no accident that Russia focused on that southern route in setting the agenda for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Vladivostok in 2012. As an outside observer in East Asian territorial conflicts with none of its geographical or economic interests affected by them, Russia takes a more neutral position on them than countries to which such conflicts pose a direct threat of armed confrontation.

The point of coincidence of the interests of Russia and China in the South China Sea is that both countries are against the involvement of extraregional actors in the territorial disputes in that region.

RUSSIA DOES NOT NEED any territorial conflicts to escalate. Territorial disputes fuel tensions in bilateral relations between Japan and China, Japan and South Korea, China and Southeast Asian countries, and this aggravates what is already a complicated political situation in the Far East. Hotbeds of war near the Far Eastern borders of Russia not only pose security threats to the country but also hamper processes of economic integration of East Asian countries, whereas Moscow sees its participation in these processes as a factor in the economic development of Siberia and the Russian Far East.

Russia maintains a neutral stance on territorial conflicts in which it is not involved. Although Russia sticks to the principle that, in any territorial conflict, it must be the business of its parties alone to seek a settlement, Russia's neutrality means that it can play a major mediatory role in such conflicts.

Russia believes that creating a new security architecture for Asia-Pacific that would be a collective system free from any blocs and based on international law may clear the way for settling the territorial conflicts in the region.

The Trump Administration's Latin American "Backyard"

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LATINO-CARIBBEAN AMERICA (LCA) is a unique civilization in terms of language, religion, the national identity of most countries in the region, their shared historical destinies, their mentality, and how they perceive the world. In international Latin American studies, it has long been the practice to categorize LCA as a peripheral region. Today, it is already common to classify it as an "intermediate stratum" of the global hierarchy.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, LCA has been engaged in processes of globalization, as part of both the world economy and the information society. In most countries of the region, a modern institutional structure has emerged with a functioning mechanism of state management and a market economy.

In recent years, the political and economic elites of the LCA countries have begun to rid themselves of the peripheral mentality and react to changes in the correlation of forces in the global arena and the rise of other centers of power, especially China, India, the Eurasian interior, and the ascending economies of Asia.

The independence of Latin America is due to many factors. As was noted above, it is a unique civilization that has its roots in Europe and Africa. This civilization is firmly integrated into the rest of the world, but

is not part of the Anglo-Saxon global project. The main difference between Latin America and the European countries is that it is not subject to bloc discipline. Latin America depends less on the United States than even the leaders of Old Europe, including Germany and France.

On the whole, LCA has a positive attitude toward BRICS. The very philosophy of BRICS appeals to Latin Americans: a desire to preserve the cultural and civilizational identity of nations, follow an independent path of development, and reshape the structure governing the world economy. The thesis that BRICS is not bound to any particular civilization, or is subject to bloc discipline, is especially attractive. This is important to Latin Americans, who have historically been inclined to follow an independent course even within regional integrational groups.

In the middle term, the role of China and other rising economies of Asia will continue to grow in Latin America. This corresponds to LCA's desire not to limit itself to the vertical system of North-South foreign ties that predominated earlier, but to follow more broadly a horizontal South-South path instead.

Finally, let us note two theses that also have a bearing on Russia. A feeling of foreign dependence and regional backwardness lingers in certain circles of Latin America's "creative class." It has therefore been proposed that it fully join the "global civilization" without aspiring to an important place in world politics or economics. There is, however, another point of view in Latin American society. The region's growing economic potential strengthens the positions of those who favor an independent path of development and a multivector foreign policy.

Economic Cyber Systems as a Follow-up to Digital Economies

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TODAY'S GLOBAL CRISIS, which manifests itself in increasing chaos, has given rise to problems that civilization has never had before. The habitual method of global use of armed force cannot solve any of them. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said in a speech at a session of the UN General Assembly in New York that exporting social experiments has tragic consequences and can have degrading effects on societies. He argued that a digital economy is essential as an instrument for tackling global tasks. A digital economy sets "a new paradigm for the development of the state, the economy, and

society as a whole" and involves the use of information technology (IT) to make governance more efficient. There exist two fundamentally different principles for building a digital economy.

THE PROPOSED TYPE of digital economy has been devised jointly by statisticians, engineers and IT specialists and is based on technological achievements such as big data, artificial intelligence, smart industries and smart cities, FinTech (financial technology), building information modeling (BIM), e-government (electronic government), and the Internet of Things (IoT). It would be a spontaneously developing form of digital economy that might be cost-effective for individual entities but could not be cost-effective from the standpoint of public spending, and least of all could it ensure crisis-free or proportional development of the world economy.

Russia's adoption in the early 1990s of an economic model that involved the rejection of all planning blocked the cyber revolution begun in the former Soviet Union, and this had negative consequences for civilization as a whole.

An analysis of the program shows that it is not based on any mathematical economic model. Apparently, its authors assume that big data is a sufficient basis for a digital economy. They naively believe that some statistics would automatically ensure efficient interaction between economic entities and thereby bring about a miracle - a rise in living standards and the quality of life, and hence a general national paradigm shift.

The concept of a digital economy as a big data-based system has become popular among IT specialists, mathematicians enthusiastic about mathematical economic modeling, and statisticians who base econometric models on statistics.

AS ANY OTHER GLOBAL CRISIS, the current crisis is leading to the technical modernization of production. A digital economy era is setting in. It is an era of "smart" means of production based on cutting-edge IT and used for operating data economies. These economies may be kept alive by victim countries - nations that import foreign investments for improving their infrastructures (including their digital elements) and for financial speculation in order to enable the West to launch a new type of production.

Since digital economies are essential for changing the character of globalization and a mathematical model should be the basis for national digital economies and a global digital economy, public debates should be organized on what this model should be like. Such debates should result in setting up a think tank to organize putting the economic cyber system into reality. This think tank should bring together the designers of the mathematical model, scientists from key research centers in all economic sectors, IT specialists, statisticians, accountants, financiers, and lawyers. They would tackle mathematical, software, organizational, and technical problems that would need to be solved for integrating the cyber system into the practice of economic administration and for organizing the training of personnel to operate the digital economy.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union and Russia: History Through the Ages

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ON OCTOBER 14, 2017, the 137th Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU), the oldest international political organization, will open in St. Petersburg. It may be recalled that the previous, 136th Assembly that took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh was truly historic for the Russian delegation. For the first time in 20 years, Russia initiated an IPU draft resolution on a very important and relevant subject, "The Role of Parliament in Respecting the Principle of Non-intervention in the Internal Affairs of States," receiving overwhelming support from the majority of national delegations and ensuring its adoption by consensus.

In Dhaka, an important step was taken along the Syrian track. The IPU's main governing body, the Executive Committee, acted on our initiative to create a working group to facilitate a political settlement in that long-suffering country.

ALTHOUGH OUR COUNTRY once played host to members of parliament from all over the world at the 100th IPU Conference in 1998, rather little is known about this organization in Russia - I would say regrettably little. Even less is known about the extensive history of Russia's participation in this international assembly of parliamentarians. Meanwhile, this history is extremely interesting and rich in symbolic facts and activities.

IN ITS ACTIVITY, the Federation Council as an upper house of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation attaches great importance to the activity of the IPU as the largest and most representative venue for fostering parliamentary democracy. That is especially relevant at a time when the activity of certain other international parliamentary organizations has been effectively paralyzed with the Russophobic activity of Western and pro-Western delegations.

The decision to hold the IPU assembly in St. Petersburg on October 14-18, 2017 is an unquestionable success of the inter-parliamentary movement and the majority of states seeking to build international relations based on the principles of equality, democracy, respect, and consideration for each other's interests.

We will do our utmost to ensure that the 137th IPU assembly is held at a high organizational level, in an atmosphere of an open exchange of opinions among all forum participants without any exception, an atmosphere facilitating the assertion of democratic values and an intercultural, interreligious and interethnic dialogue.

Italy's Failed Attempt at a "Third Republic"

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ITALY IS AGAIN at a crossroads. An attempt to carry out a constitutional reform that would have changed the country's political system has fallen through. Italy faces a new political crisis as the ruling party's policy is increasingly rejected both by the opposition and by the population. Where the nation will go from now on depends on a set of factors in its economy and its domestic and foreign policy. To make matters worse, developments in Italy are a source of special concern for the European Union. With the EU being plagued by economic, political and social crises, domestic instability in member countries causes it particular anxiety. The situation in Italy, which is one of the founders and leaders of the EU, exercises a direct effect on the pan-European political climate. Due to the high degree of mutual integration of the economies and political systems of the member countries, political instability in Italy threatens the stability of the EU as a whole.

Populism has become a stable feature of Italian politics. Religion has been playing a diminishing role in Italian politics over the past few decades - in the past, when Italy's politics were dominated by traditional parties, the Catholic Church was very influential politically. The latest developments have shown domestic political life to be significantly unstable while traditional conservative attitudes remain in place and are obstacles to reforms.

Today's economic crisis in Italy has deep roots. Italy didn't take shape as a single state before the late 19th century, and its process of unification was controlled by political and aristocratic elites. But regional differences are still in place today, and they slow down the country's economic development.

Throughout its history as a single state, Italy has been a country with powerful elites and an exclusive and increasingly corrupt political caste, and this has inevitably led to dwindling public confidence in government.

Obviously, both the current Cabinet and the one to be formed after the next elections will put off constitutional reforms. So, no radical restructuring of Italy's political system is to be expected any time soon. But the obvious need for such reforms will make future leaders revise the tactics that were used by Renzi and opt for a comprehensive overhaul, giving priority to economic reforms. The pan-European climate remains a powerful factor, and in the near term will become even more powerful if anything.

Hungary's Eastern Policy in Light of the Ukraine Crisis

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THE ONGOING UKRAINE CRISIS has been a harsh trial for Russia and the European Union; it has been especially painful for countries that recently became members of a united Europe. The reasons for this are their territorial proximity to a hotbed of tension and their special historical relation to Ukrainian affairs. This is especially true for Ukraine's immediate Western neighbors: Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania. Their attitude to the situation is in one way or another associated with the problem of Ukrainian sovereignty, as it is understood and perceived by the government of each country.

AGAINST THE BACKDROP of lobbying by the Polish government for the Ukrainian authorities' pro-Western policy, however, it is worth noting the position of Hungary, which has made itself felt in light of the events of recent years. It is largely of interest because it does not coincide with Warsaw's approaches in a number of features, and in some ways contradicts them.

The main motivation for Hungary's involvement is more subtle and does not stem from an understandable desire to obtain "historical justice," as though this could be expected; rather, it has more to do with the country's current status in the European arena.

WHEN SPEAKING of his country's foreign policy priorities in 2013, Szabolcs Takács, Hungary's Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, cited two important areas: the Eastern Partnership and the integration of West Balkans into the European Union. At the same time, he admitted that the second area was more important to Hungary's long-term interests.

With the outbreak of war in the Donbass, Hungary took in general neighborly, concerned position with regard to Ukraine. At the same time, to avoid a negative reaction from Moscow, Hungarian politicians preferred to speak not of a Russian-Ukrainian conflict but of an internal Ukraine conflict. This evoked notable dissatisfaction from the Kiev government and their European (especially Polish) political mentors.

On the whole, we may assume that Budapest has neither the intention nor the ability to pursue a policy of irredentism with regard to the Transcarpathian Hungarians. The tension is fueled by the weakness and insecurity of Kiev, which is inclined to look for enemies and position itself as a potential victim.

The Ukraine crisis that broke out in 2014 proved a challenge to Hungarian foreign policy that complicated its execution. At the same time, the nature of the Ukrainian factor's effect on relations between the two countries has its own paradoxical logic. Although developing longterm economic ties with the Russian Federation now demands strong political will and concentrated efforts by diplomats, it remains a priority for Budapest. Meanwhile, instead of the unity that was expected, the East European countries are displaying such deep-rooted discord over the single issue of Ukraine that their cooperation within the Eastern Partnership policy is itself in doubt.

Canada: The Non-Trudeauist Foreign Policy of Justin Trudeau

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ELECTED IN OCTOBER 2015 due to his widespread support in Quebec, Justin Trudeau (of the Liberal Party of Canada) came to power with promises to change foreign policy and elevate Canada's role as a global actor after nine years of rule by the Conservative Party.

In the brief period between November 2015 and the start of 2017, when Stephane Dion was minister of foreign affairs, Canada's foreign policy was aimed at increasing the country's role in the world arena through such measures as expanding its participation in peacekeeping missions. However, it displayed neither real independence nor any kind of innovation. Justin Trudeau might thus leave behind a completely different legacy of the Canadian liberal identity than Lester Pearson, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, or Jean Chretien.

THE FIRST controversial aspect of Justin Trudeau's foreign policy was the decision to end Canadian airstrikes within its international military mission Operation Impact in the battle against the terrorist organization ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and to limit Canadian participation in new technical and humanitarian missions inside the region.

The second controversial aspect of Trudeau's policy is the sending of a military mission to Latvia in July 2016 as part of NATO maneuvers to contain the "Russian threat" in the Baltic region. The mission was sent "to support North Atlantic Treaty Organization assurance and deterrence measures in Eastern and Central Europe."

Bilateral talks between Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and his then-Canadian counterpart Stéphane Dion during the 2016 ASEAN summit in Laos were marked by a renewal of the dialogue between Canada and Russia, which ground to a halt after Crimea was reunited with Russia. Nevertheless, Canada's participation in NATO's mission in Latvia, based on the unlikely idea that Russia poses a threat to the Baltic countries, has led to a cooling of its relations with Russia, does not make negotiations on the Arctic any easier, and undermines Canada's image in the international arena.

The third controversial aspect of Trudeau's Canadian foreign policy is its attitude toward Ukraine.

The main issue of Canadian foreign policy in relations with Ukraine has nothing to do with military and technical cooperation. Trudeau is the prime minister of an officially bilingual country built on the model of a federal system. A major part of this system is Quebec - which, under the aegis of liberal democracy and respect for human rights, and with a successful policy of being open to immigrants, sets an example for the entire world.

Judging from the last two years of Liberal government, the Canada of Justin Trudeau has nothing in common with Trudeauism. Its foreign policy is far from the lessons of Pierre Trudeau, whom Fidel Castro called "a world class statesman ... a serious political leader ... an upright and brave man ... who made a transcendental contribution to the modern history of Canada."

Values and Meanings of International Relations

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AN INTERPRETATION of values and meanings of international relations should precede any further discussion of them.

The concept of values, therefore, is fundamental for the world community and international relations: they determine individual and collective behavior; shape customs, traditions and cultures; and serve as the source of juridical laws. In short, they are signally important for the human community.

Today's top priority remains the idea of international law that regulates contacts between states on the principles of cooperation, equality and secularism and has determined, to a great extent, the legal content of international relations.

The Treaty of Westphalia marked a turning point in the development of international law and laid the foundations of the institute of international legal guarantees. It was on this basis that the declaratory theory of international legal recognition of states was formulated: from that time on, declaration of a new state was enough to treat it as a subject of international law.

Today, the criticism of the Westphalian principles is limited to the talks about the primacy of human rights over state sovereignty and the inability of national states to ensure effective governance in the globalized world. Limited sovereignties and international control regarding the countries that violate human rights and have moved dangerously close to genocide and ethnic purges are suggested as alternatives. The network principles and the structures based on it are suggested as instruments to be used when dealing with global problems.

Indeed, the idea of global governance as a more active and stronger role of the United Nations on the global scale and in different limited spheres is pushed forward. Global management of science under the UNESCO aegis is being discussed together with what the academic community might say about a science-policy interface.

On the whole, the structure and content of international relations are highly varied and highly complicated. Speaking at the meeting with Russian ambassadors and permanent representatives in international organizations, President of the Russian Federation Putin pointed out that international relations were steadily growing more and more complex, with hundreds of millions of people of different occupations, ages and interests involved in them.

Those who study the interrelationships between domestic and international problems in the context of world politics know that the world order based in the interaction of states and balance of power is gradually replaced with new international relations into which states are involved together with the non-governmental sphere, cities, local power and other participants. These new formats are growing more and more noticeable on the world arena and are significantly changing the climate of international communication, values and meanings of international relations.

Legal Regulation of International Activities of Russian Federation Constituent Territories

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THE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES of constituent territories of the Russian Federation are a relatively new subject in Russian regional studies and a separate field within them.

It is only natural that Russian regions have been stepping up their international activity and have been concerned over international problems. They have been directly drawn into international processes by globalization. Foreign economic activities have become an important feature of social and economic development for many Russian regions and the dominant social and economic factor for some of them.

The powers of regional authorities include conducting negotiations and signing agreements with constituent territories of foreign federal states, administrative territorial units of foreign countries, and, with the consent of the government of the Russian Federation, with the central governments of foreign states; appointing their representatives to trade missions of the Russian Federation abroad with the consent of a Russian federal government body and at the regions' own expense; opening missions abroad in order to help implement agreements; pursuing regional foreign trade programs; information support for foreign trade activities on their territory; and setting up foreign trade insurance funds on their territory (Chapter 2, Article 8).

The Regulations on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 14 play a special role among legislation on the powers of federal government bodies in coordinating the international activities of regions.

In 2001, the Collegium of the Foreign Ministry approved a document that declared the coordination of the international activities of constituent territories of the Russian Federation one of the ministry's priority tasks.

The ministry maintains that support from the federal government is essential for Russian regions to be able to make full international use of their economic, cultural, and humanitarian resources, and that joint efforts by the federal government and regional authorities are essential for Russia to be able to attain all its international objectives.

Regional laws do not normally define the legal nature of regional international agreements, except that some of them state that such agreements are not full-scale international treaties. They do not have any special sections for such agreements in regional legislation systems, nor do they establish arbitration procedures for disputes over points in such accords.³²

Besides dealing with international agreements, some regional laws contain regulations on the status of regions' missions abroad, on the participation of regions in the activities of international organizations, on official foreign visits of regional delegations, etc.

In some regions, the overall regulation of international activities is exercised by the executive branch via documents such as decrees by the president of a republic, orders or resolutions by the regional administration, or orders by the regional governor.

To sum up, the desire of Russian regions to play an increasingly independent role in the international arena is part of processes of regionalization and federalization, while, in turn, these processes stimulate the regions to boost their international relations.

Multifacial Democracy: Time to Reassess Values

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THE FORM of individual participation in the political organization of the state that stems from and was upheld by European and Christian civilization throughout the development of mankind has undergone a metamorphosis, losing one set of features and acquiring another. No one can say that democracy as a form of expressing the will of the majority of the electorate is perfect. While its earlier forms were practiced in the comparatively small Greek republics and cities of France in the 18th century, both of which were monocultural and monoethnic societies, a fundamentally different reality applies today.

Our planet's population has become far larger and is already approaching the 8 billion mark. Aided by modern means of communication, the financial and banking system, and the international division of labor, it has become more compact and interdependent.

With rare exceptions, there is one generally recognized form of the political organization of society, government, and the state for all of this diverse and contradictory conglomerate of nations: democracy. In one way or another, an absolute majority of the nearly 200 members of the United Nations identify themselves as democracies, and, despite its considerable flaws, there are still no alternatives to this form of government today.

The course of intercivilizational conflicts, where their depth and scale are completely different, and the bitterness of the parties much greater and more intense, is incomparably complicated. As we see from the examples of Great Britain and Canada, and from recent events in Spain (Catalonian separatism), democracy can itself lead to separatism in some cases, thereby opening the way to escalated conflicts. One thing is certain: Democracy is very different in countries with diverse civilizations and subcultures and conceals within it a syndrome of self-destruction.

It is easy to see that under today's conditions, an individual's vote is of very little value. For some small compensation or slight monetary benefit, a great many people are ready to sell their votes to "benefactors," and not only in poor countries. This is a widespread practice. Without the reform of general elections, we shall be faced with a deluge of entirely unqualified populist politicians who increasingly often represent not the fundamental interests and values of society that bind and unite it but those forces that pose a challenge to it and lead to widescale societal disintegration.

Russian-German Relations at the End of 2017

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THE LARGE AMOUNT of foreign policy work done by the Russian leadership in recent years has proven insufficient to fill gaps in social and economic statistics. This work mainly focused on measures to attract foreign investors and to raise the investment attractiveness of Russia. Measures to intensify cross-border movement of capital and attract "smart money" to Russia have been seriously impeded by economic determinism and overlooked many aspects of international relations.

Today's Germany is an indisputable leader of the European Union, and it is no accident that Russia's relations with Germany cover the greater part of financial and technological cooperation between Russia and the EU. It would be no mistake to see Russian-German relations as a traditional channel for social and cultural communication between Russia and the European family of nations. This area of international relations is an element of the ultimate foundations of Russian statehood and reflects the very essence of Russian society. Russian-German relations should be divided into four basic groups: economic, political, cultural, and scientific/scholarly/educational .

Energy trade is a strategic area of Russian-German relations. This chiefly applies to oil and natural gas. Oil and gas imports are very important for Germany's economy and social stability despite the reduction by the German government of the share of hydrocarbon fuels bought from Russia in the general structure of energy consumption in Germany.

Despite all the problems and obstacles, Russian-German relations show positive dynamics and a steady tendency toward growth.

POLITICAL RELATIONS between Russia and Germany seriously differ from their economic relations. Germany is one of Russia's main economic partners but, at the same time, has much stronger economic ties with countries lying next to German borders. This circumstance plays a serious role in international politics in general and in Russian-German relations in particular. This fact and its individual aspects need priority attention.

BRINGING NOVELTY into EU foreign policy agendas can be particularly effective if Russian-German relations are used as the main channel for the delivery of new ideas. And it is fundamental European cultural values rather than mass culture products supplied by English-language media that these ideas should reflect primarily.

IN SUMMING UP, one should primarily stress the high significance of relations with Germany for Russia as a democratic, law-based state and for the social and economic development of Russian society in general.

The 25th Anniversary of the Russian-Bulgarian Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation

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RUSSIA AND BULGARIA have a very extensive history of relations that goes back ages and that has ensured the mutual spiritual enrichment of our nations. For instance, in the 10th-13th centuries, Bulgaria made a significant contribution to fostering Christian culture in Rus [Old Russia] and in the 19th century, the Russian empire played a decisive role in the formation of the sovereign Bulgarian state. Our bilateral ties were not devoid of painful downturns and setbacks as evidenced, in particular, by the breaking of diplomatic relations in 1886, 1915 and 1944. Every time, however, Russia and Bulgaria found ways of restoring the level of cooperation that had been achieved and sometimes even surpassing it.

The two countries' diverging foreign policy approaches were becoming increasingly evident. Their quintessence was Sofia's official application in February 1997 to join NATO. The consequences of that decision made themselves felt in the context of the Yugoslavia conflict resolution process: Bulgaria supported NATO's use of force against Yugoslavia, allowing the bloc's aviation to use its airspace in May 1999. It is noteworthy that Bulgaria regarded that as the necessary payment for its admission to the European community.

At the same time, bilateral relations were marred by the anti-Russian campaign launched in the Bulgarian media in 1997, when our country was accused of trying to talk to Bulgaria from an imperial position and of using economic leverage to impede Bulgaria's unequivocal "civilizational choice in favor of Europe." Unfortunately, the Russian issue was subsequently used for domestic political purposes more than once.

A new stage in bilateral cooperation began in the early 2000s. The normalization of the political atmosphere of bilateral relations made it possible for Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Bulgaria in March 2003. As a result of his visit, a joint declaration on further deepening friendly relations and partnership ties was signed, continuing the course that was set by the 1992 treaty. In particular, it highlighted the need to develop political contacts "at an intensive pace," to carry out trans-European gas and oil projects and establish Russian-Bulgarian public and business forums. In July 2004, Bulgarian President Pyrrvanov went to Russia on an official visit.

Russia's policy with regard to Bulgaria remains consistent and open. In our country, the steady course toward fostering friendly relations with Sofia is upheld by various political forces and is not a subject of discussion. Speculation about Russia's "treacherous game" or attempts to influence the ongoing processes in the country that periodically surface in certain Bulgarian circles have nothing to do with reality.

Russia-Kazakhstan: 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations and Partnership

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IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND current relations between the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK) and the Russian Federation (RF), it makes sense to go back more than 25 years to the period before Kazakhstan and Russia became sovereign states. After all, these relations did not start from scratch. The common life of the republics in the Soviet Union was full of different forms of cooperation and interaction in all spheres, and their development experience on the eve of 1991 was complementary.

In the Russia-Kazakhstan context, there were close contacts between members of the intelligentsia of the two republics and between their creative unions and academies of sciences, as well as a common education system. From a cultural perspective, one should note the worldwide recognition gained by great Kazakh poets and writers, such as Abai, Mukhtar Auezov, Ilyas Esenberlin and others, through the publication of their works in Russian. Many theaters and a film studio, Kazakhfilm, flourished in the republic.

The history of diplomatic relations between Russia and Kazakhstan as friendly sovereign states began on October 22, 1992 with the signing of a Protocol of Exchange of Embassies between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan. These relations have stood the test of time and currently serve as an example of strategic partnership.

The two diasporas - the Russian diaspora in Kazakhstan and the Kazakh diaspora in Russia - are undoubtedly a "human bridge" between our countries.

The development of relations between Russia and Kazakhstan is promoted by interregional and cross-border cooperation, which plays an increasing role. In 2016, Kazakhstan received more than 20 official delegations from neighboring regions of the Russian Federation. About 45 events were held in the format of days of Russian regions and business missions. Various constituent entities of the Russian Federation and regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan have signed numerous agreements

on trade, economic, scientific, technical, and humanitarian cooperation. Interregional and cross-border trade accounts for 70% of total bilateral trade between the two countries.

Bilateral relations between Russia and Kazakhstan are very wide-ranging and diverse. Today the two friendly states face common tasks: digitization of the economy, adoption of innovative technologies, attraction of foreign investment, effective use of geographical

location, and construction of a strong integration union. Hence, in summary, we have every reason to be optimistic: relations between Russia and Kazakhstan have a good future ahead of them.

Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky and Russia's Greater Role in the Far East

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ONE OF THE PLACES OF HONOR among the outstanding statesmen of Russia who served as its foreign ministers belongs to Prince Alexey Lobanov-Rostovsky. At 35, he was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Constantinople (1859-1863); later, he returned to the Ottoman Empire as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary (1878-1879) and served in the same rank in London (1879-1882) and Vienna (1882-1895). On February 26 (March 10), 1895, Nicholas II made him foreign minister.

A gifted man, he amazed his contemporaries with his excellent abilities as a statesman, his brilliant education, wide knowledge of foreign languages and talents as a writer. A refined dignitary, "he was excellent and irresistibly charming company... invariably elegant in the choice of words and subjects... he was highly attractive to cultured society"¹ and its female part. His skill of dealing with the worst of predicaments, his peaceful disposition and boundless energy put him in a class of his own.

AS FOREIGN MINISTER, Lobanov-Rostovsky paid special attention to the Far East.

His policy was moderate, balanced and cautious; peace for Russia was his main aim, which he achieved with the entire range of diplomatic means, carefully avoiding any involvement in armed conflicts.

A skillful diplomat, the prince drew Germany and France to Russia's side for a joint diplomatic demarche supported by a demonstration of naval power. He used Germany's a no mean interest in the Far East to put diplomatic pressure on Tokyo.

In line with his principle "pleasantly in manner, powerfully in deed" (*suaviter in modo, fortiter in re* - Lat), Lobanov-Rostovsky never retreated from the demand that Japan should pull out its troops from Korea and insisted that Japan should live up to its promises to respect Korea's independence.

The sudden death of Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky on August 30 in the royal train on the way from Vienna to Kiev disrupted the plans for more active policy of Russia in the Far East and its containment of Japan.

His sudden death was mourned in Russia and abroad where newspapers paid tribute to his services to the state and his diplomatic achievements.

His short career as foreign minister - 18 months - was filled with important and frequently amazing diplomatic achievements especially obvious in the Far East. Russia gained much more weight in China through the interference of three powers against Japan with the support by French financial capital. His consistent policy was designed to have Korea as an independent country without letting other countries, Japan in the first place, to occupy a special place there. It was accomplished without the use of force and added to Russia's prestige and political weight in Seoul.

The "Ambassadors' Plot" Against Soviet Russia in 1918: The "British Trail" Re-interpreted

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The several weeks in August-September 1918 when the Soviet regime, barely 12 months old, was hanging by a thread (which Bolshevik leaders also admitted) can be described as the most dramatic period in the history of Soviet-British relations.

The heads of the Entente powers planned a coup d'etat as the most efficient instrument to remove the Bolsheviks from power. Later, Soviet official historiography branded it the "Ambassadors' Plot" or the Lockhart Plot named after the young (he was barely 30 at the time) British diplomat dispatched in the latter half of January 1918 by the UK premier David Lloyd George as head of a mission to establish contacts with the Bolshevik leaders.

According to the well-informed memoir writer, it was not by chance that the German statement of May 23, 1918 about the discontinuation of military operations on the territory of the former Russian Empire coincided with the meeting of Lockhart, the French Ambassador Joseph Noulens, and the head of the American mission David Francis in Vologda. According to many authors, this meeting marked the turning point in Lockhart's strategy: from that time on, he opted for an anti-Bolshevik intervention while maintaining the official contacts with Trotsky and Chicherin in a hope of a German volte-face that might force the Soviet government to accept a large-scale interference of the Entente.

Felix Dzerzhinsky, head of the Cheka, the Soviet secret police, a professional revolutionary with huge experience in clandestine activities, suggested, with Lenin's agreement, that, to remain in power, the Bolsheviks should use the allies' subversive activities against the Entente itself, as well as against the Germans, within the framework of the maneuvering policy. This means that the Ambassadors' Plot (or the Lockhart Plot could also called and with good reason the Dzerzhinsky Plot.

As could be expected, the Latvian Club attracted the attention of the Cheka; in fact, there were double or even triple agents among the Club members who reported to the Bolsheviks (or Left Socialist Revolutionaries), counterrevolutionary organizations of former officers and foreign intelligence. Confronted with the intensifying Civil War and the mounting threats coming from Germany and the Entente, the Bolsheviks had no choice but to look for an unusual solution. They responded with a fictitious National

Latvian Committee staffed with delegates of the Latvian units allegedly ready to depose the Soviet Government with the help of the Allies. This Committee was set up on the initiative of Yakov Peters, Deputy Chairman of the Cheka, and on an order from Dzerzhinsky.

The plot, no matter how real, devised by British, French and American diplomats who staked on an uprising of the national units stationed in Moscow and Petrograd was practically impossible to implement because of the conflicting sentiments among the Latvian riflemen and, most important, because of the preventive moves of the Cheka leadership who managed to capitalize on the complicated domestic and foreign political context. It is equally obvious that the plot failed because, first, Lockhart, Reilly and Cromie underestimated the underground experience of Lenin, Dzerzhinsky and Peters that went many years back and, second, because the British had seriously overestimated their own organizational talents and financial abilities as limitless.

This means that the realizable plan of removal of the Bolsheviks from power that intuitively, on the strength of coincidences, took shape in the British and French minds was transformed, by the efforts of British military intelligence and the Cheka agents skillfully planted in the ranks of the plotters, into an adventurist project of a "palace coup." People in the Cheka knew that the chances of those who bet on the fictitious "Latvian plot" to achieve a regime change in Russia was close to zero.

The failed "Ambassadors' Plot" - or, rather, the plan of diplomatic and military representatives of the Entente countries to change the political regime of Soviet Russia - destroyed diplomatic relations between Moscow and London. They were restored after many years of painstaking efforts.

The Soviet Union and the UK in the "Afghan Theater": Post-Pearl Harbor Factors

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JAPAN'S ATTACK on Pearl Harbor, the United States' naval base in Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, started large-scale military operations in the APR. In a few days, the correlation of forces in the eastern periphery of World War Two changed dramatically and the number of states fighting on both sides increased. On December 8-12, 1941, the United States, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and several other states declared war on Japan at sea and on land. On December 9, 1941, China, having declared war on Japan, Germany and Italy, launched land operations against Tokyo; two days later, Germany and Italy joined the fighting against the United States and turned World War Two into a global war.

London was worried: after just few weeks, Japanese troops had penetrated the Indian forefield and moved dangerously close to the eastern borders of India. Operational

changes in the region were fraught with unpredictable results and political destabilization in South Asia and the Middle East, including Afghanistan.

The Soviet leaders, likewise, could not remain indifferent to the steadily complicating operational situation at the Soviet Union's southern borders. In December 1941, the Soviet intelligence service had to draw a plan of countermeasures to subversive efforts of the German, Italian and Japanese special services in Afghanistan, to save Afghan neutrality and undermine the German and Japanese secret operations designed to destabilize the political situation in India.

Yuri Kuznets, historian of the Russian special services, wrote: "Afghanistan, India's western forefield, became an object of struggle the outcome of which would have affected not only its future. If Kabul sided with Germany or if its neutrality became a mere formality, India would have found itself in a highly complicated situation. In view of the anti-British sentiments of long standing in the widest circles of Indian public fanned by the military successes of the Axis Powers, the worst could not be excluded: India might have left the ranks of fighters against the Axis Powers.... No wonder Moscow attached great importance to what was going on in Afghanistan."

The British diplomats, aka intelligence officers, in Afghanistan worked hard to tune up cooperation with the Soviet embassy. For example, in the middle of March, Connor-Green, one of the officers of the British intelligence station in Kabul, sent a report to his Soviet "colleague" Denisov about the schemes of German intelligence in Northern Afghanistan. Less than two weeks later, he sent another report, this time directly to Ambassador Mikhailov in which he wrote that "the British obtained more or less reliable information that confirmed the content of the previous report (March 1942) about subversive activities of German agents against the USSR."

The rout of fascist troops at Stalingrad tipped the balance of forces in favor of the anti-Hitler coalition in the West and in the East. New trends in the development of Soviet-British cooperation in Afghanistan became obvious.

"Better 10 Years of Talks Than a Day of War"

Author: P. Akopov

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ANDREI GROMYKO, an outstanding politician and diplomat, used to say: "Better 10 years of talks than a day of war." I often heard him say this - a saying that has now effectively become an aphorism. He regarded bilateral and multilateral talks as an important diplomatic tool that should be used in national interests. At the same time, Gromyko stressed that talks should be conducted by relying on economic power, not from a position of strength.

The book by Soviet and Russian diplomat E.G. Kutovoy, "International Talks at the Crossroads of Civilizations," which was published recently, is devoted to this topic. The author studies the evolution of the process of conducting international talks with countries that belong to different civilizations, from the Antiquity until today. That is an

outstanding effort. He had to sift through a mass of sources of historical and modern international literature, including archival materials on the subject at hand. In such an ambitious undertaking, the author effectively drew on his years-long work experience in the diplomatic service, as well as on the fact that in recent years he has been teaching a course on international negotiations at the Russian Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy and the Institute of Asian and African Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University.

Considerable attention is also given to interconnection between diplomacy and various branches of knowledge as a source of improving the theoretical and practical aspects of conducting diplomatic and business negotiations. In so doing, the author expertly and, I would say, successfully illustrates his theoretical propositions and generalizations with concrete examples from historical practice.

The book also benefits from the fact that alongside international talks, it also addresses business talks in diplomatic activity (pp. 141-146).

The author points out that the Western style has been traditionally dominated by the factor of force that has been often used to achieve a diplomatic victory over a partner.

In my opinion, the chapters devoted to Soviet diplomacy in the international arena and the specifics of the Russian Federation's approach toward international talks are also very good.

In writing this section, the author was clearly helped by the fact that he has passed all stages of a diplomatic career, working in various countries and in various fields.

Strategic Dead Ends of the United States' Middle East Policy

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VALINASR is an expert on the problems of the Middle East, a fellow at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Diplomacy, dean of the Paul Henry Nitze School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, and a senior fellow in foreign policy at the Brookings Institution. In his book *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat*, Nasr tells of his two years of working at the U.S. State Department during the administration of Barack Obama. Nasr's work is distinguished by its deep analysis of the socioeconomic and political processes now under way in the Middle East.

Nasr's book acquires special relevance today in light of the foreign policy measures taken in the Middle East by the administration of Donald Trump.

NASR'S BOOK is a critical assessment of U.S. foreign policy from within. The book devotes a great deal of attention to the twists and turns of the internal conflict in the American governmental apparatus. This side of the book could be of use to those studying the recent history of the United States, and to anyone who is interested in the mechanisms of foreign policy making in the United States.

According to Nasr, the State Department also had to compete with intelligence agencies and the military in the number of its analytical works, and for the president's attention to them. Nasr therefore describes in some detail how analytical materials pass through the channels of the State Department and the White House. He gives examples of the Pentagon's bureaucratic finesse aimed at maintaining the volume of matériel, technical, and financial means it requires, and devotes a great deal of attention to the process of drafting reports, memoranda, analytical notes, and Venn diagrams designed to illustrate where the interests of different political players might intersect.

Nasr is justifiably certain that military means of resolving conflicts will never replace painstaking diplomatic efforts.

THE DETAILS Nasr presents of the negotiations behind closed doors with officials of the Middle East countries are interesting. From his description of them, we get the impression there is no support for Washington even among its closest allies. If U.S. policy in the region is recognized on the official level, it frequently finds no support on that of the direct exchange of opinions through diplomatic channels.

From the viewpoint of Russian national interests, the pages of the book dedicated to the influence of the economic sanctions imposed by the Western countries against Iran and Iraq are worthy of attention. Nasr notes their limited effectiveness as ways of applying political pressure and the uncertainty of their consequences. These are important and timely considerations under the circumstances of the continuing pressure of the sanctions

On the whole, Nasr's book paints a fairly sad picture of the State Department's efforts in the Middle East, while greatly simplifying the problems facing the region and avoiding any complicated analysis.

Islamophobia as a Threat to International and National Security

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THE RUSSIA-ISLAMIC WORLD GROUP of Strategic Vision has brought out an extensive study of Islamophobia - a Russian translation of *Islamophobia: From Confrontation to Cooperation* by Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu is a Turkish academic and diplomat who from 2005 to 2013 was secretary-general of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the world's second-largest organization in terms of the number of people it represents.

In his book, the fruit of many years of reflection about practical work that had been done to create an atmosphere of religious tolerance and eradicate Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination by means of multilateral diplomacy, Ihsanoglu proposes an eight-point plan to attain this objective, a goal that might seem unattainable (p. 17 of the Russian edition). It is a remarkable fact that a person who has headed such a huge international organization wants to share his thoughts because he is talking about the civilizational problems of 1.5 billion people, the world's Muslim community. Ihsanoglu complains that not too many people in the West know what the OIC is all about (p. 18).

The reader might see Ihsanoglu's recurrent appeals for tolerance as no more than incantations because he appears to "overlook" bloodbaths that are staged time and again by people who consider themselves true followers of Islam. But he doesn't disregard instances of extremism, and explains the reasons for them. He mentions, for example, mass protests in all Muslim countries with multiple fatalities that were triggered by the film *Innocence of Muslims*, which he brands as Islamophobic, extremely derogatory and an insult to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (p. 27).

In his book, he says that the U.S. administration had appreciated his efforts to put the OIC across as a constructive and energetic campaigner for global peace and security.

Ihsanoglu's book has been widely acclaimed among Russian politicians and academics. Ihsanoglu attended a presentation of the book at the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) during which prominent Russian political figures and scholars discussed the study, credited the Turkish diplomat and academic with a major personal contribution to relations between the OIC and other multilateral intergovernmental organizations, and expressed support for the observer status at the OIC that has been granted to Russia.