

"COMMON THREATS AND A COMMON ENEMY ENABLED COUNTRIES WITH OPPOSING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS TO JOIN THEIR EFFORTS FOR THE SAKE OF A VICTORY"

Author: S. Lavrov

Acting Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at the flower laying ceremony at memorial plaques to mark Victory Day, Moscow, May 8, 2018

FRIENDS,

We come together annually at this time of the year to mark the greatest date in the history of our country, Victory Day, the day when we celebrate the great achievements of our fathers and grandfathers, and a day of sorrow for those who did not return from the battlefield. Those included employees of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade, whose memory has been eternalized in this room. As we render homage to their feats, let us remember the efforts of those who operated on the foreign policy front to provide a diplomatic backing to the fight of the peoples of the Soviet Union against Hitler's Germany.

This year, we are marking a number of important anniversaries. Primarily, we are marking 75 years since the Battle of Stalingrad, which turned the tide not only in the Great Patriotic War, but also in the Second World War. This year, we will also mark 75 years since the Moscow Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the USSR, the United States and the United Kingdom and the top level Tehran Conference among the leaders of the Anti-Hitler Coalition.

Let me repeat what has been said on a number of occasions already: common threats and common enemy enabled countries with opposing social and economic systems to join their efforts for the sake of a united Victory, and to prevent a catastrophe for humanity. I strongly believe that this experience must teach us all a lesson that is especially relevant in today's international environment.

We must also be mindful of other lessons of that era, when nationalist selfishness and the unwillingness to respect the principles of equal and indivisible security prevailed, when attempts were made to ensure one's security to the detriment of others. I am obviously referring to the Munich Agreement, which was concluded 80 years ago in 1938, becoming the pinnacle of the appeasement policy by Western powers with regard to the Third Reich. It was the Munich Agreement that paved the way to the Second World War. We must also be mindful of this sad experience in today's environment.

Russia will never act to the detriment of security of any other country. We are always open to an honest and sincere dialogue, respecting the interests of all our partners and committed to balancing all the interests. This remains the case today, as President of Russia Vladimir Putin said yesterday during his inauguration. We will be consistent in our efforts to promote these principles and will do everything to prevent the horrors that humanity faced during the Second World War from ever happening again.

I would like once again to congratulate our dear veterans on this great occasion and wish them good health and continued work for the benefit of our Ministry.

THE NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION TREATY: RESULTS, CHALLENGES, PROSPECTS

Author: Mikhail Ulyanov, *Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the International Organizations in Vienna; info@rusmission.org*

Mikhail Lysenko, *associate professor, Department of International Law, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; Director of the Security and Disarmament Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2001-2004); mikelys@mail.ru*

JULY 1, 2018 is the 50th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that entered into force on March 5, 1970 after the three depositary states (the Soviet Union, the United States and the UK), as well as 40 other countries, deposited their instruments of ratification.

At present, the NPT can claim perhaps the largest number of signatories of any treaty in history. A total of 191 parties have adhered to the treaty (only the Chemical Weapons Convention has one more). The 50th anniversary is an important and essential milestone for the NPT, as well as for the entire nuclear non-proliferation regime that has fallen on hard times.

During this half a century, disagreements between nuclear and non-nuclear states have significantly increased. Instead of looking for points of convergence within the framework of the treaty, some of its issues are taken to alternative formats. New parallel regimes with a limited number of parties are being created that come into conflict with the NPT and other existing international legal mechanisms in this area. The ongoing processes arouse serious concern in Russia, which is an initiator and depositary of the NPT and therefore feels a special responsibility for its future.

In recent years, nonnuclear countries have been increasingly critical of the NPT, which they regard as a discriminatory treaty.

A balanced approach toward its three pillars - i.e., nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy - has for many years been viewed as key to the success of the treaty. Unfortunately, this balance was upset. NPT review cycles began to focus primarily on disarmament aspects, while nonproliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy receded to the background. Russia believes that this creates an unhealthy situation.

Apart from nuclear disarmament, the establishment of a WMDFFZ in the Middle East will remain a pressing issue during the current review cycle, as well as at the NPT 2020 Review Conference.

The situation that has evolved around the JCPOA through the fault of the United States is threatening to push back the prospect of a political and diplomatic settlement on the Korean Peninsula. In making decisions, Pyongyang is sure to consider the fact that any agreements with the U.S. can be violated at any moment and without any reason.

To sum up, it should be noted that compliance with the treaty in good faith, respect for the balance of interests established by it, prudence and caution in relation to actions taken with regard to other agreements in this area, and the implementation of all agreements based on this international legal instrument are key to the success of the NPT.

Hopefully, all parties to the NPT will have enough wisdom and responsibility to ensure the integrity and inviolability of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

THE RISE OR FALL OF AMERICA'S WORLD HEGEMONY

Author: K. Dolgov

Doctor of Science (Philosophy); esta20@mail.ru

TODAY, the media all over the world, with Russia no exception, are discussing the sanctions Washington is steadily piling up on the countries and governments it finds unpalatable, its unprecedented pressure or even armed intervention being used all over the world to establish America's domination in the material and spiritual spheres.

What has happened to the great country and the great people respected by many across the world?

We should turn to prominent American scholars and intellectuals, who being fully aware of the real state of affairs from inside, analyze the history, theory and practice of the above developments in search for answers.

Recently, there appeared deliberations of two scholars of worldwide fame - linguist, thinker and public figure Noam Chomsky and economist Robert Pollin - who have scrupulously traced the evolution of the United States in economy, politics, social sphere, and culture.

In his recent interview, Chomsky drew attention to the revival and widening of the most negative features and trends of social life of the United States: racism, slavery, inequality, social subjugation and exploitation, etc.

Some scholars, George Frederickson among them, have demonstrated that the doctrines of "white race superiority" in the America of our days became even "more obvious, threatening and unbridled than the apartheid of South Africa." No wonder the history of racism in America is gradually acquiring theoretical garbs of justification of the United States' world domination, the favorite mantra of American leaders.

Under pressure of acute disagreements within the country, U.S. leaders have looked for causes of the far from favorable situation in the economy, the social sphere, the

education, health care, culture, etc. and pointed an accusing finger at the "culprit" consistently identified as the Soviet Union and, later, Russia.

We all know that the United States promotes its health services as the best in the world. In fact, however, it is the most expensive but by far not the best. All attempts of American leaders, including President Barack Obama, to make health services accessible to common people invariably failed: the oligarchs that control the lion's share of America's wealth were and remain opposed to it.

Throughout the 20th century, the United States has not merely caught up with the highly developed European countries but, because of its special attention to the development of material production, industry and agriculture in the first place, outstripped these countries by the development rates and GDP volumes to become the world's strongest economic power. America achieved this thanks to its Anglo-Saxon understanding of the priority nature of economy as compared with all other forms of social development up to and including politics. It has become more or less clear that politics does not dominate economy - it is, rather, its pale shade. This means that the mysteries of the United States' development are hidden in economy and economic interests. This also means that without a detailed discussion of specifics of economic development of this great country it is impossible to correctly assess its politics and culture.

The earlier suppressed, intentionally or unintentionally, idea of the Leader has surfaced because of exacerbated internal contradictions in the American establishment that cropped up in the clashes between the Democrats and the Republicans. To quote Noam Chomsky, "Trump has pulled the cork out of the bottle and legitimized neo-Nazism, rabid white supremacy, misogyny and other pathologies." The Republican establishment won the race because it had promised to raise the standards of living of common people.

When Russia came to its senses, when it started defending its national interests and its sovereignty, the American leaders appointed Russia Enemy No. 1 on par with international terrorism. The ideological Russophobic campaign developed into an unprecedentedly wild and cynical crusade: America was piling heaps of unfounded accusations against Russia and its allies. Unashamed, it passed lies for the truth, the truth for lies, and law for lawlessness while lawlessness was raised to the level of law.

In one of his recent interviews, Chomsky pointed out that as a true representative of the Republican Party, Trump is more concerned about the interests of those who in fact elected him, that is, the richest layer of the American elite.

Chomsky has indicated that history knows no analogues of American policy as we know it today; no ruler of the past, even the most odious of them, be it Attila the Hun or even Hitler, never entertained a possibility of ensuring their mercenary interests by destroying mankind. Trump has no great ideas and, hence, no positive ideology. His aim is simple: to please the richest strata of the American elite.

DRUGS IN AFGHANISTAN: THE SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE

Author: N. Plotnikov

Head of the Information and Analysis Center, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Major General (ret.), Associate Professor, Doctor of Science (Political Science); p79057666114@yandex.ru

DRUGS ARE THE MAIN SOURCE of financing for all Afghan anti-government factions without exception.

Afghanistan is the world's main producer and exporter of opiates. Opium produced in that country makes up more than 90% of the global output of the drug. Afghan heroin flows into Europe, Russia, Central Asian countries, Iran, and Pakistan. It has found its way into India, China and other Asia-Pacific countries, is rapidly winning black markets in the United States, Canada and Japan, and is now available in Africa as well.

The Americans had organized systematic narcotics production in Afghanistan long before their troops invaded that country in October 2001. The CIA began to put hundreds of millions of dollars into Afghan opium production almost immediately after the Soviet Union moved its limited armed forces contingent into Afghanistan in December 1979.

Thereby the United States let the genie out of the bottle, something that, in fact, the Americans have a record of doing. More and more land in Afghanistan was being brought under opium poppy cultivation.

Afghanistan is estimated to have produced 3,300 tons of opium in 2015 and 4,800 tons in 2016, but the record level was reached in 2017 since UNODC began to monitor illicit drug production in the country in 1994 - an estimated output of 9,000 tons.

There is a bunch of reasons why increasing amounts of land in Afghanistan get sown with opium poppies. The main factors are a weak political system, political instability, mass unemployment and poverty, corruption among government officials, numerous cross-border smuggling routes, and de facto non-existent local governments, especially in rural localities.

Afghanistan will continue to increase opium production, and heroin made from it will conquer new territories all over the world.

Drugs are one of the main sources of funding for the Taliban. Every year, they bring hundreds of millions of dollars to the movement. The Taliban have been making stably rising profits by opium sales over the last few years.

For all intents and purposes, the Taliban have evolved into a classical drug cartel - they pursue the drug business through all its stages from poppy growing to heroin manufacturing and sales. The Taliban supply peasants with seeds, implements, fertilizers, and money for poppy growing and take the opium from them after the crops are gathered in.

But drugs mean more than money to the Taliban. They bring the movement political capital by winning support from peasants, traffickers, and young people who are hired to harvest poppies for \$4 a day.

Drug dealers supply the Taliban with weapons, motor vehicles, motorcycles, gasoline, diesel, and means of communication such as mobile telephones. There have been reports that drug dealers have been setting up hospitals in Pakistan's Balochistan province for wounded Taliban.

Numerous land and air transportation lines that have opened in Africa offer drug cartels a multitude of opportunities. Africa is an increasingly important part of the southern route.

Persian Gulf countries are other significant parts of this route but also important markets for Afghan heroin. Narcotics are delivered there by sea and by air.

SOME WESTERN ANALYSTS believe that narcotics are the main source of wealth not only for organized crime and terrorist organizations but also for some Western intelligence services, which have become powerful actors in the world of banking and finance. This view is shared by some Afghan experts, who doubt that it would have been possible to take such huge amounts of heroin out of Afghanistan by air without the involvement of Western intelligence services.

AMERICAN PROFESSOR Alfred McCoy argues that a unique natural environment and climate and intensive efforts by the American military machine have turned Afghanistan into a classical drug state, a country where drugs dominate the economy and home policy and determine the extent of foreign interference in domestic affairs. Growing drug crops has become much more profitable for Afghan peasants than normal farming.

As a result, international humanitarian organizations are forced to send food to Afghanistan to prevent famine. Some of this food ends up in the hands of anti-government groups, and some is sold on markets. The more land comes under opium poppy cultivation and the larger poppy crops are, the more food Afghanistan needs.

SOFT POWER, CHINESE STYLE: COMPETING FOR PUBLIC OPINION

Author: G. Zhigarkov

*Third Secretary, Embassy of the Russian Federation to the People's Republic of China;
dortan888@yahoo.com*

The tall and stiff is of inferior rank.

The supple and weak is of superior rank.

Tao Te Ching

FAST ECONOMIC GROWTH supplied China with new resources that can be used to promote its geopolitical and economic interests abroad and with a new context in which its place in the world is reassessed.

Dissatisfied with the world order, Chairman of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping consistently rejects the right of the strongest, the rules of the zero game and the hegemonic designs of certain states. In October 2017, speaking at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, he outlined his new foreign policy strategy

that presupposed a different level of global interests and global responsibility of the PRC.

In the new epoch, a big state with Chinese specifics has proclaimed its key diplomatic aim as "development of a community with a shared future for mankind."

Translated into common tongue, this means that China intends to be actively involved in transformations of the world order and to move away from its foreign policy course of the last three decades described as taoguang yanghui, that is, "to conceal one's strengths and bide one's time."

As could be expected, neighboring states and the key global players are rightly concerned with the rapid growth of China's influence and military might.

In this context, China should pursue an efficient soft power policy as an indispensable condition of its status as a global power.

Chinese leaders deem it necessary to use all communication platforms to explain the gist of the "Chinese dream" and the system of social values with Chinese specifics. The traditional and new media, educational and research institutes, cinema and literature as well as the entire cultural industry are expected to add their share to the common effort of building up the country's positive image.

Culture is the central part of the Chinese vision of soft power. China relies on soft power as an instrument of cultural sovereignty which can be described as a strategic novelty.

In fact, the soft power resources of China are not limited to traditional culture: its successful economic model, foreign policy and social achievements can also be considered as such.

Today, Beijing is reorganizing the system of broadcasting to other countries so that the available resources will be consolidated to upgrade international significance and competitiveness of the Chinese media. Very much in line with the soft power strategy, a new structure - China Global TV Network (CGTN) - was set up in 2016 that broadcasts in all official languages of the UN on seven TV channels.

The future of Chinese media industry and its single governing center with vast funding and consolidated system of foreign broadcasting, including in Russian, looks bright.

WHILE EXPANDING its global cultural space China will be confronted with civilizational misunderstandings and opposition of the political establishment of certain states. The West has already responded to Chinese activity with the "sharp power" concept. This construct is used to accuse the "authoritarian states" (Russia and China) of applying soft power as a smokescreen in information warfare and political lobbyism

This response confirms that China's soft power strategy is quite successful. Its comprehensive actions are intended to create the necessary conditions for its own agenda of economic globalization, including realization of key projects of "diplomacy of big state with Chinese specifics" - the BRI initiative and a "community with a shared future for mankind."

PRIORITIES OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN COUNTERING EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

Author: I. Rogachev

Director, Department for New Challenges and Threats, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation; dnv@mid.ru

ON APRIL 3, 2018, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, held an international research to practice conference, "Priorities of International Cooperation in Countering Extremism and Terrorism," at the V.Ya. Kikot Moscow University of the MIA.

The conference brought together a representative makeup of participants: over 100 top-notch experts from relevant Russian agencies, academia, public and religious organizations, as well as heads and officers at counterterrorism subunits from key international organizations: the UN, SCO, CSTO, CIS, OSCE, Council of Europe, plus a number of states (China, Iran, Serbia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan).

In the past three years, the issue of combating extremism on the international arena has become a kind of "framework" for formulating and actively promoting distorted and dangerous principles and parameters of international cooperation in this area.

The uniqueness of the conference from the standpoint of its substance and foreign policy significance is not only that it brought together highly influential and reputable experts in the field, but also that for the first time in recent years, it was a broad and in-depth discussion of issues related to countering extremism and terrorism on an international level, with a special emphasis given to Russia's advanced and successful experience in such diversified and integrated efforts, as well as with a focus on the Russian vision of priorities regarding collective, international partnership in corresponding areas.

Another equally important aspect of the "uniqueness" of the Moscow conference is its well-thought-out presentation, discussion and formulation of approaches toward the goals of countering not only terrorist but also extremist threats through joint efforts. This refers to a concept that is not so well defined in international law than terrorism is, especially on the practical level.

Unfortunately, it has to be said that in the past three years, the issue of combating extremism on the international arena has become a kind of "framework" for formulating and actively promoting distorted and dangerous principles and parameters of international cooperation in this area. Western countries have invented a concept of "combating nonviolent extremism" that leads interstate cooperation away from the fundamental, time-proven basis of international counterterrorism law to some rather vague conceptual areas, which makes it possible essentially to divide terrorists into "bad" and "not so bad" and to justify some of them (with the exception of "violent extremists") as the purported opposition to arbitrarily defined "repressive regimes" that deserves understanding and support.

This is a direct path to using not only the issue of combating nonviolent extremism for interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign states and destabilizing legitimate governments that are unsuitable to the West, but also, in certain situations, using terrorist ("violent extremist") groups to fight against "uncooperative" governments.

Under these international circumstances, the conference provided timely, well-defined and appropriate guidelines for international anti-extremist cooperation, designed, in our view, to complement and support international counterterrorism cooperation, especially in preventing terrorism and the spread of terrorist and extremist ideology and propaganda.

There were also "co-chairs' recommendations" that were prepared by the co-organizers of the Moscow conference, taking into account the contribution to the discussion by all speakers at the conference and putting forward proposals with regard to international cooperation based on Russian experience and the Russian vision of priority goals facing the international community.

OUR PLANET'S HOT CLIMATE: REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE PARIS AGREEMENT, AND MORE

Author: S. Roginko

Head of the Center for Ecology and Development, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences; Candidate of Science (Economics); roginko@bk.ru

IT HAS BEEN over a year since President Donald Trump announced on June 1, 2017 that the United States was withdrawing from the United Nations Paris Agreement on climate change. He thereby put an end to the suspense that had lasted right from the U.S. presidential election and was on a par with a good thriller. Though the Republican election platform included a point to remove the U.S. signature from under the accord and Trump had repeatedly confirmed it, the global environmentalist lobby had constantly kept world public opinion agitated by speculations in the media.

There were stories about a "climate conspiracy" in Trump's inner circle involving the then secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, the president's daughter Ivanka Trump, and her husband Jared Kushner. Ivanka Trump even arranged for her father a meeting with the most high-profile U.S. pro-Paris Agreement activist, former U.S. vice president Al Gore. But Gore, the man behind famous horror stories in the media about climate change, failed to frighten Trump. Meanwhile, as a businessman, Trump apparently remembered how much money the global warming theme had raised for Gore himself, who is sometimes referred to as the first climate billionaire in history. So, the president is unlikely to have had any illusions about the true motivation of the would-be savior of the planet. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who had been trying to teach Trump the ABC of climate change right from his moment of inauguration, didn't get any further than Gore.

Nevertheless, Trump's announcement about withdrawal from the Paris Agreement was a bombshell. "The Paris Agreement "punishes the United States ... while imposing no meaningful obligations on the world's leading polluters," he said.

Trump made clear there won't be any Klondike for the greens. More than that, before his inauguration, he launched large-scale audits of the budgets of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency looking for the channels of financing of the environmentalist lobby, which was advancing the idea that global warming was a manmade phenomenon.

Lately, the global warming theory has become a kind of secular religion, with faith in global warming replacing scientific argumentation. This quasi-religion has a special mission in the shallow materialistic set of values chosen by the West - to shift protest sentiments into an area where they can pose no threat to the establishment.

MARKETS didn't react to Trump's move the way alarmists had predicted - shares went up.

But there was panic in Europe. European leaders were making feverish efforts to do something about the situation. The Group of 20 (G20) summit in Hamburg on July 7-8, 2017, was chosen as the site for the first battle. A draft strategy called G20 Hamburg Climate and Energy Plan for Growth had been expected to receive unanimous approval at the summit. But Trump's policy scuttled the plan.

Trump was openly defied, and on American soil as well. After learning about his decision to cut funding climate alarmists, Macron announced a plan to invite American scientists supporting the manmade global warming theory to work in France and allocate 30 million euros to fund their research.

THE 2016 UN CLIMATE CHANGE Conference in Marrakech set a 2018 deadline for the final approval of specific procedures for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Has this deadline been met? Over the past year, it has become obvious that the Marrakech conference delegates were too optimistic and overlooked the diversity of opinions among Paris Agreement signatory states. This was the result of apparent euphoria over the unexpectedly easy approval of base criteria necessary for the accord to come into force and to become a full-scale international document. But this apparent optimism seems to have been fizzling out because of fruitless, and at times deadlocked, negotiations. There have been two rounds of talks this year, both in Bonn.

Russia's cautiousness about the Paris Agreement is understandable. It shouldn't let itself be restricted by an unfinished construct that can produce various surprises. It is the only sensible stance on Russia's part to put off ratifying the accord until all its details are definitively approved, and meanwhile defend its interests at UN climate negotiations that obviously won't be easy.

BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM OF INFORMATION SECURITY: RUSSIAN PRINCIPLES AND INITIATIVES

Author: S. Boyko

Department Head, staff of the Russian Security Council, leading expert at the Center for International Information Security and Scientific and Technological Policy, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Science (History); boiko_sm@gov.ru

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES for the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the field of International Information Security for the Period until 2020, which were approved by the Russian president on July 24, 2013, clearly state the objective of Russia's policy on international information security - to help develop an international legal regime to underlie such a system.

The general purpose of the proposed international information security system is to fend off threats to strategic stability and facilitate equal strategic partnership in the global information space.

Cooperation with the governments and academic, expert and business communities of all countries is Russia's priority task in building this system. Our country's policy is designed to form the basis for interaction with other nations on all aspects of this task. This is in line with the national interests of Russia and helps our country strengthen its national security system.

This platform may consist of norms and principles that would be enshrined in principal international agreements, primarily United Nations conventions, and in resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

The GGEs' history goes back to November 29, 2001, the day resolution A/RES/56/19, which had been proposed by Russia and bore the same title as the resolution of December 4, 1998, "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security," was passed by a consensus vote at the UN General Assembly 56th Session.

Russia, its close partners in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and in BRICS, and developing countries represented in the GGE that was convened in August 2016 proposed that the 2015 report should become a prologue for rules of behavior in information space that the 2016 GGE was expected to draft. Unfortunately, those proposals were never put into practice.

Unlike earlier cybersecurity agreements, the Russian-proposed convention would be based on a wide range of concepts, address aspects of technical assistance, provide a regulatory framework for mutual pretrial legal assistance, including legal assistance in emergency situations, and make provision for a mechanism for the implementation of key points of this convention.

As one of its strongest points and one of its distinctions from current partially obsolescent agreements, the proposed convention would criminalize various common nefarious activities such as unauthorized access to electronic information and its unauthorized interception, unauthorized modification, blocking, destruction or copying of electronic information, denial of service (DoS) or distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks - acts that can partially or completely block a website, - use and dissemination of malware, and spamming.

The question certainly arises whether the international community is prepared to have global legally binding documents on Internet governance.

Bilateral and multilateral contacts between Russian and foreign experts make clear that this question cannot be answered in the affirmative without reservation. Proposed norms and rules for UN-overseen governance are the main stumbling block.

NON-STATE ACTORS IN TODAY'S INFORMATION WARS

Author: A. Smirnov

Deputy Department Head, Central Directorate for the Prevention of Extremism, Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation, assistant professor, Candidate of Science (Law)

RIVALRIES AND CONFRONTATIONS between states in the information space are a feature of today's international relations. Information is becoming one of the priority instruments in fighting for global domination.

We agree with experts who believe that there exist two principal forms of information warfare, technological and psychological, the former targeting information systems and communication channels and the latter, people's minds and public opinion.

We can detect a trend toward growing non-state involvement in information wars. There are various interconnected reasons for this.

One of them is the latent character of information warfare: governments launching information attacks are careful to keep them undetected or to try to gloss over their own involvement if such attacks are detected. Another reason is that it is difficult to find out who carried out the information attack and what the objective was. Yet another reason are resources that some Internet users and associations of users apply to conduct for cross-border attacks.

INTERNATIONAL terrorist and extremist organizations make extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) for propaganda and recruitment.

A report for 2017 by Group-IB, one of the leading international companies dedicated to the prevention and investigation of high-tech crimes, speaks of "state-sponsored hackers" as well as "financially motivated" ones. Geopolitical disputes between nations "are being accompanied by an increase in cyber espionage and sabotage campaigns," the report says.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS and individual civic activists have recently been forming powerful international associations, which mainly owe their emergence to the global information and communication resources of the Internet. However, they are often drawn into information wars because of powerful effects their investigations may have.

GLOBAL MEDIA remain the most influential source of information, and therefore they inevitably get drawn into information wars.

Media, especially state-financed media organizations, predominantly act as agents of governments in information wars.

American NGOs are widely known for their key role in organizing "color revolutions" over the past two decades. They worked with opposition parties and their youth units, with central government elites, and with local government bodies. They also supported media groups and Internet resources that were involved in subversive activities and local NGOs that later organized protests.

Prestigious international NGOs publish reports assessing specific developments or containing development ratings for various countries in specific fields. Such reports are powerful vehicles for influence.

COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS that take part in information wars mainly do so indirectly, under outsourcing agreements, fulfilling tasks such as monitoring the information space and cyber intelligence, and information security tasks, including defense of critical facilities in information infrastructures.

It has been a trend for a few decades for governments to hand over some of their military and security functions to commercial organizations, which has manifested itself best in the emergence of private military corporations. It would be logical to expect the emergence of private companies organizing information offensives, both technological and psychological, on a commercial basis, which would mean commercializing information warfare.

CHILDREN AND THE "DARK SIDE" OF THE INTERNET

Author: Armen Oganesyanyan

Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs

TODAY, the international community devotes considerable attention to the political, military and economic aspects of cyber security. This is only natural. Disruption of critical infrastructure, cyber espionage, hacking attacks on big business and the banking sector - indeed, these are extremely acute problems now. However, let's talk about a no less important aspect of information security, its humanitarian dimension, specifically the security of children and teenagers on the Internet. There is a well-known expression: "Children are our future." There can be no sustainable development of the state or the international community as a whole unless children, as the most vulnerable social group, are provided appropriate protection and rights in cyberspace. It may be recalled that, according to expert estimates, every third Internet user in the world is under the age of 18. This is a substantial figure.

Having received access to the Internet, minors have opened a kind of Pandora's box. It would be wrong to say, of course, that it contains only dangers and threats - far from it. The Worldwide Web opens broad opportunities for adolescents to access educational information, communication, online learning, socialization, and creative self-expression.

However, there are a considerable number of threats for children and teens lurking in cyberspace. The first and perhaps the most serious danger for them is Internet dependence, or in other words, a kind of "digital addiction." According to a survey that was conducted by Kaspersky Lab in 2016, about 56% of all underage respondents in Russia were practically always online; in the United States, the proportion is somewhat smaller, 51%; in Europe, it is 40%.

The second problem is that cyberspace is used by all kinds of malefactors for purposes that are far from benevolent. This includes cyber bullying, sexual harassment of children and destructive content (pornography, encouragement of extremism or suicide through "death groups" and so on). These problems are common; they have affected not only the United States, European countries and Russia but also countries in the Middle East and Asia.

Another very dangerous problem is related to the Internet of Things - to be more precise, Internet toys. Experts note that today, malefactors can hack such toys and get access to a home Wi-Fi network, as well as obtain data on an adolescent and send him messages purportedly on behalf of his family.

There can be no sustainable development of the state or the international community as a whole unless children, as the most vulnerable social group, are provided appropriate protection and rights in cyberspace.

It is pointless to weigh all "pros" and "cons" regarding children's Internet use. The digitization of society is an irreversible process. Nassim [Nicholas] Taleb, a prominent American economist and trader, has said that development as such is beneficial and inevitable, the only question is how we adjust to it; if society does not adjust to change fast enough, it is bound to collapse; what's more, with its most sensitive areas being affected.

OIL PRICES, THE IRAN CONTRACT AND THE PIPELINE ACROSS UKRAINE

Author: Yu. Shafranik

Chairman of the Union of Oil and Gas Producers of Russia, Doctor of Science (Economics); referent@cng.msk

The U.S. economy is based on a balance of different forces. There is no single center that plans everything there. Hypothetically speaking, there is an ongoing struggle between commodity producers and industrialists. The former benefit from high prices and the latter benefit from low prices. However, this struggle has an impact not only on world oil prices, but also on the state of the global economy.

I should note that oil producers take nothing for granted. They plan for decades ahead. Try laying a pipeline to Europe from Iran. First, we need to calm down the entire region for 25 years or so, make it stable, and only then start building a pipeline. Furthermore, two dozen billion dollars would have to be spent on all of that. I am amused to read and hear news reports to the effect that oil prices have jumped in connection with the situation in Iran. This is a purely speculative game on the stock exchange, but it has nothing to do with the deeper underlying factors.

According to our forecast, 2018 will see a fall in prices and it will last for another year. I do not see this as a big problem: This year, the average price should not be below \$55 - quite a decent price for the Russian economy.

Global economic growth certainly impacts the growth of consumption. And the growth of consumption is one factor that impacts the price. Energy demand is sure to grow in the next 15-20 years. Naturally, there will be changes in the balance of energy.

It should be noted that Iran, as a natural gas power, has an impact on the region from Europe to India. And, of course, it has competitors -Russia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and so on. However, any disagreements can be addressed through talks, by agreeing on gas production levels and gas prices, thus not infringing on each other's interests, but facilitating mutual development. This is one approach. Another approach is to take advantage of competition while there is still a chance.

China is currently going through another transition period: domestic consumption, transition from coal to renewable energy sources - hydroelectric, solar, wind, biomass, and so on. And they have all of these balanced out. It is noteworthy that even when buying traditional energy sources, such as oil and gas, the Chinese are putting a bet on renewable energy sources.

Large-scale oil and gas projects require a responsible approach, as well as guarantees of their implementation. We need guarantees from Brussels. Bulgaria has acted to its own detriment with regard to South Stream, just as Ukraine is doing now. As soon as the project fell through, Bulgaria should have demanded and received compensation. However, it did not do so. Our country is demonstrating political patience toward Bulgaria. I hope that this position will lead to a breakthrough. However, taking the present situation into account, in starting this project, it is necessary to follow the well-known "money comes first" principle.

GERMANY AND RUSSIA: SAME CHANCELLOR, SAME RELATIONS?

Author: A. Stepanov

Independent analyst; gals1950@gmail.com

NOW that the new German government's unprecedentedly lengthy birth throes are over (that government isn't actually all that new), and Germany is back to its political routine, one would naturally wonder whether Russian-German relations would undergo any changes.

Alas, so far there somehow aren't too many reasons for optimism. On the other hand, opinion polls suggest that the gap formed between Russia and Germany in 2014 might not have been as deep as it is.

A SURVEY carried out late in 2017 by Kantar Public and commissioned by the Körber Foundation suggests that 95% of Germans believe that it is important or very important that Russia and the European Union develop better political relations over the next few years. Some of the questioning in this survey was done in Poland in Russia. Even in Poland, whose policy toward Russia can't be called friendly in any sense, 80% of respondents were in favor of rapprochement with Russia.

The Germans see Russia as Germany's second most important cooperation partner after France.

Another noteworthy fact is that more than half of Germans and Poles expressed their belief that Russia belongs to Europe. We Russians, on the other hand, are not so sure - less than half of Russian respondents considered Russia as part of Europe.

It seems the new foreign minister will take a much more confrontational position on Russia than his fellow party members had done. Does that represent a common line on the part of the SPD and CDU/CSU? We will know the answer later. In any event, Maas can't even be expected to have his predecessors' degree of independence.

MERKEL'S FOURTH GOVERNMENT is having a difficult start to its term, and Germany's relations with Russia are one of the reasons. Russia no longer seeks to hide its global ambitions.

There will be challenges no less serious in 2019. In the summer, there will be European Parliament elections, and elections to the EU legislature are seen in Germany as "mini-elections" to the Bundestag. About six months later, there will be elections in the federal states of Brandenburg, Saxony and Thuringia. The CDU may be in for quite a few unpleasant surprises in eastern Germany, where it enjoys modest popularity, to say the least. Only after this chain of electoral ordeals is over will the Christian Democrats be

For all these reasons, the current government may go before long. Of the seven postwar chancellors, only two - Helmut Kohl and Kurt Georg Kiesinger - were able to serve out their tenures. Will Angela Merkel be the third one? Or will the helm pass over to another party or coalition, which will have its own principles for relations with Russia?

THE AGE OF "SOVEREIGN POPULISM": PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS OF MARCH 4, 2018 AND NEW TRENDS OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN ITALY

Author: Yevgeny Sulima, *Professor, Department of Geopolitics, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Doctor of Science (Philosophy); krikun_86@inbox.ru*
Maximilian Shepelev, *Professor, Department of International Relations and State Governance, Southwestern State University (Kursk), Doctor of Science (Political Science); ma_shepelev@mail.ru*

ON FEBRUARY 13, 2018, Stefano Feltri, well-known in his country as a political analyst and deputy director of Il Fatto Quotidiano daily, published his new book *Populismo sovrano*. He has written that populism revived in Europe and outside it is rooted in the current demand for sovereignty, concerns over the negative effects of globalization and the crumbling of the West that for a fairly long period of postwar social contract based on integration that guaranteed peace and prosperity remained responsible for sustainable development. The crisis of political discourse caused by the shop-soiled ideas and programs of the traditional mainstream parties, which offered no adequate answers to the new challenges of contemporary globalism, rekindled populism in the West. This crisis provoked a deep-seated mistrust in the party system, parliamentarianism, political elites, and international institutions that in the eyes of the common people look not amenable to any reform. People have no faith not only in the results of the procedures of representative democracy, but in these procedures

themselves up to and including the mechanism of delegated responsibility and the importance of compromises between different political positions.

Stefano Feltri has demonstrated that populism is growing increasingly "sovereign" not only because it adds more weight to sovereignty in the eyes of the public; this happens because it has won. Today, all political leaders have become populists.

Emmanuel Macron's victory at the 2017 presidential elections in France created an illusion that the populist wave symbolized by the Brexit in the UK and Donald Trump's victory at presidential election in the U.S. had retreated. The parliamentary election in Italy on March 4, 2018 buried these hopes: Italians were obviously fed up with the parties and people that remained at the helm far too long. They voted against M. Monti, E. Letta, M. D'Alema, P. Gentiloni, and even Silvio Berlusconi.

Election results divided the party system into the "new Right" headed by 45-year-old Matteo Salvini, leader of the Lega (former Lega Nord), and the "new Left" led by 31-year-old Luigi Di Maio of the Five Star Movement (M5S). The former won by softening his extremely radical rhetoric to prove that he was not a dangerous extremist and separatist but a political leader capable of uniting the wide spectrum of the center-right forces of Italy that previously identified themselves with Berlusconi. So far, there is a "diarchy" in the center-right coalition; it remains unbalanced with power and control gradually shifting to Salvini.

They have succeeded to a great extent; today, political polarization is obvious on geographic maps. Post-election Italy is divided into two big areas: the M5S dominates the South of the Apennine Peninsula and Sicily and Sardinia; the center-right coalition, led by the Lega, dominates Northern and Central Italy. The boundary runs between the Emilia-Romagna and Marche regions.

In 2013, the Five Star Movement invaded the political scene of Italy on the wave of the migration crisis, the crisis of the eurozone and the crisis of faith in the EU institutions. It was a fundamentally new political force that was open about its anti-establishment nature and that became one of the key symbols of the coming changes in the party system of Italy. Long before the 2018 elections, "new bipolarity" was predicted even if its nature was not yet fully understood.

In any case, the parliamentary elections of March 4, 2018 not only created an absolutely new political situation inside the country but turned Italy into an element of political uncertainty for Europe. Today, one thing is clear: there is no way back for the country's party and political system, yet the rich experience of its political elite suggests that it will cope with the transition from the Second to the Third Republic.

CONTINUITY: A KEYNOTE OF CUBAN POLITICS

Author: M. Kamynin

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Cuba; embrusia@newmail.ru

As has been repeatedly noted, Russian-Cuban relations are impervious to situational factors. Their current state can be described as excellent. In the process of the country's "modernization," the Cuban people carefully preserve their ideals and firmly uphold their principles, adhering to the course once chosen. During the transitional period, they place their bet on reliable, time-tested partners. It was no accident that the leitmotif of the election of the country's top leadership was "continuity." I am convinced that the course toward developing wide-ranging cooperation with Russia in the spirit of strategic partnership will be continued.

We maintain a regular political dialogue with Cuba that is characterized by trust, mutual respect and the concurrence or proximity of positions on the most acute issues on the international agenda today. Very good recent examples of the solidarity, adherence to principle and courage of the Cuban side were official statements condemning the deportation of Russian diplomats under the pretext of the "Skripal case," as well as in connection with U.S., British and French missiles strikes on Syria.

Such mutual understanding provides fertile soil for the development of wide-ranging cooperation also in the material sphere, including energy, metals, transport, ICT, medicine, and biopharmaceuticals.

Cuba, which enjoys well-deserved respect in the international arena, has for decades successfully countered U.S. attempts at isolation and subversive campaigns.

Today, at the height of the West's anti-Russian provocations, we, as well as the Cubans, are drawing closer together. The senseless archaic sanctions policy, which has demonstrated its counterproductive nature, is giving impetus to our economic development. Under such turbulent circumstances, we greatly value the firm support from Cuba, Russia's loyal friend.

Our views of what is going on in the world are very similar. The Russians and Cubans have shared humanitarian values. The years-long bonds of friendship, mutual sympathy and solidarity, respect for history and interest in culture, among many other things, provide a solid foundation for future relations between Russia and Cuba. Our common goal is to prevent their erosion, preserve this legacy and pass it on to our countries' young people.

ROHINGYA: SOUTH ASIAN KOSOVARS?

Author: G. Ivashentsov

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Member of the Russian Council on International Affairs; ivagleb@googlmail.com

INTERETHNIC CLASHES are not a rarity for many Asian and African countries, and foreign media outlets do not sensationalize them. However, what has happened around the Rohingya community in Myanmar in recent months has largely broken with this pattern. TV screens and newspaper pages have been filled with reports of the purported genocide of the Rohingya perpetrated by the Myanmar authorities: thousands of dead Rohingya, hundreds of burned villages, and thousands of refugees fleeing to Bangladesh. Tough statements were made by leaders, public and religious figures in a number of Muslim states, and the issue was raised at the UN. On certain days, the Rohingya issue in the media was so off the scale that it almost completely eclipsed the situation around Korea, fraught with nuclear conflict.

Myanmar is a multiethnic state. About 70% of the country's population are ethnic Burmese and 90% are Buddhists; the Myanmar government officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups, including Christians (about 7% of the population), Muslims and followers of other religions. However, the Rohingya are not on this list. To the central government, as well as to the majority of the Myanmar people, they are primarily illegal migrants from abroad.

Ever since the 1940s, the Rohingya have had strained relations with their neighbors the Rakhines, who had reason to be concerned about the Rohingya's expansion to their lands. They still remember how, during World War II, the British supplied the Rohingya with weapons to fight Japanese invaders but the Rohingya used those weapons to spill blood of Buddhists.

The Western world intensely disliked the military regimes of Burma/Myanmar. Therefore, any reason whatsoever was sought for denouncing the "Burmese military." And the Rohingya issue proved very convenient: After all, it involved the oppression of a minority - not only an ethnic but also a religious minority. So, myths began to be created to the effect that the Rohingya were the most oppressed Muslim people in the world. Its protection became the concern, on the one hand, of international humanitarian organizations with huge resources, primarily the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and on the other, of radical Islamists.

As Myanmar entered a new reality in the form of democratic changes, the voices of those in the international community who called for ending aid and assistance to the Rohingya, because they were not really in danger, became louder. However, at that point, radical Islam entered on the scene. Rohingya enclaves/reservations did not stretch like rubber as the number of Rohingya people was constantly growing, especially young people.

It is noteworthy that in recent years no public or political organizations have taken any action on behalf of the Rohingya. Power in radicalized Rohingya enclaves passed to those who in other countries would be called field commanders.

TODAY, there is a large scale of deaths and destruction in Rakhine. The northern part of the state, where the Rohingya used to live, was subjected to several cleanup operations, with many villages burned. The Rohingya blame arson attacks on the army, whereas the Myanmar military blame them on ARSA militants.

The reaction from the Myanmar authorities was extremely tough. However, how do authorities in other countries respond to terrorist attacks on police stations and how do the military respond to the killing of their comrades? A war is not a picnic, not a school of humanism. Nevertheless, the problem is that in the present-day situation, with global television and the Internet, even the most baseless rumor can be blown up for the sake of ratings; what is important for TV people is that an event become a talking point, and it does not really matter what is said about it.

There is ample evidence that most of the photos and videos about the atrocities perpetrated by government forces that are currently making the rounds on the Internet were made long ago - or, as has already been repeatedly confirmed, they are fakes manufactured far away from Myanmar. Many media reports have been denied by independent eyewitnesses, including ICRC representatives in Myanmar.

THE GENERAL COURSE of events is reminiscent of what happened in the run-up to the NATO operation in Yugoslavia in 1999, which was designed to partition off Kosovo of present-day Serbia. At that time, the world suddenly learned about the existence of a new Muslim community called Kosovars, just as is now the case with the Rohingya, whose rights are violated, which is supposed to justify their acts of violence against the authorities of the country and even their civilian neighbors.

Reports by Western TV networks from Bangladesh areas bordering Rakhine are surprisingly similar to what CNN and the BBC were showing in 1999 from Kosovo.

THE WESTERN PRESS rarely mentions the geopolitical subtext of the current tragedy in Myanmar. Meanwhile, playing the Muslim card around the Rohingya problem has far-reaching goals.

Whereas to the Western public, atrocities on the screen are something like digital horror stories, the Islamic radicals who see the dead bodies of their co-religionists on the screen, even if they carried out a terrorist attack and paid the price for that, get extremely agitated and ready to "exact revenge."

As for Russia, on October 3, 2017, as he received credentials from the Myanmar ambassador to Russia in the Kremlin, President Vladimir Putin said: "We are concerned

about the upsurge in ethnic and religious tension in a number of the country's regions. We are calling on all sides to exercise restraint. We know from our own experience that solutions to problems as complicated as these should be sought in the sphere of political cooperation and by political means without any human rights violations."

TURKMENISTAN, THE HEART OF THE SILK ROAD

Author: Batyr Niyazliev

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Turkmenistan to the Russian Federation

OVER 140 YEARS have passed since Ferdinand von Richthofen, a German geologist, geographer and traveler and the president of the Berlin Geographical Society, coined the term Silk Road. Several more decades had passed before scholars in different countries became seriously interested in this phenomenon of the antique and medieval world and began to study specific routes of caravan trade where Turkmen land had an important place. The Silk Road era, which lasted for more than 15 centuries, has left thousands of monuments and landmarks along the entire route from the Mediterranean to the Far East. Many of them are located on the territory of Turkmenistan.

In the modern era, the legendary route is being restored in a new quality, carrying the idea of revitalizing and strengthening trade, economic, humanitarian, and cultural ties between states and peoples. In his book, "Turkmenistan, the Heart of the Silk Road," Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, citing facts of national history, ancient tales and legends, as well as events and developments from the country's modern life, notes that a fundamental role in the evolution and active use of the Silk Road, each of its branches being on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites, belongs to, among others, the Turkmen people.

Thus, as our state carries out major transport projects of the century, a modern history is being written and the idea of restoring the Silk Road - the heart of which is independent and neutral Turkmenistan - is being revisited.

The Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran transnational railway line that has been put into operation can carry up to 10-12 million tons of cargo and makes it possible to connect to transport infrastructure in the east and south, gaining access to dynamically developing markets. Turkmenistan believes it is essential to focus efforts on ensuring that the opportunities for Central Asian and Caspian states arising in connection with these major transit projects be used to the maximum degree possible.

Convenient and safe international corridors using rail, motor, air, and water transport ensure the sustainable development of the entire region, foster neighborly relations between nations, strengthen cooperation, expand the volumes of trade turnover and help address a number of social issues. As a strategic goal defining the contours of a new, large-scale format of cooperation on the continent, they help create wide-ranging

and promising geoeconomic configurations. In this context, it is important to note that an international sea port in the city of Turkmenbashi is due to be put into operation in the very near future.

The state invests heavily in modernizing the material and technical base of the transport sector and improving management through modern technology. High priority is given to developing sea and river transport infrastructure. Active work is under way to improve passenger and cargo transportation, develop ports and port facilities, and streamline state oversight over the safety of shipping and navigation.

Central and South Asia is a space for active international cooperation. Ancient trade routes passed across these territories for centuries, bringing Asia and Europe closer together. At present, countries in these regions play an important role in expanding global economic partnership. The implementation of projects in these areas opens up great prospects for the optimization of transport, energy and cultural ties in the Eurasian space. Therefore, as Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov noted, our region is emerging as a major link in the formation of a new trade and economic partnership model on the continent, which, in turn, opens up opportunities for creating a platform for more wide-ranging cooperation. This is a vivid example of deeply innovative thinking in the global geoeconomic configuration and a vision of strategic perspectives for its development.

Ô SPORT, TU ES... LA PAIX?! O SPORT, YOU ARE PEACE?!

Author: A. Varfolomeyev

Senior Specialist, Russia 2018 Local Organizing Committee (LOC), member of the academic council for the sports management program of the International Centre for Sports Studies/FIFA and the National Research University-Higher School of Economics, Candidate of Science (Political Science); varfanton@yandex.ru

IN GLOBAL SPORTS, 2018 is a remarkable year with its two outstanding events, the XXIII Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang in South Korea in February, and the FIFA World Cup in Russia in June and July, the first FIFA world cup to be hosted by Russia. Since 1994, Winter Olympics and FIFA world tournaments have always been held in the same year, the end-year of a four-year cycle in top-class sporting contests. But the period from 2014 to 2018 was probably the first four-year cycle when, in defiance of all common sense, it was not athletes or fans who called the shots but behind-the-scenes lobbyists in international sports organizations and functionaries in them who were fulfilling odious political contracts. In looking at our numerous athletes who have fallen victim to the global anti-Russian campaign, one has to admit, sad as it is: 0 Sport, you have become war.

Baron de Coubertin,* the founder of the modern Olympic movement and the first director general of the IOC, considered sport to be a rare form of activity that, due to its nature, could not be a source of conflict or social confrontation. Sport was, moreover, an opportunity to satisfy a desire for rivalry, and even aggression, that is part of the human character.

However, the world we live in is by no means an ideal place. There emerged cracks in the edifice of Olympism, which was glorified by Coubertin so poetically when he was still alive. One of the most shameful pages in the history of international sport is racial and ethnic discrimination.

Pressured by some governments and throwing aside the principle of personal responsibility, international sports bureaucrats may stick a suspect label on any Russian athlete.

As usual, this is probably a case of combination of objective and subjective factors.

Any athletic one-on-one competition involves two parallel dramas. One of them is one's efforts to suppress one's weaknesses and take full control of oneself. The other is about which flag will go up after the contest. Although the Olympic Charter does say that "the Olympic Games are competitions between athletes in individual or team events and not between countries," sport was, is and will be a form of rivalry between nations.

Russia's role in international affairs, its relations with specific countries, primarily English-speaking, and the use by those countries of sports issues in their current campaigns to blacken Russia's international image.

We believe it is primitive to interpret attacks on Russia on the sports flank as nothing else than attempts to discredit the Russian government system, as is quite often claimed in the media. There is more to it than that. Namely, Western elites persistently want ordinary people in their countries to change their attitudes to Russia and its population. Effectively, they seek to deprive Russia of what remains of its former positive international image.

It would probably be the best tactic to prove that there is no serious basis to the fomentation of negative sentiments about our country. One would expect events such as the 2018 FIFA World Cup to help open Russia, to enable the hundreds of thousands of guests from dozens of countries to draw their own conclusions and to share what they have seen with others.

Ordinary Russians have been waiting for the World Cup impatiently, and not only because it's a genuine celebration of sport. In the above-cited Nielsen poll, 68% of respondents said that they expected the international reputation of Russia to improve because of the tournament.

RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND ARMENIA UNDER NEW HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Author: Aram Manukyan

Postgraduate student, Saint Petersburg State University; aram.v.manukyan@gmail.com

ARMENIA experienced events in April and May 2018 that have been dubbed a "velvet revolution" and resulted in the radical replacement of political elites. The government of President Serzh Sargsyan was forced to resign, and the leader of the protest movement, opposition parliamentary deputy Nikol Pashinyan, was elected prime minister. This has given rise to serious worries about the future of Russian-Armenian relations despite numerous assurances by Armenia's new leadership that there were no geopolitics behind the change of government.

Russia's anxiety is understandable because Armenia is its old and loyal ally in the South Caucasus and the two countries have extensive cultural and historical ties and a record of close economic, political and military cooperation. However, these apprehensions make little sense if one bases one's projections not on the presumption that Armenia will follow the route that has been taken by the political elites of other post-Soviet countries but on an analysis of social and economic problems in Armenia and its 25-year history of constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation with Russia.

For Armenia as a small country burdened with grave historical, economic and political problems, maneuvering between key global political players is probably the only way to maintain stability not only in international relations but also in domestic affairs. Complementary policies in relations with various countries without giving preference to any nation or group of nations is Armenia's main foreign policy principle.

Russia and Armenia have very close economic relations. Russia is Armenia's main economic partner and the biggest investor into its economy. Armenia's well-being largely depends on its economic cooperation with Russia.

Unlike migrants from neighboring Georgia and Azerbaijan, there is no trend among Armenian migrants to diversify their range of destinations - every year 93% of them have been heading to Russia.

Armenia's entry into the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015 was not only a geopolitical move (although many experts see it as chiefly a geopolitical act) but a means of maintaining domestic economic stability. For this reason, an overwhelming majority of Armenia's population approves of the country's EAEU membership. For ordinary Armenians, the main advantage of Armenia's being in the EAEU is not that it provides the country with foreign trade benefits but that it gives them the same rights to work in Russia as those enjoyed by Russians.

The involvement of Russian state and private companies in the Armenian economy is bound to affect Armenia's domestic politics, and the large-scale Armenian labor migration to Russia makes an overwhelming majority of Armenia's population pro-Russian. All this determines Armenia's foreign policy course.

However, stable relations between countries are conditional not only on economic factors but also on domestic political stability in them and on the continuity of their foreign policies. Many Russian political scientists, experts and journalists interpreted the events of April and May 2018 in Armenia as one more "orange revolution" in the post-Soviet space.

Putin and Pashinyan, during their meeting at the EAEU summit in Sochi, confirmed that relations between the two countries kept developing fruitfully. Pashinyan's trip to Russia was the first foreign visit he made as prime minister, and this is further evidence of the importance that Armenia's new leadership attaches to relations with Russia. One can confidently assess Russian-Armenian relations as the most fruitful bilateral relations in the post-Soviet space. One can be just as confident that the recent political changes in Armenia will not have any impact on the nature of its friendly relations with Russia, which have spanned many centuries.

BRAZILIAN-RUSSIAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Author: Antonio Luis Espinola Salgado

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Russian Federation

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS between Brazil and Russia, which were established on October 3, 1828, reached the level of strategic partnership in 2002. In 2010, the Russian Federation and Brazil adopted a strategic cooperation plan of action, outlining an array of bilateral goals and tasks to deepen dialogue between various institutions in a bilateral format, within the framework of BRICS, and in a multilateral format.

The rapprochement between Brazil and Russia is facilitated by the similarity of approaches and visions. Both countries have similar positions on issues related to building a multipolar international system, preserving the central role of the UN, the priority of international law and the rejection of unilateral measures based on the use of force. Brazil and Russia are strengthening their partnership relations within the framework of BRICS, constructively cooperating within the framework of the Group of 20 and advocating for a reform of multilateral governance institutions, including the UN Security Council, the IMF and the World Bank.

Since a visa waiver agreement, providing for visa-free travel for their citizens travelling on ordinary passports, was signed in 2010, the flow of tourists has increased significantly in both directions. Currently, about 25,000 Russian tourists annually visit Brazil, and Russia plays host to about 30,000 Brazilians each year.

THE VOLUME of bilateral trade, which in previous years exceeded \$6 billion, stood at \$5.23 billion in 2017, up by 21.4% on 2016. At the same time, Brazilian exports increased by 26.7%, to \$ 3.19 billion, and the volume of Russian imports to Brazil was up by 13.9%, to \$2.03 billion.

Bilateral trade features low added-value produce: Livestock and agriculture products and resources used in agribusiness account for up to 80% of bilateral trade.

In conjunction with the trade department of the Brazilian Embassy, the Brazilian export and investment agency in Moscow is working to bring Brazilian and Russian business people and investors closer together. In recent years, we have actively facilitated the participation of Brazilian entrepreneurs in Moscow food fairs (Prodexpo and World Food) and sent and hosted delegations of shoe and motor parts manufacturers, and wine and food producers.

THERE are good prospects for deepening security and defense cooperation between Brazil and Russia. These issues are addressed at the top level.

THERE is a significant potential for expanding bilateral cooperation in science, technology, innovation, in particular biotechnology, pharmacology, nanotechnology, and information and communication technology.

IN SEPTEMBER 2017, Foreign Ministers Aloysio Nunes Ferreira and Sergey Lavrov signed an agreement on the establishment of cultural centers, which will help the two nations to get to know each other better.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that in today's unpredictable world, Brazilian-Russian strategic partnership, which stands guard over international law and a multipolar world and meets the supreme interests of both countries, contributes to the maintenance of peace and security around the world, with the central role of the United Nations.

VIKTOR CHERNOMYRDIN: MAN, POLITICIAN, DIPLOMAT

Author: A. Frolov

*Deputy Executive Director of the Russian Energy Club Nonprofit Partnership (2000-2001), Vice President of the Regional Public Foundation for Support and Development of the Middle Class (2002-2009), Doctor of Science (Political Sciences);
afrolov53@mail.ru*

VIKTOR STEPANOVICH Chernomyrdin, a remarkable and original man, a prominent statesman and organizer of industry, a prime minister of Russia, and a politician who has also left his mark on Russia's foreign policy, would have been 80 years old on April 9, 2018.

There is probably no need to recount Chernomyrdin's biography, because its key events have been widely covered in the media. But I would like to mention several points that characterize him as an individual. First, he had an inherent desire to learn wherever he was, both as a schoolboy and as a statesman.

Viktor Stepanovich always devoted himself to his work, aiming to achieve the desired result. He had no patron to push him up the career ladder: all his achievements were due to his own hard work and reliability. He was valued and promoted for these qualities.

Many people at that time were keen on politics, but few were ready for selfless work. It was also a time of internal struggle for power, a time of "checks and balances," when ministers and Kremlin politicians were planning how to outdo their rivals.

Viktor Stepanovich was always very thorough in his work. "Mercedes cars are not made quickly," he liked to say. For some, his unhurried pace may have been annoying, but this was due to an in-depth analysis of issues, the cautious approach he had developed over the years, his sense of responsibility, and his desire to avoid mistakes.

One should also note Chernomyrdin's deep commitment to his family. His home was his fortress, a place of refuge.

He knew how to be friends, valued friendship and sincerity in friendship, and did his best not to let his friends down.

According to Viktor Stepanovich, the most dangerous and difficult time in his international activity was NATO's aggression against sovereign Yugoslavia in 1999, when he agreed to act as a mediator, a special envoy appointed by the Russian president to negotiate a settlement in the Balkans.

With his usual energy, he undertook the role of an international mediator - a role that was unique in Russian history - and became the first Russian politician to engage in shuttle diplomacy. The war was brought to an end, although everyone paid a high price for it.

People have and will continue to have warm memories of Viktor Stepanovich, of his humor, irony, and sayings. There are always fresh flowers on his grave in the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow as a token of love and respect. A memorial museum is to open shortly in the village Chernyi Otrog in honor of Viktor Chernomyrdin, a famous

citizen of Orenburg Oblast and of the country, a citizen whom Vladimir Putin has called a patriot of Russia.

DIPLOMACY ON THE EVE OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

Author: O. Lebedeva

Deputy Dean, School of International Relations, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations, Candidate of Science (Sociology); o.lebedeva13@gmail.com

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION of 1917 in Russia removed the regime of czarist autocracy from the stage; the Foreign Ministry, however, survived with minimal losses. The Provisional Government brought to power by the revolution was determined to follow the previous foreign policy course. The Foreign Ministry returned to the scene after four days of revolutionary turmoil even if the situation in the country looked more like a war than anything else which inevitably affected the ministry's functioning and the course it tried to follow. As could be expected, political power could not leave the ministry alone. Its interference in foreign policy had caused disagreements that gradually spread to the Provisional Government.

The revolution did nothing to defuse the tension: the wave of war was steadily rising; the country was living amid economic chaos and complete devastation; the crime level became unacceptably high.

To cope with all these difficulties, Russia needed smart people well-versed in politics and state governance. In this context, all forces should be united either by setting up Soviets (the Bolshevik variant) or closing ranks around the liberal camp. The liberals won: they were ready to take power; they knew enough of what should be done and how and were determined to act.

Lvov and his cabinet relied on so-called patriotic principles; the country wanted the war to continue, while the members of the Provisional Government wanted to reap Russia's share of future privileges and contributions. They pinned their hopes on the sentiments of the masses interpreted by the liberals as defensive and liberating. In fact, popular support of the ideas of the Provisional Government was tepid; later, they brought the country dangerously close to a civil war.

The regime of dual power in Russia meant that foreign policy issues were discussed and endorsed by members of the Provisional Government who worked in contact with the so-called Commission of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies headed by members of moderate socialist parties.

Dual power in the country meant that there were two structures dealing with foreign policy. The Foreign Ministry preserved its traditional role, while the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies demonstrated its growing interest in foreign policy. On

April 4, it approved the suggestion of its executive committee to set up a Department of International Relations to fight for liberal-democratic values popular at that time. The new department was staffed mainly with liberal democrats (in fact, Mensheviks).

At the same time, the new structure had no power and no instruments needed to control the Provisional Government and the Foreign Ministry. Therefore, its work was reduced to sending cables to Russia's diplomatic missions abroad about the activities of the Soviet.

Somewhat later, the department started helping political migrants in foreign states, some of which were neutral, while others openly hostile.

The new Department of the Press and Information launched energetic campaign in the allied and neutral countries where its newly created representations organized all sorts of lectures and seminars designed to increase an interest in Russia and its aims. These offices relied on information supplied by the Foreign Ministry of Russia and the Russian press. Russian citizens who arrived in foreign countries were asked to talk to foreign audiences about Russia and its everyday life. The representations were also expected to acquire all sorts of information and print sources related to the issues important for the Foreign Ministry.

The Provisional Government saw interaction with the army as one of its priorities. After February 1917, the army was not ready to launch an offensive which disorganized, to a certain extent, the Entente countries' actions. And then the first post-February Russian offensive failed.

Russia's foreign ministry tried to preserve its influence in the Balkans, not an easy task in view of the obvious weakness of its army. The government of Serbia became uncertain about the correctness of its pro-Russian orientation while the Entente countries were widening their influence in the region.

Its weaker positions in Europe forced Russia to shift its attention to Central Asia and consolidate its influence there.

In the last days of the Provisional Government, the British and French diplomats stationed in Russia went out of their way to urge this government to suppress the "anarchy." The feeble efforts of the representatives of the American Red Cross to persuade Russians to promise land to the peasants as a necessary political move was flatly rejected by the military representatives of France and Britain. Incited by the allies, the right wing of the government decided to remove Kerensky from his post and to liquidate the Soviets. These plans were buried by the October Socialist Revolution.

GEOPOLITICS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Author: A. Kramarenko

Director of Development, Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary; akramarenko@russiancouncil.ru

DISAPPOINTMENTS caused by the lost chances to start a "new post-Cold War history" of world politics made counterfactual history the latest trend of historical studies. Alexey Arbatov has rightly written: "In the early 1990s, the U.S. had a unique historical chance to lead the creation of a new, multilateral world order together with other centers of power. However, it unwisely lost this chance" thus making wars, crises and misunderstandings between Russia and the West unavoidable.

This explanation is too simple as if history is made by dimwits. Everything becomes more complicated as we move back to the more remote turning points of history such as World War I or the 1917 Revolution in Russia.

Counterfactual history encourages a game of imagination; this can be hardly called genuinely creative approach to history yet the results might be interesting or even instructive.

THERE ARE ENOUGH REASONS to say that World War I could not be avoided not only because Germany, in which the top crust tried as best as they could to suppress the rising Social-Democrats, badly needed a war. The same fully applies to Austria-Hungary struggling with its own and much graver problems; to France that was losing the industrialization race to Germany; to the British rulers who for 30 years had been trying in vain to bridle the Irish Home Rule movement, etc. The contradictions between Britain and Germany, two European countries very close in many respects, were too obvious.

European politics as a whole faced no less serious problems.

In the context of its traditional "splendid isolation" policy and its claim to the role of the guarantor of European balance, London's ambiguous position was absurd: its correctly interpreted interests rejected even a possibility of domination of any power on the European continent. The war declared on August 4 is one of the pernicious effects of secret diplomacy and its catastrophic repercussions for peace in Europe including inability to make a clear strategic choice in a qualitatively different situation.

Defeat in this war, very much like the earlier defeat in the Crimean War, would have been caused by the domestic situation in Russia that had come too close to a revolution. The monarchy would have been quickly transformed into a constitutional monarchy; a pro-German government would have come to power which meant modernization under external. German control. New Minin and Pozharsky were an

unlikely variant. The deeply split society could have hardly acquired enough willpower to close ranks and confront this prospect.

Should we pay special attention to the intelligentsia and its nihilistic "wandering" that Dostoevsky condemned in *The Possessed* and other writings? The Russian liberation movement is responsible for fifty years of consistent terror starting with Karakozov's attempted assassination of Alexander II Liberator in 1866 up to and including his murder in 1881. Alexander III who responded with stronger Russophilic trends merely worsened the state of affairs inside the country and decreased the chances of the liberal alternative to power. The year 1917 settled the scores. The Interim Government disregarded the obvious threat of a revolution to plunge into intrigues; it twice postponed the elections to the All-Russia Constituent Assembly and acted as if it controlled the course of time.

Today, it is hard to say how the systemic crisis of Western society, closely associated with what Brzezinski called "massive global political awakening," that reached its focal point on the eve of World War I would have been resolved on both sides of the Atlantic. Fascistization of many fields up to and including the experience of Peronism in Argentina and domination of the mafia in the trade union movement in the United States suggested alternatives: in postwar Italy, mafia was de facto incorporated in the establishment.

In the West, Nazism was perceived as a warning, an experiment of sorts conducted in strictly controlled conditions with Russia playing the decisive role (or even carried out at its expense). It seems that the logic of history demanded that this devil of European self-consciousness should be cast out on its own soil. In fact, this phenomenon differed but little from what had been going on in colonies including slavery and slave trade.

Russia/the Soviet Union had nothing to do with Nazism. It was Schopenhauer who in fact influenced the Russian liberation movement.

Continued ability to preserve historical creativity is another reference point. As part of the German Empire or being involved in its political orbit, Russia would have rejected its historical creativity and completely detached itself from the choice our ancestors had made and reconfirmed. The fact that the atheist Soviet Union became a form of preserving our spirituality and its role in the European and world affairs can be explained by the inscrutable roads of history. Bipolarity of the Cold War period meant that European civilization still dominated the world affairs: the ideology of each of the sides was based on various products of European political thought. This explains non-accidental convergence periods between the wars and after the war.

History creates no finality. Donald Trump's National Security Strategy has transformed NATO into a business project designed to re-industrialize America through its military-industrial complex. A century ago, Russia as the third force in Europe offered America a chance to become involved in European affairs that Washington never fully tapped.

THE JEWISH QUESTION IN MUSSOLINI'S ITALY

Author: O. Denisov

historian; Look.well@mail.ru

IN ITALY, attitude to its Jewish community was different at different times. Early in the twentieth century, it was mainly tinged in religious colors; Catholics objected to Judaism as a religion that opposed the principles of the Roman Catholic Church. Fascism added chauvinism to the Jewish Question and made it sharply politicized.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Italy was in an acute social and political crisis; the ruling circles that could no longer rely on the government obviously unable to cope with the mounting workers' movement had no other option but to turn to an alternative political power able to contain the massive actions of pauperized population groups. It was in this context that fascism became a platform on which class contradictions were suppressed and various social forces consolidated.

Benito Mussolini, leader of the fascist party, grew into a state figure in the ranks of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) where his political career had begun. His numerous biographies suggest that the views and opinions of the future prime minister and the leader of a new movement were shaped by activists of the Italian socialist movement the core of which consisted, to a great extent, of Jewish radicals and oppositionists. This makes an evolution of his ideas about the Jewish Question doubly interesting.

At first, Mussolini and his comrades in arms remained basically neutral regarding the Jewish issue discussed in the Italian media of the time. Mussolini's articles on this subject were intended for the foreign, rather than Italian, audience. On June 4, 1919, he published in his newspaper the article "The Jewish Roots of Bolshevism" in which he accused the "world Jewish community" of plutocracy.

According to some contemporary authors who write about Italy's modern history, the year 1935 marked a turning point in the development of Italian anti-Semitism.

At first, the Italian fascists had no clear idea about the Jewish question; in the course of time, they started gradually moving toward the European nationalist movements. It seems that due to absence of racist and xenophobic traditions in Italy, Il Duce was tapping the international anti-Semitic experience.

In view of the importance of the Jewish question in the world, Mussolini did his best to preserve at least an illusion of a balance between the liberal regimes in some of the European countries and the United States, on the one hand, and his support of Hitler, on the other. According to Russian historian Mikhail Panteleyev, by the time Hitler came to power, Il Duce had repeatedly stated that racism and nihilism of the Nazis could not be accepted as civilized. The Russian historian has deemed it necessary to point out

that at first Mussolini accepted Jewish refugees from Germany. However, as Italy was moving closer to Nazi Germany, the Duce also began to persecute Jews in his "responsibility zone."

Berlin and Rome, however, were separated, to an extent, by the odious German ideas about sterilization of the so-called "sub-human" peoples. At the same time, Mussolini's determination to consolidate the doctrine of "universal fascism" on the European continent pushed him toward closer cooperation with the Third Reich.

It should be said that Mussolini's foreign policy course designed to re-divide the world was fully supported by Nazi Germany. The Third Reich wholeheartedly approved Italian fascists' plans of colonial expansion in Africa.

Facts are stubborn things. No charges of persecutions of Jews, arrests of Jews or violence against Jews were raised in postwar Italy. Some of the lawsuits contained information of denunciations of Jewish citizens or of stealing their property. At that time, the Italian judicial system was avoiding qualifying anti-Jewish crimes as crimes of genocide: a few death sentences were passed only to war criminals guilty of the most barbaric mass murders.

Alas, these lessons of history have been ignored. The voices of those who had survived in one of the worst social catastrophes of human civilization are barely heard in the information cacophony of our days. Ignored lessons of history lead to distorted approaches later translated into public space and the sphere of practical politics. Today, the past is returning, at least in part; the world community is once more confronted with radical ideologies very close to fascism and the younger generation is highly susceptible to them.

ARABS IN WORLD WAR II

Author: S. Vorobiev

Professor, National Research University-Higher School of Economics, Assistant Professor, Professor at the Academy of Military Science, Candidate of Science (History); iacl@yandex.ru

WITH 61 STATES (representing four-fifths of the planet's total population) involved in WWII, and 110 million people taking part in hostilities, the political, economic and military status of the Arab peoples did not allow them to play any prominent role in the victory of the Allies over the Axis Powers. For seven postwar decades, the Middle East and North Africa remained a zone of large-scale armed conflicts and permanent military-political turbulence that, from time to time, pushed the world to the brink of global armed confrontation. This explains the close attention of historians and political scientists to the recent history of the Arab East and, in particular, the role its population played in World War II.

In Soviet and Russian historiography, the issues related to the role of Arabs in World War II were covered in numerous scholarly publications. Prominent experts in the Arab East, likewise, paid a lot of attention to the subject. In Soviet times, scholars paid special attention to the positive role of Arab units in the Allies' armed struggle in North Africa, in the Middle East and Europe; in post-Soviet Russia, attention was shifted to cooperation between German Nazism and certain Arab religious, political and military figures. Today, in addition to scholarly works, there was a fairly big number of publications that negatively assess the same events and the role Arabs played in them.

It is necessary to consider this topic in the balanced way. It is especially important to dwell on the role the Arabs played in military operations against fascist Italy, the closest ally of Hitler Germany.

We should admit that the Arab peoples who had no significant role to play in the events of World War II were on both sides of the aisle.

The names of Mufti of Jerusalem Mohammed Amin al-Husseini and of Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, who filled the post of Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Iraq, resurfaced each time when the question of contacts between the Nazi and prominent figures of the Arab world at the early stages of the war is discussed in scholarly or journalist writings. Their close ties with the Third Reich are an established fact; the same can be said about pro-Nazi feelings among a great part of the political elite and officer corps of Egypt; the British colonial bureaucracy and the military, however, managed to remain in control.

In April 1943, the Nazis with the help of the Mufti of Jerusalem set up a German-Arab Free Arabian Legion (Legion Freies Arabien) called at first the 845th German-Arab battalion. By the end of the war, it was 20 thousand-strong; the exact number of Arab volunteers in its ranks is unknown. Its units fought in Greece and Yugoslavia. Nazis used Arabs taken prisoner in June 1940 when they had defeated the French army to knock together a legion of French volunteers (la Légion Tricolore). Under German command it fought in Libya and Tunisia as the 638th reinforced infantry regiment.

Libyan Arabs hated Italian colonialists. In 1912, they had taken up arms against Italians and laid them down only several decades later, in 1931. Italians, who always cruelly suppressed those who resisted them, became even crueler when fascists came to power in Italy in 1922.

Sheikhs whom Italians imprisoned or taken hostage were dropped from aircrafts on the territories of their tribes; massive public rapes became common practice, an unbelievable insult in a patriarchal Muslim country. According to Libyan researchers, in the years of colonial rule, the country lost one-fourth of its population.

Despite certain short-lived successes, Nazi propaganda failed. When the Allies landed in Algeria and Morocco in November 1942 (Operation Torch), the Arab servicemen remained passive. Arabs and Berbers were obviously unwilling to fight on the side of

Germany and Italy. The feudal elite and the comprador bourgeoisie of the Maghreb closely followed the hostilities, scared to make a mistake and waited for an opportune moment to reap the fruits after the war.

Summing up, we should admit that the Arab peoples who had no significant role to play in the events of World War II were on both sides of the aisle. The positions of the elites and the clergy which formed an attitude to war among common people depended on numerous factors: eagerness to achieve national sovereignty; influence of the propaganda of the warring sides; economic stimuli; history of relationships with the powers; personal ambitions, etc. It seems that Libyan Arabs, the only people in the Arab East with experience of colonialism in fascist garbs, fought for an idea. The position of the Orthodox Arabs of Syria and Lebanon who, being fully aware of persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union, prayed for the victory of Mother Russia and its Allies was a unique one.

THE FORT ROSS DIALOGUE CONFERENCE IN VELIKY NOVGOROD

Author: Ye. Antonova

Department Head, International Affairs; journal@interaffairs.ru

RUSSIAN and U.S. politicians, diplomats, business figures, and scholars gathered in Veliky Novgorod, Russia, on May 21-22, 2018, for a conference that was part of Fort Ross Dialogue, a project involving annual international conferences on Russian-American relations. The 2018 conference was overseen by the Russian Foreign Ministry's Interdepartmental Working Group for Preserving Russian Historical and Cultural Heritage in the United States. The group was set up in 2017 as a consultative body in the coordination of efforts to strengthen Russian-American cultural ties and in organizing support for the conservation of Russia-related memorial and cultural sites in the United States.

The Veliky Novgorod conference was an implementation of a Transneft initiative to take Fort Ross Dialogue a step further by holding conferences in Russia and not only on the premises of Fort Ross or Stanford University.

Russian-U.S. contacts have a long history. The Russian America phenomenon stands not only for Russians settling in American territories in the 18th and 19th centuries but also for the economic and cultural development of America's Russian community of those days. Russian America comprised Alaska, part of California, the Aleutian Islands and, for a short time, the Hawaiian Islands.

Fort Ross was built on the Californian coast in 1812. Today, the fortress is the central part of Fort Ross State Historic Park.

Until recently, Fort Ross had practically been unknown and largely neglected, but support from Transneft helped revitalize it.

Fort Ross conservation and promotion initiatives have had top-level state backing in Russia. Lavrov said that Fort Ross, as a unique monument to Russian participation in the development of America and a symbol of longtime Russian-American ties, continues to play an important educational role as every year it tells more than 200,000 Americans about the culture and way of life of some of the first European settlers in the American West.

The 2018 conference looked for new opportunities for cooperation in various fields. There were cultural, cybersecurity and energy issues on its agenda. Among the participants were Alexey Volin, Russian deputy minister of mass communications; Thomas Leary, minister counselor for public affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow; Mikhail Shvydkoy, the Russian president's special envoy for international cultural cooperation; Sarah Sweedler, president of Fort Ross Conservancy; Nikolay Tokarev, president of Transneft; Andrew McGrahan, president of Chevron Neftegaz; Nikolay Kolesnikov, vice president of Sovcomflot; and Andrey Nikitin, governor of Novgorod region.

However, there was also a sense of confidence during the event that, if nations are open to dialogue and compromise on key political issues, their economies would be under less pressure and there might be more willingness to cooperate under energy projects. There exist all necessary economic conditions for such cooperation.

The Fort Ross Dialogue conferences have made clear that the history of political and cultural relations between Russia and the United States and their shared interests may guarantee stable cooperation between them even in the present-day situation of political rivalry and exacerbated antagonisms between the two nations.

BORIS DMITRIYEVICH PYADYSHEV

October 22, 1932-June 8, 2018

Boris Dmitriyevich Pyadyshev, an eminent diplomat with a career of more than 50 years in the diplomatic services of the former Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia, has passed away.

Pyadyshev, who held the rank of ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, belonged to a pleiad of Soviet diplomats who graduated from Moscow Institute of International Relations in the 1950s and made up the core of the Soviet diplomatic service. The leadership of the Soviet Union and the senior echelon of the Foreign Ministry valued Pyadyshev's talents, and quite often it was through his lips that the general secretary

of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet prime minister and foreign minister made their statements. Pyadyshev's distinctive style was detectable in principal foreign policy documents. It was often Pyadyshev who penned content in central newspapers that stated our country's position at international forums and negotiations.

Pyadyshev showed himself to be a brilliant diplomat during his years of service at the Soviet embassies in Great Britain and Bulgaria, and his missions to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yugoslavia and other countries and to international organizations constitute a chapter in the history of Russian foreign policy.

As Russia was opening up to the world, statements made by Pyadyshev during his briefings at the Foreign Ministry were quoted extensively by the media worldwide. He was often the first, and sometimes the only, Russian official with whom leaders of major countries wanted to meet. He led the Soviet delegation to the London Information Forum of the then Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, a historic event at which our country achieved tremendous success.

For 22 years, Pyadyshev was editor-in-chief of International Affairs, replacing in this capacity Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Taking up this role at a historical turning point, he changed the general course of the journal and laid the foundations of what for Russia was a completely new form of international politics analysis. As a pioneering initiative, International Affairs became a discussion platform where current global issues have been debated in a frank way and in plain language. These debates have been helping to shape Russia's long-term foreign policy line.

Pyadyshev showed enviable persistence in looking for talented contributors from among Foreign Ministry personnel, both renowned diplomats and beginners. Since then it has been a tradition and a matter of prestige for Russian diplomats to write for the journal.

Pyadyshev, moreover, authored about 15 works of research. Time shows how valuable any scholarly research is, and Pyadyshev's studies are works of indisputable value. They contain interpretations of historical process that have proven accurate and made correct forecasts for decades ahead.

He was always willing to help anyone who needed it. No one would have had any reason to question his kindness, empathy, and integrity. He was one of those whom many people call a true friend.

His death is a great loss. He will always be remembered.

International Affairs colleagues

EUROPE THROUGH THE EYES OF A POLITICAL SCIENTIST

Author: O. Ivanov

*Professor, Deputy Rector for Research, Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Doctor of Science (Political Science);
oleg.ivanov@dipacademy.ru*

RUSSIA in general and its social thinkers in particular began to take interest in Europe during the reforms of Peter the Great.

Our interest in Europe grew steadily at every stage of our subsequent history.

In this article, we are reviewing a book by Alexey Gromyko, Doctor of Science (Political Science), corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and director of the Academy's Institute of Europe, entitled *Raising a Vital Issue: Europe and the Modern World** The book represents a systemic assessment by a political scientist of characteristics of modern Europe, key social developments in it and their sources, and of the character and development trends of present-day international relations.

Raising a Vital Issue was published late in 2017, but what has happened over the past few months just corroborates what Gromyko says in it.

The main text of the book is preceded by what can be called methodological explanations - "In Lieu of an Introduction: Constancy and Changeability in History." There are two forms of interpretation of historical developments, Gromyko points out. One of them "focuses on the explosive character of global or regional processes, the unexpectedness of an event, and the swiftness of change that can astound the reader." The other, on the contrary, "is centered on the inertness and logicity of global development and its rigidity, on apathy in the system of international relations, a feeling that, despite the multiplication of events, everything remains unchanged." Such major "aggregated" categories as "states, social classes, civilizations, and socioeconomic models ... push the subjective factor back into secondary, if not tertiary, roles." "This represents the history of structures, 'slow history,'" Gromyko says.

Both absolutizing "the changeability of history" and absolutizing the seeming constancy of international relations would make scholarly forecasting impossible, but "these two opposite types of absolutization can be avoided if one follows the cyclical principle in studying the history of international relations and the 'horizontal' principle in civilization studies".

Part I deals with a multitude of changes, both visible and latent, that followed the collapse of the bipolar world. Gromyko speaks about problems of international integration projects. Part II centers on the political strategy of the European Union, especially its policies toward Russia and other countries in the "post-Soviet space," and

on the European security theme, including Europe's entanglement in the "cobweb of the Ukrainian crisis." In Part III, Gromyko sums up what he said in Parts I and II and examines various risks, looks at chances for negative and positive scenarios of global developments, advocates efforts to achieve a reasonable balance of power, suggests ways of dealing with new challenges, with the West's anti-Russian propaganda and with its economic, and at times military, pressure on Russia, and comes up with ideas for compromise formats, running through a history of such compromises. He also talks about rivals of Russia, about true and stable friends of it and about opportunists that are only friends in specific situations. He examines the motives of those true and false friends and consequent constant and variable factors in Russian diplomacy.

In spite of the complex nature of issues raised in it, the book is written in fairly plain language accessible to a non-specialist reader. One of the characteristics of Gromyko's scholarly style and way of presentation are frequent citations of works by other scholars, at times supplemented with brief explanations of the role of such works in tackling various problems.

TO UNDERSTAND RUSSIA

Author: A. Sindeyev

Chief Research Associate, Department of European Security, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences; Professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Professor at the Department of Foreign Regional Studies and International Cooperation, Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Doctor of Science (History); a_sin74@mail.ru

IGOR MAXIMYCHEV, Doctor of Science (History), chief research associate of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences, has written a book that has been published in the German language in Germany recently and has a title translating as *To Understand Russia: What Moscow Really Thinks of Germany and Where New Confidence Can Come From** The publication of Russian scholarly books in foreign languages is hardly a rarity these days. However, works on political science, history and other social sciences account for too small a share of them to match the role one expects Russia to play in international scholarly discourse, in shaping European and global public opinion, and in supporting Russian diplomacy. Conferences and discussions are important formats for the statement of views, but books, both print and electronic, indisputably hold a special place.

Maximychev made an understandable and commendable move by deciding to write a book for a German audience. This complicated, difficult and time-consuming work involves fulfilling various roles simultaneously, primarily the role of an intercultural communicator. Despite apparent at first sight trends for global cultural universality, intercultural dialogue is an extremely difficult task to pursue. Neither sermonizing nor

contrived modesty nor self-restraint will work. Nor will one get very far without having a clear position and down-to-earth objectives.

To Understand Russia will be of interest to both younger and older people. Maximychev tries to bring it home to young people who don't know much about the ordeals of World War II that international peace, personal well-being, and desire of the two nations to know more about each other shouldn't be taken for granted.

To Understand Russia will be of special interest to older readers, people who, just as he does, wonder what will happen to Europe when the helm goes over to young politicians.

Maximychev argues that Russia and Germany have a special joint role to play. "They fulfill an important European and global mission" part of which is to prevent war, he says. "The last century with its world wars must become an exception in German-Russian coexistence that has spanned centuries and enriched both sides." One should take issue with Maximychev's view of Russian-European relations as essentially amounting to Russia's relations with Germany. But he is definitely right that Russia and Germany need to work hard to rebuild confidence. A lot has been said and written about confidence recently, but there is one very important point that sometimes is overlooked: a network of institutions and a great deal of intellectual input are needed to maintain confidence.

Any system of international relations works if its participants understand one another's concerns and interests, and tireless work by scholarly communities is one of the conditions for such understanding. Maximychev's book is a significant example of such work.

The six chapters of Maximychev's book prove conclusively that one can understand Russia. Moreover, Maximychev encourages his readers to constantly seek to understand Russia better and to try to rediscover it over and over again. It also becomes obvious to the reader that Russians, people who can solve some of the most complex problems, have every reason to be proud of their country, whereas a sense of national pride and mutual respect combine to make up a sound basis for confidence and cooperation.

RELIGIOUS RADICALISM AS A TREND

Author: Ye. Osipov

senior research associate, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Candidate of Science (History); eaossipov@gmail.com

IN RECENT YEARS, much has been said about radicalism and its varied offshoots. True, the number of terrorist acts climbs up, the popularity of extreme right political forces grows, and the wave of left radical and anti-globalist movements, migration crises

and international tension is rising. This is how everyday realities look in many countries of the world.

France is one of the European countries in which radical trends are only too obvious. At the 2017 presidential election, Marine Le Pen and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, two radical politicians who represented anti-establishment political movements, reaped 41% and 51% respectively of the votes cast by young voters aged between 18 and 24. On the whole, the Fifth Republic is getting accustomed to violence against the law and order structures, destruction of material assets during rallies, protest acts that keep lyceums and universities blocked for a long time, and rejection of republican values that looked unshakable not long ago. Today, when fifty years separate us from the May 1968 events, we can talk about "banalization of protests" not only among the groups on the margins of society but also among its law-abiding part.

Late in 2015, after a series of terrorist acts in France a group of scientists, mostly sociologists of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) launched a large-scale research project to identify the factors responsible for the spread of radical ideas among the younger generation. In April 2018, the results were published in a monograph *The Temptation of Radicalism* one of the hits on the French book market.

The project is a unique one: for the first time, academic science turned its attention to the younger generation rather than to terrorist acts and those who commit them; it has become interested in the process of radicalization and the factors that plant the ideas of radicalism in the minds of high school students.

A vast, and most interesting, part of the book that deals with religious radicalism, one of the main objects of attention of the public and the media, offers two important conclusions that devalue the old and generally accepted opinions.

Sociologists have detected two component parts or two stages in religious radicalism: the "ideological" as devotion to the fundamentalist religious trends and "practical," the adepts of which are more than just religious fanatics - they justify violence for religious reasons.

The authors of the book under review who obviously prefer the term "religious absolutism" to "religious fundamentalism" have repeatedly pointed out that it is present in all world religions; the poll, however, revealed that religious absolutism was more typical of Muslim high school students.

Religion, or to be more exact, extreme Islamist trends combined with the male gender is the main factor of religious radicalization of the French youth.

This sociological study has demonstrated that the French national and confessional politics that for many years relied on the thesis that radicalization among the younger generation was caused by social and economic factors should be revised. This book made a great contribution to the broad and far from simple discussion of the place and role of Islam in French society, into which not only extreme right political movement are involved. In his speech of May 22, 2018, President of France "poured cold water" on the plan to shake up the banlieues devised by Jean-Louis Borloo. The president pointed out that more money poured into sensitive zones would not solve the main problem of radicalization.

THE SLOVAK STATE THROUGH RUSSIAN EYES

Author: Ján Čarnogurský

Slovak politician, prime minister of Slovakia in 1991-1992

RELATIONS between the Soviet Union and the Slovak State during World War II are the subject matter of a book published in Moscow in 2017 and entitled *The USSR and Slovakia, 1939-1945: War Policy Aspects*. The book was also appeared online on postoj.sk on September 6, 2017. Published by the Institute of Slavic Studies in Moscow, it was written by Valentina Maryina, a research associate at the institute. By reading it, one gets better understanding of the functioning of the Slovak State that existed during World War II.

Maryina used Slovak scholarly literature, Slovak archives, and Russian diplomatic and military archives. The Slovak State maintained diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union until the latter was attacked by Germany in June 1941. In describing that period, Maryina made use of reports sent by Soviet diplomat Georgy Pushkin from Bratislava to Moscow. Speaking about wartime events, she cites minutes of diplomatic negotiations, mainly talks between the Czechoslovak government in exile in London and the Soviet leadership, and correspondence that the Soviet command had with partisans in Slovakia, with émigré Slovak communist functionaries in Moscow, and with leaders of the Slovak uprising. The book is based on extensive research, and all the conclusions are corroborated by information from credible sources.

Maryina cites a document from Russian Foreign Ministry archives with what appear to be conclusions based on negotiations between Pushkin and Gustáv Husák. The document describes President Tiso as a gifted tactician who has been able to strengthen his position in a moderate government and oust pro-German radicals.

Slovak politicians always looked to the Soviet Union for defense against the Hungarians. Pushkin wrote in his journal that Foreign Minister Ďurčanský asked him

when the Soviets would occupy Subcarpathian Ruthenia (which at that time belonged to the Hungarians) because Slovakia wanted a common border with the Soviet Union.

The readers of *The USSR and Slovakia, 1939-1945* will become familiar with the subsequent history of Czechoslovakia and will be able to draw their own conclusions as to whether historical forecasts that are made in the book have materialized.