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On Victory Day

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The month of May and its fireworks are now behind us. The country and the world celebrated Victory Day, which is a holiday of war veterans, home front workers, and all the people of Russia and other victorious nations.

There's another date ahead – June 22, the day of memory and grief for those who died during the Great Patriotic War. We will be remembering those who fell in battle, were tortured to death in captivity and concentration camps, or died of hunger and the toils of war.

What does May 9 mean for the peoples who were on the verge of annihilation, and why do some people loathe this holiday today? As someone who is part of the first post-war generation and who grew up on the stories told by war veterans and family tales about the war, I believe the answers to these questions are obvious. The peoples of the Soviet Union and other countries became the object of the inhuman ideology of Nazism, and then the victim of aggression on behalf of the most powerful, organized and motivated war machine of that time. At the cost of terrible sacrifices, the Soviet Union made a decisive contribution to defeating Nazi Germany and, jointly with the allies, liberated Europe from the fascist plague. The victory laid the foundation for the post-war world order based on collective security and interstate cooperation and paved the way to creating the UN. These are the facts.

Unfortunately, however, the memory of Victory is not sacred to all around the world. It is regrettable that there are individuals in Russia who picked up the myths spread by those who want to bury this memory, and who believe the time has come to stop solemn celebrations of Victory Day. The higher the anniversary numbers become, the more we come face to face with the desire to forget.

Bitter as it is to witness, we see the attempts to discredit the heroes, to artificially generate doubts about the correctness of the path our ancestors followed. Both abroad and in our country, we hear that public consciousness in Russia is being militarized and holding Victory Day parades and processions is nothing other than imposing bellicose and militaristic sentiment at the state level. By doing so, Russia is allegedly rejecting humanism and the values of the “civilized” world.

Notorious for its political correctness, Europe is trying to smooth out “sharp historical edges” and to substitute military honors for winners with “neutral” reconciliation events. No doubt, we must look forward, but we must not forget the lessons of history either.

Today, distorting the past, Western politicians and propagandists want to make the public doubt the fair nature of the world order that was approved in the Un Charter following World War II. They adopted a policy seeking to undermine the existing international legal system and to replace it with a certain “rule-based order.” They want to create this order based on the principle of “he who is stronger is right” and according to the “law of the jungle.”

Just as enthusiastically as the Europeans, the Americans are creating an image of “militaristic Russia.” however, most of their own history is a sequence of endless wars of conquest.

Not a single election campaign in the United States is complete without the candidates trying on a toga of a commander-in-chief in action. The ability to resort to the use of force for any reason is proof of an American politician’s prowess.

This year, as we took part in Victory Day celebrations, we once again told everyone willing to listen: “yes, just like our ancestors we are ready to decisively repel any aggressor. But Russians do not want war, and do not want to go through horror and suffering again.” The historical mission of our nation is to guard peace. The peace we are trying to preserve.

Russia in the Middle East and the Palestinian Problem

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The Palestinian Problem is one of the worst headaches of the middle east and one of the greatest geopolitical challenges.

The Soviet Union/Russia, which was present when it originated, was one of the countries that tried to resolve problems related, among other things, to Israeli and Palestinian statehood and the fact that Palestine is the cradle of three world religions – Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

At all stages of Russian history, the middle east occupied an important place in the foreign policy of Russia. Its interest dates to 988, when Russia adopted Christianity; in the 11th-16th centuries, it was interested in Palestine as the holy Land where Christianity had appeared.

In the 17th-18th centuries, Russia had no choice but to gain a foothold on the Black Sea coast and liberate Crimea, the place used by the Crimean khans, vassals of the ottoman empire, to plunder Russian possessions. Russia needed an access to the Azov, Caspian and Black seas and, later, to the Mediterranean controlled by the ottoman empire.

It was under Catherine II (1762-1796) that Russia was especially successful in the pursuance of these aims.

In the first half of the 19th century, the so-called eastern Question, a product of the crisis of the ottoman empire and of rivalry between the main European powers – Britain, France and Austria – for the influence in eastern Mediterranean, that nominally belonged to Turkey, developed into one of the key issues of the international political agenda. Russia confirmed its great power status during the reign of Catherine II and acquired, under the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, the right to patronize all orthodox Christians living in the ottoman empire.

Between the October Revolution of 1917 and the end of World War II, the middle east did not figure prominently in Soviet foreign policies. The Soviet Union acquired a great role to play in mid-eastern polices in the latter half of the 1940s when the Palestinian Question was gradually coming to the fore.

There were plans to divide Palestine into provinces ruled by the central government headed by a supreme commissar. In February 1947, there appeared the Bevin Plan (named after the British foreign Secretary) that envisaged a five-year period of transfer under British control to independent united Palestine concluded by elections to the assembly with an Arabic majority entrusted with the right to settle the question of an independent state. however, this plan was rejected by the Arab higher Committee and the Jewish agency.

In February 1947, in an effort to disentangle itself from the crisis, the British government transferred the Palestinian Question to the Un. The Soviet Union, relying on the Resolution of the Un General assembly of November 29, 1947, was one of the initiators of setting up a Palestinian and an Israeli state as a way out of the dead end.

Later, significant political changes became obvious in the middle east and in the geopolitical situation as a whole. In 1950-1960s, there appeared a bloc of socialist states led by the Soviet Union, a successful rival of the Western bloc led by the United States. Despite the Cold War between them, the blocs achieved military parity.

In The 2010s, the middle east became a scene of massive social protests that came down to history as the Arab Spring. Ruling regimes in some Arab countries were removed; political Islam (including its most radical forms) rose high on the wave of protests; armed conflicts flared up and produced an avalanche of refugees. Social protests as the first stage of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Bahrain were caused by domestic factors: economic crisis, corruption, arbitrariness and nepotism of people in power who remained there too long, and an absence of real democratic freedoms behind the so-called façade democracy.

It should be said that on the eve of the conflict the social-economic situation in Syria was much better than in Tunisia and Egypt; it could not, therefore, stir up a vast internal conflict and armed opposition.

Turkey has its own interests in Syria: the Turkish leaders who pose themselves as successors of the ottoman empire are pursuing the policy of neo-ottomanism and try by all means to spread Turkish influence to all regions that formerly were parts of the ottoman empire. Turkey claims leadership of the Muslim Sunni world (of which Syria was part) that belonged to the ottoman empire for 400 years (from the 16th to the early 20th century). This explains the expansionist Syria-related trends in Turkey's foreign policy.

In this context, the role of Russia in the struggle against radical Islamism and in settling the Syrian crisis looks especially important. The friendly relations between Syria and Russia and their economic,

military, political, and cultural cooperation are part of their histories. Today, it is the only Russia's real ally in the middle east.

The Arab Spring and the conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen split the Arab-Muslim world and, to some extent, pushed the Palestinian problem to the back burner. Israel is exploiting this to perpetuate, to a certain extent, the status quo; it went as far as declaring Jerusalem capital of Israel; the United States recognized it and moved its embassy there. The Palestinian problem should be resolved on the basis of UN documents; it is a must that fits the interests of the Palestinians and the security interests of Israel. Today, when the United States can no longer be viewed as an objective mediator, since it acts on the side of Israel, Russia is gaining more and more influence in the middle east; its role in the fair settlement of the Palestinian problem has considerably increased and continues to do so.

The Blue Economy and the EU

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The United Nations General assembly Resolution "Transforming our World: The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development," adopted on September 25, 2015, defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets. Achieving those objectives, which will be pursued by "all countries and interested stakeholders," should promote human prosperity and at the same time "secure the planet" [1]. A special target area, SDG 14, is devoted to the world's oceans and contains the phrase: "Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development."

In 2010, it is estimated that the size of the ocean economy [4] reached \$1.5 trillion, or about 2.5% of global gross value added. The number of full-time jobs in the maritime industry totaled about 31 million in 2010. Continued growth could lead to a doubling of the size of the global ocean economy by 2030, up to \$3 trillion, and the number of full-time workers could increase to almost 40 million.

Modern attitudes to using ocean resources are based on the concept of the blue economy – the marine and coastal equivalent of the green economy.

The term "blue economy" has varying interpretations based on how various actors define it, but it essentially refers to specific approaches to managing maritime activities.

Although the concept does not have commonly accepted concrete provisions, it is nevertheless used in various fields. The resolve of a considerable part of the international community to transition to the blue economy in conjunction with relevant actions is bringing about a transformation in the management of marine resources and spaces – for example, in terms of establishing international ocean governance bodies.

In 2015, the WWF analyzed the raw economic value of the ocean and concluded that in terms of volume, it could represent the world's seventh largest economy. The organization presented a new economic term for assessing the maritime (ocean) economy that is equivalent to gross domestic product: gross marine product (GMP). The new term is not defined and is not widely used, but in view of

the above-mentioned developments, it could become a new macroeconomic indicator reflecting the market value of all goods and services produced using oceanic resources.

It should be noted that the main driver of these global trends in the practical implementation of the blue economy concept is the European Union, which actively supports the development of the concept not only in the EU but all over the world.

The EU blue economy is gradually expanding beyond the traditional framework of the common understanding of maritime activity and acquiring the contours of a global economic project. Such a conclusion can be drawn from its definition, which the European Commission presented in 2018 in the first topical report.

The European Union considers all sectoral and cross-sectoral economic activities related to the oceans, seas and coasts, including those in the EU's outermost regions [5] and landlocked countries, to be part of the blue economy. It encompasses maritime economic activities that use marine-based resources in waters and coastal areas (fisheries, aquaculture, marine transport, etc.).

The data presented in the 2018 report do not reflect the full volume of the EU blue economy and are approximate. As such, they represent a summary result of the most developed sectors of the EU's maritime economic activity.

At present, practical implementation of the blue economy concept is proceeding along the lines of valuing the goods and services produced using the oceans; and determining and itemizing the overall value contributed by various maritime economic sectors, as well as the value of resources that can be used to ensure sustainable development. Once that process is complete, the EU expects to get an idea of the actual economic contribution of maritime economic activity to the EU economy, as well as to objectively assess the volume and value of its marine natural resources.

Thus, the transition to the blue economy will result in an "inventory" of marine natural resources and facilitate the establishment of international oceanic governance bodies, as evidenced by the initiative of the World Wildlife fund to create the so-called Blue alliance.

Strategies for the International Adaptation of Small Countries: Satellitism vs. Finlandization

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After the bipolar model ended in the 1990s, global politics unequivocally entered an era of chronic instability and reformatting. "Chaos threatens side by side with unprecedented interdependence," said U.S. foreign policy guru Henry Kissinger. In this context, the emergence of new global "power centers," regional powers with their conflicting and intersecting spheres of interest, supposes that the mass of small countries* will use more diverse action strategies and various forms and methods of adapting to the variable external environment beyond the binary framework of the "two traditional realistic types of

behavior: balancing and bandwagoning.”

Small states with a limited raw materials base, a one-sided economic structure, a narrow foreign trade potential, and small size in principle seemingly cannot be viable, self-sufficient or successful. They should objectively be part of another powerful state or integration association.

Unlike the bipolarity of the Cold War period or the unipolarity of the 1990s and early 2000s, the current multipolarity (or polycentricity) emerging under the formational unity of primary actors likely implies more variable and dynamic international adaptation models.

Small countries traditionally try to maneuver between superpowers, but the space for maneuver sometimes diminishes rapidly, especially during periods of international political tension or during conflicts or wars. At times, interstate competition becomes less acute and intense, while all other geopolitical parameters remain roughly the same or equal. Hence there is a certain “mutual politeness” of the great powers concerning spheres of influence or each other’s immediate surrounding areas.

The U.S. under Trump chose to take a tough approach to its own geopolitical sphere, most obviously in relation to neighboring Mexico. The American president considers the north Atlantic Treaty to be already “obsolete,” with few allies who are paying “what they’re supposed to.”⁶ In other words, alliance member countries must either pay their bills for security in NATO at the established level of 2% of gross domestic product (and in the future, 4%) or pursue more friendly relations with Moscow and reach a special agreement with it.

Finlandization is not, of course, the only potential option for a small state to make changes vis-à-vis a great power. But all small countries face the challenge of adapting further when superpowers must at times ease their mutual relations, defuse tensions or even partner with each other. In these circumstances, small countries become superfluous or even redundant in their intermediary activities.

It is generally accepted that “Finlandization” is a rather fragile international-political construction, since, according to the strategy’s own logic, the concessions that are made become self-reinforcing. Internal or external events could “rock the boat,” and this could lead to overt political or even military intervention by a great power.

In the form of eventual reflection, we believe, though it might seem strange to some, that a possible object of hypothetical Finlandization in Europe could be the three Baltic NIS countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

While unambiguously accepting the insufficiency of their forces and absence of a suitable remote ally, small states must constantly ask themselves: Is the neighboring great power oriented on the status quo or is it hoping for its fatal destabilization?

It is paramount that a general change in the political climate leads to an improved political atmosphere between a great power and a junior partner. The great power needs to use Finlandization to try to raise the level of its concessions by declaring its future steps in advance.

Small countries with limited material and political resources tend to be more inclined to build cooperative relationships with a powerful neighbor, since Finlandization provides great material advantages and political benefits. Today, there are many weak states that are in the same position Finland was during the Cold War. We can provisionally put the five Central Asian republics in this category with respect to Russia. They have the advantage that their geostrategic problems are dealt with in large multilateral formats, not just bilateral ones. In a multipolar world where the alternative to stability is sometimes only chaos, violence or war, Finlandization as an effective survival strategy for small countries may be at times the best historical choice, despite its unsavory reputation in Western public opinion and its mediocre assessment by some specialists, experts and political scientists.

BRICS and UNIDO: **Points of Convergence**

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The BRICS countries attach great importance to cooperation with UNIDO (170 member states) as a specialized agency in the United Nations system that has great potential for expanding and deepening cooperation among the five states in providing technical assistance in promoting advanced industrial technologies and practices, as well as implementing projects to promote and accelerate international development with the participation of other developing countries.

Russia, whose annual assessed contribution is about 3.6 million euros, or 5.15% of UNIDO's regular budget, is focused on using the organization's capacity to implement international development assistance projects. Russia's \$2.6 million annual voluntary contribution to UNIDO's industrial development fund (which it has been paying since 2009) has helped promote and support large-scale project-related activities. Such funding levels make it possible to develop and implement various UNIDO projects (including large-scale ones) in member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union and the CIS, making a significant contribution to industrial development and integration efforts.

As a result of Western sanctions, a very important component of UNIDO's cooperation with Russia involving GEF funds is winding down. For instance, this year UNIDO is completing the last two major GEF projects in Russia with a total budget of \$9.95 million.

China, whose annual assessed contribution of about \$9.2 million accounts for 13.2% of UNIDO's regular budget, is a major recipient of technical assistance through this organization and a key donor and provider of extrabudgetary financial resources to ensure its project activities in other developing countries.

Successful bilateral cooperation between the BRICS countries and UNIDO creates objective prerequisites for deepening and expanding industrial development cooperation within BRICS, as well as for projects in the "BRICS plus" format.

Russia was the first BRICS country to provide financing for the development and implementation of UNIDO projects aimed at increasing the practical payoff from cooperation within the framework of the group of five through this organization.

Another important achievement of the UNIDO project on technology exchange between Russia and Brazil was the creation of the first Internet portal for technology exchange between the BRICS countries, as well as the selection of new potential partners for expanding technological exchanges.

Experience accumulated in technology exchanges and e-commerce, among other areas, could help the BRICS countries use UNIDO's potential more efficiently and effectively. This also applies to new projects, taking into consideration one Russian company's initiative to establish and maintain an online database on technology exchanges among the BRICS countries with UNIDO's assistance.

UNIDO could become an effective tool for the BRICS countries in establishing the PartnIR. This role would be fully within the organization's mandate.

It is also important that the organization has the essential expertise on the new industrial revolution, as well as the relevant practical experience.

In closing, it should be said that the BRICS countries have broad opportunities for enhancing the practical impact of their cooperation with UNIDO in the context of their concerted efforts to achieve the

Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, not only through bilateral cooperation with the organization. Significant results could also be achieved by increasing and expanding support for multilateral initiatives at UNIDO in the BRICS and “BRICS plus” format, as well as by using its potential to implement wide-ranging integration plans in the context of PartnIR cooperation.

The Afghan Peace Process: **Preliminary Results and Assessments**

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Late in 2018 and early in 2019, Moscow hosted two very important events related to peace settlement of the afghan conflict which had been going on for over 30 years.

It was back in 2006 that the need for peace talks with the armed opposition in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRA) became obvious. IRA President Hamid Karzai responded to the need with creating the afghan Peace Commission headed by Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, an influential politician and former president. In may 2010, Karzai convened Loya Jirga (traditional grand council of elders) unofficially known as Peace Jirga. The consultative Loya Jirga that attracted 1600 delegates from all provinces recommended that a high Peace Council (HPC) should be set up to consolidate peace process, offered a highly specific reconciliation plan and outlined its organizational structure.

It was a bigger and much more important structure than the Peace Commission and spoke volumes about the political and state importance of reconciliation with the armed opposition.

On September 29, 2016, President Ghani signed a peace agreement, a product of protracted negotiations, with the leader of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who for more than 30 years had sided with the antigovernment armed forces. President Ghani spoke of the agreement as an “event of historic importance”.

Three-day ceasefire between the Taliban and the afghan security forces can be described as another achievement of the Kabul peace process.

The international community, in particular, the leaders of the UN and NATO, Russia, the United States and some other countries who paid a lot of attention to this experience of “real reconciliation,” hailed Kabul’s initiative. The Taliban, however, declined President Ghani’s invitation to prolong the ceasefire yet these three days in June 2018 deserve special mention: the fact that Taliban fighters strictly obeyed the order of their leaders refuted the idea that the group was torn apart by inner disagreements.

Starting with 2016, external mediators who sought practical steps toward the peace process in Afghanistan and consolidation of their political and diplomatic image became even more active. A four-sided coordination group of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and the U.S. became involved in the process against the background of decreasing security and stronger positions of the Taliban.

In 2017, in Moscow after six days of consultations, representatives of Russia, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Iran, and India agreed to create the Moscow format of consultations.

In June 2017, two months after the first meeting of the Moscow format, the Afghan government started its own format of reconciliation into which external players were also involved.

The United States, Great Britain, Pakistan, the UN, and NATO supported the new peace offer the Afghan officials made at the Kabul Conference.

Starting with 2001, American policy on Afghanistan was vague enough. Donald Trump made the vagueness of Washington's strategy much more obvious, especially in the Afghan peace process.

The war in Afghanistan is America's longest and most expensive overseas military intervention; it is of a huge importance for its domestic policies. There is no doubt that the Afghan campaign will figure prominently in the coming presidential elections in the United States. It is highly important, therefore, for Trump to demonstrate convincing progress in his Afghan policy to earn appreciation of his American voters before the presidential campaign is unfolded.

It should be said that at all sorts of international and regional forums Afghan officials deemed it necessary to stress that the leading role of the Afghans in this process was one of the main principles of the legitimacy of peace talks.

According to the media, by April 1, 2019, special representative of the U.S. Khalilzad and representatives of the Taliban completed five rounds of talks. According to the Taliban, the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of Afghanistan was one of the main conditions. The Taliban hinted that it was ready to discuss a gradual process. After the fifth round, Khalilzad said that the sides had reached an agreement on a draft withdrawal decision and the guarantees of the Taliban that it would discontinue its contacts with all terrorist groups.

Irrespective of the practical results of the current peace process in Afghanistan, the road to real peace in the IRA will be long. So far it is hard to say what it will bring to the people of Afghanistan and the Taliban. Today, the Taliban, which has strengthened its international position, is the main beneficiary of the peace process. It is especially obvious against the background of the much weaker positions of the government of Afghanistan.

Shaping the Image of China as a Responsible Global Power.

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A country's image in the minds of those who live inside and outside it depends on the logic and goals of its development. In the process of construction, its elements might differ by time and resources needed to create and consolidate them. The result, likewise, may be different where the length of time needed to produce the desired effect and the effect itself are concerned. An image of a country responsible for the development of mankind and its security is time- and resource-consuming to the greatest extent while inevitable contradictions between global responsibility and national interests make it idealistic

and unachievable. many countries, however, claim the status of responsible – either regional or global – powers depending on their scope and development goals.

At first, the Chinese expert community was apprehensive and even fearful of the idea of China as one of the responsible world powers. The West, on its side, was actively trying this role on China and even imposing it. This stirred up mistrust. It was repeated, among other things, that the role of globally responsible power does not fit China's interests; that Beijing is being drawn, contrary to its will, into funding the international system on a grand scale. It should be said that Western politicians tried to persuade China to become a more active sponsor.

China, which follows its own and relatively independent road of development, has its own "adjusted" interpretations of the classical theories of international relations. Such is the Chinese concept of "comprehensive national power" (zonghe guoli); there are several variants of its division into components. The most traditionalist of it consists of four categories: basic power (population, resources, national cohesion); economic power (industry, agriculture, finances and commerce, science and technology), national defense power (military might, nuclear weapons, technologies), and diplomatic power (foreign policy, approaches to international affairs, involvement in aid and assistance programs, and relief operations).

Gradually China was acquiring a system of partner relationships, first with neighbors and later across the world, based on the rejection of the use of force in conflict settlement and the threat of use of force in bilateral relations. Beijing preferred dialogues and compromises, mutually acceptable settlements of disputes and mutually profitable cooperation.

In the latter half of the 2000s, expert community in China started talking about shifting accents in Beijing's foreign policy from the traditional orientation at developing countries toward a fairly small group of countries that claimed a special role in the world.

China is actively involved in shaping and developing regional economic cooperation and regional political interaction institutionalized by its involvement in ASEAN Plus one, ASEAN Plus Three (China, Republic of Korea, Japan), the Shanghai Cooperation organization, the east Asian Center of World economy (China, Republic of Korea, Japan), and BRICS. The SCO that developed into an important mechanism of regional security with the name of a Chinese city in its title is an example of a successful image component.

In the late 2000s, the world expert community started talking of Chinese nationalism as a threat to international and regional security. In July 2009, speaking at the 11th ambassadorial Conference timed to the jubilee of the PRC, Chairman hu Jintao pointed out that Chinese diplomacy should rely on the ideas of peace, development and cooperation; this was intended as an official confirmation that China was not moving toward radical nationalism.

Foreign and Russian experts have traced down the interdependence between China's involvement in peacekeeping operations and the Chinese leaders' determination to acquire the international status of responsible power.

On the road toward an image of a responsible state, China is confronted with the Western interpretation of responsibility, the product of the post-Cold War years, in which "non-democratic states" do not fit the norms defined by the "democratic core." accusations of revisionism, violations of

human rights inside the country, refusal to democratize the domestic political process and of building up military might are heaped on China accompanied by talks about the “Chinese threat.”

The world of international relations, as we know it today, can be presented as a sum-total of three dimensions: the world of politics, the world of economics and the world of social relationships. China has become one of the world’s biggest economies; throughout several decades, it has been perfecting its experience of international relations. Its internal policy is stable; its foreign policy has gained recognition and respect.

The Crisis in Venezuela and Its Prehistory

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The CRISIS in Venezuela is difficult to understand outside the context of turbulent changes in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

Around the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the United States began to lose its positions in LAC. The United States retains considerable political clout in LAC and still plays the key role in its economy, remaining its main source of financing and the chief market for its goods, mainly commodities and food, but the Americans have European Union countries and China snapping at their heels, and, moreover, Russia has been winning back political ground that it lost in the region.

When Donald Trump became president, his “America first” slogan became embodied in a present-day edition of the Monroe Doctrine that means a plan to take full control of the Caribbean. It became obvious quite soon that the Trump team was planning to sort out the United States’ backyard.

The main target of Trump’s attacks in LAC is its supposed left radical flank. his chief adversary is Venezuela, a country that has joined Cuba in spearheading left-wing trends in the continent. It apparently won’t be long before the United States gets around to Cuba and Nicaragua.

Former Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez tried to establish a new model of government in his country based on Bolivarianism, an ideology named after Simón Bolívar, the 19th-century fighter for Latin America’s independence from Spanish rule.

Social programs became one of the main causes of the Venezuelan crisis. numerous poor Venezuelans were getting used to social security benefits and losing stimuli to work. on the other hand, social programs, including free education and healthcare, needed large state expenditure while the economy was suffering major losses because of plummeting global prices for commodities, mainly hydrocarbons.

U.S.-Venezuelan relations have soured further during the presidency of Trump with the United States renewing sanctions against maduro’s “authoritarian regime” and leveling new accusations at it, including allegations of links with drug traffickers and human rights violations.

The main point in Russia's position is that Venezuela must not become one more instance of removal of an inconvenient government by a foreign government. Russia has to take notice of risks it may face if it actively defends Venezuela's current legitimate regime, but it also needs to be aware of reputational damage if it departs from its commitments as an ally.

What will happen in Venezuela is difficult to foresee. The United States' first blitzkrieg against Venezuela didn't work. However, it's obvious that the Trump administration won't give up efforts to overthrow the Maduro regime, and that, to achieve this, it will employ the entire typical mechanism of pressure – political, economic, primarily financial, and cyber means. One can't rule out sabotage either.

In any case, attempts at a political settlement appear more likely than an armed invasion. Maduro in principle agrees to a political process and wouldn't object to new parliamentary elections although he does reject the idea of a new presidential election, which he might lose.

Whatever is going to happen, the Venezuelan crisis is already having reverberations that go far beyond the boundaries of Latin America and has assumed a geopolitical dimension.

How Business Became a Hostage to Geopolitics

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The Russian foreign ministry increasingly sees the current state of international relations as a dangerous no-rules game. One comes to this conclusion when one sees the established world order falling apart and international treaties that have done such a good job to so many countries, guaranteeing global security and stability for many decades, being called into question or just ignored.

Today's world is a place where political interests closely intertwine with business interests. International relations have come to amount to competition among countries in which pragmatism pushes ideological considerations into the background. This trend has been particularly obvious after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the onset of the liberal world order.

The world has moved into an era when governments throw aside all isms and put their entire power and influence at the service of their country's business community. This has triggered intense geopolitical rivalries among great powers with consequences that have come unexpected to champions of liberalism and has plunged globalization into a protracted crisis.

For political simpletons, globalization was portrayed as a blessing for everyone. However, the United States planned to use globalization as a means of advancing its own interests, and least of all did it want a change to the hierarchical world order based on the outcome of the Cold War, and least of all did it want to relinquish its status as the world's only superpower.

Consequently, what the United States got wasn't what it had expected – it was caught in a trap it had laid. It had assumed that the developed part of the world, the “golden billion,” would retain its role as the financial, economic, and technological center, naturally under American organizational supremacy and control, and pass over “yesterday's” functions – manufacturing and other – to the rest via an integration and interdependence system that would perpetuate global political and economic inequality. But this is not what has happened.

The collapse of a world order has always involved painful processes in international relations, changes of leaders and parliaments, and the agonizing birth of new rules of international behavior. and it is business that has always had the worst time. for companies that didn't directly participate in hazardous governmental projects and managed to avoid bankruptcy, those have been times of serious losses and difficult adaptation to new realities.

In the past, such periods have usually involved economic antagonisms that developed into trade wars and military conflicts some of which evolved into world wars. It's only rather simple-minded people who believe claims by some fashionable authors that World War I was an accidental result of activities by some political “sleepwalkers” and not a clash of the economic interests of European great powers, primarily Britain and Germany, and business elites that were behind those interests.

After decades of ideological confrontation, the world has clearly entered a new era, a period of redistribution of roles among principal power centers, primarily the United States, China, Russia, and the EU. apparently, the nuclear arsenals of key global powers remain the only brake on their increasingly intense rivalries and mainly limit them to economic competition.

Today's world political scene is marked by intertwining geopolitics and geo-economics that underlie bitter global antagonisms. any dispute or conflict, no matter which region is its site, is, at the end of the day, a struggle for resources, especially energy, a clash of the interests of large corporations and governments backing them. Recent developments in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Venezuela, and other hot spots are good examples. after many years of relative stability, those countries were rocked by bitter domestic conflicts with the United States and its main NATO allies interfering in them.

Trump bases his behavior on the tough business logic of everyone taking care of themselves, although this runs against the United States' post-World War II strategy of unifying the Western world under its leadership and setting up political and military alliances, primarily NATO, although the latter's future looks uncertain, to say the least, now that Trump has accused its European members of parasitism.

focusing on military operations to “liberalize” and “democratize” the world, the United States has been finding it harder to win economic competition both with its allies and partners and with its principal adversaries. American companies, primarily transnational military-industrial, energy and telecommunications corporations that behave as masters and lawgivers throughout the world and therefore are geopolitical actors, felt threatened in this competition.

The declared reason for the current large-scale sanctions against Russia was the reinclusion of Crimea in Russia. however, it was long before that when the West began to consider the use of sanctions as a long-term strategy to achieve a “change of regime” in Russia and force the country to abandon an independent foreign policy if it contradicted Western interests.

Only a naïve politician may expect a great power to change its behavior under that external economic pressure rather than looking for an antidote. Several years after the West launched its war of sanctions against Russia, some Western analysts and politicians admit this.

Women of the World: The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Implementing Russian Foreign Policy

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The Russian Federation has always stood for a polycentric world order and for equal and indivisible security with unconditional respect for the sovereignty of nations and their right to choose their own path of development.

As Russian President Vladimir Putin noted at a plenary session of the Second Eurasian Women's forum (EWF), there are many historical examples of women assuming responsibility for key decisions that have shaped the destiny of entire states and nations. Indeed, Russia's breakthrough development cannot be achieved without full use of the powerful creative potential of Russian women in implementing national projects designed to improve the living standards and quality of life of our citizens and to make life in the country more comfortable.

Women and girls make up half of the world's population, but humanity still has a long way to go before achieving full equality or men and women in terms of rights and opportunities. There are still many problems in the world related to inequality, including gender inequality. Statistics show that 70% of all people living in poverty are women. Women remain disadvantaged in access to economic resources: even though 400 million women work in agriculture and produce most of the food, they own less than 20% of land in the world.

Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women is of great importance, including for the implementation of the Un 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development. equality has its own place among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals listed in the 2030 agenda: Goal 5 is to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

Russia is among the world's leaders in the number of women executives: 47% of top management positions in our country are filled by women, with a 16% increase in the last few years, while the number of women in public service at all levels of government has reached 72%. Today, almost 33% of all business owners in Russia are women, and this is one of the highest figures in the world.

The Second EWF, held in St. Petersburg on September 19-21, 2018, not only confirmed the prestige of this major international women's platform for discussion of topical issues, but also continued the tradition of promoting women's projects in every way.

It is important to note that the Eurasian Women's forum is not just a one-off event held every three years, but an ongoing process that primarily involves systematic work to resolve problems related to gender equality in the country and Russia's positioning in the world.

Preparations for the third forum are already underway, and the main task now is to use this systematic work to support women in Russia, develop women's NGOs, and foster female entrepreneurship. For these purposes, the federation Council has established a standing expert advisory body, the Council of the Eurasian Women's forum, which has already shown itself as a unique presentation platform for women's projects both in Russia and at the international level.

Mother Teresa, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, once said: "every work done with love and with an open heart always brings a person closer to God." The Russian federation is willing to freely exchange its solutions in the field of equality, to use the effective experience of other countries, and to work together to create the best opportunities for women's self-realization in order to build a decent future for our children and to improve the world around us. I am convinced that we should do our utmost to eliminate many of the existing stereotypes and career constraints for women, improve access to education for girls, and create an enabling environment for female employees and entrepreneurs so as to help them feel more confident and independent.

France: Attempts at Interculturalism

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According to the latest statistical data, in 2017, France welcomed 370,000 migrants [15], the biggest number in its history; about half of them were not born in Europe.

For several decades now, France has been struggling with the problems of social and cultural variety created by immigration.

The law supports the trend of the last few years, viz. selective immigration to attract professionals. From 2016 onwards, residence permit under the Talent Passport was extended to four years while the new variant of the law specifically extended the right to the Talent Passport to employees of innovative companies.

The new law was issued to fight illegal immigration, attract talents and shorten the detention procedure. President Macron supported by 90% of expats during his election campaign because of his slogan "migration is a chance for France" said recently that France could not receive all poor people.

It seems that starting with the mid-2000s the European Union has been living under a neon "Integration" sign. For over a decade now, the EU has been working on the rules of integration of third-country nationals, the basic principles of which were formulated in 2004 in The Hague Program.

Intercultural approach presupposes that to be effectively involved in a dialogue with different cultures Europeans should acquire adequate competences, in particular, “open-mindedness, empathy, cognitive flexibility, communicative awareness, the ability to adapt one’s behavior to new cultural contexts, and linguistic skills” [21, p. 26]. The White Book points out that intercultural “competences necessary for intercultural dialogue are not automatically acquired: they need to be learned, practiced and maintained throughout life” and that “civil-society organizations, religious communities, the media” play “a crucial role in the pursuit of the aims and core values.”

The European Union pours a lot of money into intercultural variety: in 2017-2018, it funded 12 integration projects within the Creative Europe project with the total budget of nearly €1.5 billion.

In France, social and economic integration of migrants is frequently impeded by administrative and legal barriers and by the social security system, the complexity of which puzzles not only foreigners but also its employees whose duty is to help them. In many cases, newcomers must use legal expert assessment or to go to court to defend their rights. Renewal of residence permit or seeking additional medical aid requires support or even legal instruments. In a broad sense, many migrants of the first or even second generation perceive access to the organizations of common law, to dwelling and employment as “jumping hurdles” [18, p. 133].

Emmanuel Macron tried his hand at managing cultural variety at the municipal level. It was on his instruction that former minister of Urban Politics Jean-Louis Borloo prepared a report “Live Together, Live in a Big Way for national Reconciliation” with a lot of depressing statistics.

for some reason, President macron rejected Barloo’s plan. Instead, he set up a Presidential Council of Cities and launched a new program of “mobilization collective” to let all and everyone “obtain his/her dignity in all corners of the Republic”.

On the one hand, French are not ready to “start loving migrants as their neighbors”; this was amply confirmed by nationwide condemnation of the draft “La grand nation: pour une société inclusive” prepared by President Olland’s adviser Thierry Tuot who suggested, among other things, that all illegal migrants should be legalized, the procedure of citizenship simplified and public prayers permitted [23]. This proved to be too revolutionary. On the other hand, statistics of international marriages says the opposite: nearly one out of three marriages in France is concluded with foreigners, mainly migrants from the Maghreb. Interculturalism is expected to resolve this contradiction in favor of socially preferable coexistence.

The New Frontier of Japan’s Economic Diplomacy

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Economic diplomacy as a phenomenon of international life has been attracting numerous analysts as it unfolds against the background of the rapidly changing situation in the world economy and practices of individual countries that suggest their own interpretations and create new instruments.

For decades that have passed since its economic miracle, Japan was and remains for many countries, in East Asia in the first place, an example to be followed. Today, improved methods and instruments of economic diplomacy are associated with Japan's quest for a new global role. From the mid-20th century onwards, socio-political discussion has been concentrating on identifying national interests and state strategy as the initial basic elements. Despite the widespread opinion that for a long time Japan lacked comprehensive state strategies, the country's leaders formulated strategic aims and achieved them. Indeed, in the postwar years, Japan not only revived its economy – it has caught up with the economic development level of the West.

Liberalization of international trade is a permanent priority of Tokyo's economic diplomacy. Japan explains its revival as a big economic power by its skills to extract advantages from the "free and open" global economic system that took shape under the leading role of GATT/WTO. On the other hand, protection of the free trade principles goes deeper into the history of Japan's foreign policy than its WTO membership.

Very much in line with the "comprehensive security" doctrine of the first half of the 1980s that concentrated on economy and trying to somewhat defuse the tension in trade and investment relations with its partners, Japan took certain measures to weaken its protectionist zeal. It liberalized its market on its own free will and kept its export at a fixed level. In the final analysis, this helped Japanese economic operators retain their favorable positions on foreign markets.

Japan looks at international trade liberalization as an element of a broader policy of building up geostrategic architecture in which the "Chinese factor" traditionally figures prominently. Strongly motivated by competition with China, the Japanese government is actively involved in setting up trade and economic blocs. In this context, the evolution of Japan's official position on the country's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership initiated by the United States deserves special mention.

The foreign ministry of Japan has admitted that previously the government was fairly passive when it came to support to private businesses.¹⁵ Today, Tokyo uses all available instruments, including ODA, to promote the interests of Japanese businesses abroad. The state organizations operating outside the Japanese borders are instructed to support Japanese companies. Diplomatic assistance to private companies is increasing.

In August 2016, Prime minister Shinzo Abe revived the strategy of "free and open Indo-Pacific" built around the idea of the "rules-based international order" in the space of two oceans. Approved by the Trump administration, the term Indo-Pacific Region and the corresponding concept were further developed in the foreign policy discourse of Japan, the United States, Australia, and India.

In view of the growing demand for infrastructure in the world, in the rapidly developing countries in the first place, Japan stakes on export of infrastructural systems.

In 2017, Tokyo revised the recommendations and principles of promotion of infrastructural projects in line with the Indo-Pacific strategy. From that time on, the concept was spread to the institutionalized interconnection and people exchanges inside and between the regions of Asia, the middle east and Africa by developing "quality infrastructure" that corresponded to the "international standards."

A positive image of the country ("image making") can be described as a new trend of economic diplomacy. The recent trends have demonstrated that today Tokyo pays a lot of attention to the

economic aspects of the country's image to attract investments and tourists. much is done to promote the brand "Japan" that rests on "three whales" of human resources, technologies and culture.

By summing up, we can say that among the instruments of economic diplomacy there are traditional means: liberalization of international trade, official assistance, energy security, and protection of the agricultural sector. new, including not yet tested, instruments are also used, viz. the country's positive image and infrastructural projects abroad. The government together with big business intends to set up a center for coordination of foreign economic activities.

Islamic State's Use of Information as a Terrorism Tactic

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Islamic State (IS, an organization banned in Russia and also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or ISIS and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIL) became an actor in world politics quite recently but showed its nature as a threat to international peace and security as soon as it came onto the global political scene.

French citizens make up the largest European group in IS – they number nearly a thousand. The fact that, besides marginal elements of Muslim society, the IS's ranks include well-educated people, some of whom come from the West, means that the organization has a solid ideological foundation. In terms of information policy, IS may compete successfully with many countries with highly sophisticated media systems.

The main premises of IS's ideology are the goal of creating a worldwide caliphate, a state dominated by the pure, righteous, genuine Islam of ancestral times, and the duty of fighting "infidels" – all those who try to prevent the creation of the caliphate. There is nothing new about this – Al-Qaeda and other organizations had proclaimed a caliphate as their goal before IS came into being. But IS is more advanced technically – it employs ICT to recruit new members. In its propaganda, IS uses quite simple methods that are essentially no different from those of other terrorist organizations, but it makes much more effective use of them than practically any of the other groups.

Play on contrast, the simple idea that revenge is a way to social justice, and religious reasoning have combined to become a simple and affordable means of winning the hearts and minds of millions of Internet users.

IS is the first terrorist organization to make extensive use of social networking and messaging services such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Social networking sites are becoming the most accessible and efficient channels for information targeting young people, for whom they often replace all official sources of information. IS speaks to a tremendous range of Internet users through social networking sites.

Yet another instrument of IS propaganda are nasheeds – male-performed songs aiming to win support and intimidate enemies. nasheeds reflect key points of IS propaganda – the weakness of today’s Islam, the humiliated status of ordinary people, the heroism of IS fighters, and the jihad as the only possible path. Nasheeds have a hypnotic effect. although the majority are in Arabic, there have been some in Russian, English, German, and Chinese, obviously because there are Muslim minorities in Russia, English- and German-speaking countries, and China.

There is one more potential weapon against IS – ideology, or in fact anything that Joseph S. Nye terms soft power. In one of his books, Nye argues that young people brought up in the spirit of Western values would be less likely to embrace terrorist ideas.

But once again practice made fun of theory: IS has proven that it can use practically any soft power channel no less effectively than any government.

Despite territorial losses, depleted military resources, and a weakened administrative system, IS remains in a position to produce and publish large amounts of diversified media content and vastly enlarge its audience. IS’s recruitment of nationals of European countries has ceased to be a surprising fact in recent years. IS has developed an ICT-based worldwide recruitment system.

IS has an effective propaganda strategy with simple and clear messages that address people’s natural feelings and instincts. although all key world powers try to counter this propaganda and have the overall goal of destroying IS, in practice they take no steps to unite in combating the organization. each country has to rely on its own logistical resources and its own media in counterterrorism action.

Modern Instruments of “Digital Diplomacy” as a Vital Element of Soft Power

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Rapid technological development has accelerated globalization processes around the world, removing borders not only between countries but also between continents. The concept of soft power that America has been actively using in recent decades has exhausted its toolkit and requires new means of expression. This concept emphasizes not the military potential of a state but its cultural values, scientific achievements and diplomatic skill.

Specialist on U.S. foreign policy Natalia Tsvetkova comments that after Barack Obama came to power, traditional soft power tools changed significantly. for example, America’s use of digital technology for diplomatic purposes was manifested primarily in the activization and strengthening of liberals, the launch of a mass propaganda campaign against terrorism, and an increase in the information flow about confronting Russia.

The U.S. government is continuing to search for new ways to express the concept of soft power. When analyzing American foreign policy activity after sanctions were imposed on Russia and several reciprocal steps were taken such as shutting down consular and diplomatic missions, experts noted a decline on the American side of the importance of the cultural element.

After the head of the British government accused the European Union of election meddling, representatives of our embassy commented on this statement on Twitter: "It is good thing Russia is not guilty, as always." Amid widespread condemnation and complaints about hacker attacks on American programs, such a response was a vivid example of successful trolling that has generated a lot of likes and retweets, and not only by those who support our state policy.

Politicians who skillfully incorporate and utilize social media can successfully promote their own ideas to the masses and significantly increase their number of supporters.

The significance of social networks in domestic and foreign policy was once again confirmed by the recent presidential election in America. according to a tally by the media, the number of Trump's posts during the campaign doubled the number of posts by Hillary Clinton. according to Hillary, the dissemination of false and misleading information on the Web was the main factor in her defeat. Thus, it can be reasonably concluded that the impact of digital diplomacy on a wide range of people, regardless of their age, material status and other criteria, is highly effective and broad-based.

Today, Slaughter runs the new America company, which seeks to create and find ways to restore and maintain the image of the U.S. as a great world power. She comments that strong, multilevel channels of communication will be a more effective tool than developed military potential for a state to achieve all objectives.

When implementing strategic planning, most countries currently include improving technological instruments, developing science and expanding digital resources as key objectives. In particular, to bolster its title as the "world's factory," rapidly developing China has come up with a special program that can only be implemented by using technology in the state's economic development.

The means of digital intelligence to transform "likes, comments and reposts" to meet politicians' objectives while exporting democratic ideas to the far corners of the earth show that the phrase "digital soft power" will be understood much more widely in the future than it is today.

210 Years of the Russian Consular Service

Author: I. Volyнкин

Director of the Consular Department of the ministry of foreign affairs of the Russian federation Photos courtesy of the Russian foreign ministry's Department of history and Records

Every employee of the Russian foreign ministry – former, current or future – was, is or will be (in one way or another) involved in consular work, which is an integral part of the diplomatic service. on may 15, 2019, we mark a significant date in the history of the Russian foreign ministry – namely, the 210th anniversary of the consular service.

Consular activity, which is closely connected to state objectives, has for centuries focused on people – be it the direct protection of citizens’ rights or direct contacts with foreigners. A lot has changed since then, including the organization and structure of consular activity, as well as the main documents regulating this activity. However, the purpose of consular activity – i.e., to help and protect – has remained unchanged. If you look up the meaning of these verbs in a dictionary, you will see exactly what the consul does. Broadly speaking, he does everything to ensure a normal life for his fellow citizens abroad.

Nevertheless, those who have read this should not forget that foreign countries have their own laws; their residents have their own traditions that often differ from ours, and the violation of those traditions may incur penalty; in that case, a consular officer will be unable to exempt you from liability no matter how hard he might try.

The Consular Department of the Russian foreign ministry and Russian consular offices abroad make a significant contribution to promoting tourism in Russia. In this context, it is important to note the rapidly developing e-visa project for travelers to the Russian Federation, whose geographic reach is due to expand considerably this summer. It is also important to mention the one-of-its-kind-in-the-world fan ID that foreign guests could use to visit Russia even after the 2018 FIFA World Cup. In keeping with the Russian president’s instructions, work is under way to develop effective legal protection mechanisms for Russian citizens abroad, including by involving nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations and associations.

Only a few people know that consular personnel are engaged in activities related to war memorials, performing maintenance on the graves of Russian (Soviet) soldiers and officers abroad, searching for information about the fate of MIAs in other countries and helping the relatives of those killed in the line of duty learn more about the heroism of their predecessors, visit their graves and pay tribute to their memory.

Regarding the successes of the consular service and recalling its history, we are compelled to mention the tragedy that befell us in the last decade. The untimely death of Russian ambassador extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Turkey and former Consular Department Director A.G. Karlov resounded painfully in the hearts of all current or former consular staff members.

Without tiring the reader with all sorts of legal subtleties, it should be noted that the main quality of consular officers is their willingness to help – be it assistance in an emergency or life and death situation or the need to issue a certificate to reassess the cost of housing and utility services provided. Clearly, new times will require new solutions, but there is no doubt that the essence of consular service will always be predetermined by the etymology of the word “consul.” As is known, one of its meanings at the dawn of civilization was “one caring about his country and its citizens.”

Russia's First Mission in Vietnam

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In The Second half of the 19th century, amid a growing rivalry between colonial powers in China and Southeast Asia, the Russian empire continued to strengthen its positions in the far east, in particular on its Pacific coast. The newly established Pacific Squadron made long sea voyages. merchant ships of the Russian Steam navigation and Trading Company and the Russian Volunteer fleet plied between Vladivostok and Black Sea ports. Under those circumstances, the port city of Saigon, a rapidly growing center of French Indochina located at the intersection of the main sea routes, was bound to attract the attention of the Russian tsarist authorities.

St. Petersburg was seriously considering the possibility of establishing its official mission there. In January 1894, Cochinchina Governor Augustin Julien Fourès briefed French Indochina Governor General Léon Jean Laurent Chavassieux on the arrival of the Russian consul from Singapore to explore the possibilities for Russian consular presence in Saigon.

The pressing need for that became even more obvious shortly before and right after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).

During a little more than a year in Saigon (from august 11, 1904 until October 30, 1905), Count alexander Alexandrovich Liven (1860-1914), the captain of the cruiser Diana interned by the French authorities, not only ensured the ship's repairs, but also successfully performed the functions of the head of Russia's entire mission in the far east and Indochina. he was highly instrumental in providing reconnaissance and intelligence support for the redeployment of the 2nd and 3rd Pacific Squadrons from Madagascar to Cam Ranh Bay.

Captain Liven established close ties with mark Zélim Mottet (1863-1943).

That Frenchman of Swiss origin, a native of Geneva, who received French citizenship in February 1901, was a well-known person in Saigon.

White the cruiser Diana was in Saigon, Mottet frequently carried out some delicate assignments from her captain. among other things, Maison m. Mottet et Cie provided sea freight services, so Count a.a. Liven used it to charter vessels to provide supplies to the 2nd Pacific Squadron under Rear Adm. Z.P. Rozhdestvensky's command in Cam Ranh Bay during its far east expedition.

Count A.A. Liven did not forget Mottet's good deeds. Responding to a query from St. Petersburg before the Diana was due to depart, he proposed appointing Mottet as Russia's nonresident vice consul in Saigon, as "a person who has already provided valuable services to our maritime Department."9 The foreign ministry of the Russian empire issued a corresponding order on November 15, 1905. The Diana's captain also granted mark Mottet a power of attorney, appointing him as his legal representative and authorizing him, "on behalf and at the expense of the Russian Government, to manage and administer all property, affairs and interests, in particular, the coal warehouse established in Saigon."

In 1910, on account of ill health, mark Mottet left Saigon and returned to Switzerland. however, he was still listed as Russia's nonresident vice consul until February 15, 1913, when he was officially dismissed by the order of the Russian foreign ministry.

Not much is known about the consulate's activities. Its principal mission was to promote trade relations between the two countries and to provide assistance to Russian warships and merchant ships visiting Saigon. In particular, in December 1912, when the cruiser Askold, the flagship of the Siberian flotilla, was on a visit to the capital of Cochinchina, Paul Hauff accompanied its captain, L.K. Teshe, at all meetings and ceremonies arranged by the French colonial authorities.

The last reference to the "Russian Consulate" in Saigon on a city map dates back to 1920, which showed its location on the corner of Catinat St. (Dongkou St.) and Turk St. (Ho Huan Nghiep St.) in the building where Maison Henri Blanc et Hauff Saigon – which called itself "successor" to Maison m. Mottet et Cie – had its head office at that time.

Mr. Trump, Lift Your Blockade of Venezuela!

Author: Carlos Rafael Faria Tortosa

Ambassador extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Russian federation.

The economic war against Venezuela was unleashed as far back as 2013, when many people and countries, many governments and much of the world media still couldn't see it. That's when there began disruptions with the supply of goods, including the bare necessities, when the distribution of food was getting blocked and some of it was being sent abroad, to Colombia for instance. Today, our country is under sanctions, under a financial blockade that is being coordinated by the U.S. government.

We'd like to give you an example of how the economic blockade is affecting the economy of Venezuela in general and its population in particular. Sums to a total of \$5.47 billion have been frozen in international banks. That is a huge amount of money, which could be used to buy medications, commodities, industrial equipment, and other essential goods. At the moment, this is impossible. The United States and its allies say that our people need humanitarian aid of some kind. But President Nicolás Maduro has been asking, why don't you give this money back to us and enable our government, our people to provide themselves with all they need? We know that they don't want to do it and won't do it. Their aim is to overthrow President Maduro, stop the political process that he has started, and take control of Venezuela's oil reserves, which are the largest in the world, and other Venezuelan wealth.

We have money frozen elsewhere as well – \$517 million in Clearstream in London, \$507 million in American outlets of Japan's Sumitomo Mitsue Banking Corporation, \$458 million in Citibank, and \$230 million in another American bank, Union Bank. Large sums are stuck in two Belgian firms – \$140 million in Euroclear and \$53 million in Banque Eni. There's \$38 million in France's Banque Delubac. There are yet another 41 banks and financial institutions in 17 countries where Venezuelan money, more than \$654 million altogether, is stymied.

In October 2017, an allocation for vaccines was blocked at the UBS bank in Switzerland. This held up a vaccination program in Venezuela by four months, which had a serious adverse public health effect. also, in 2017, foreign banks blocked a \$9 million payment for dialysis drugs, and thereby hindered the treatment of 15,000 Venezuelans. In 2017-2018, European and American banks raised obstacles to financial transactions by the Venezuelan government to a total of \$300 million for buying food.

Dialogue is the only solution to the crisis. We need support, but the opposition is looking for other ways in order to take power in our country. Recently, we started a dialogue in the Dominican Republic with the mediation of its president. however, the Venezuelan opposition withdrew from the negotiations as it didn't want any agreement with the government. That was the result of pressure from the United States, which didn't want the dialogue to be successful.

We put a lot of value on the role of Russia in dealing with the problems of the Venezuelan people. Russia demands lifting the sanctions against us. and, of course, every time there is a critical situation in our country, there comes the voice of Russia urging us to exercise restraint and avoid an armed clash. Russia has always demanded lifting the financial and economic blockade of Venezuela. other countries advocate dialogue between our government and the political opposition.

Other countries, including members of the Un Security Council, for example China, also call for restraint and balanced policies and for respect for our constitution and for the rules and laws of our society – our society, let me stress.

Our people are very intelligent – they know what is being done, who is doing it, and what for. They trust President Nicolás Maduro and the other leaders. Sooner or later, we'll have all the hardships behind us. We will win!

New Zealand and Russia: 75 Years of Diplomatic Relations

Author: R.H. Winston Peters

The Right honorable Winston Peters, New Zealand minister of foreign affairs.

The 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between New Zealand and Russia is a chance for us to reflect together on the history of our bilateral relationship to date, and on how this relationship might develop further in our rapidly changing world. our diplomatic relationship was established at a time when war was raging in Europe and threatening the global community. New Zealand was among the first countries to declare war on Nazi Germany. our commitment to the war effort in Europe was in no way limited by our geographical distance. approximately 140,000 new Zealanders – nearly nine percent of our total population at the time – served in the war.

The Second World War had a profound and wide-reaching impact on New Zealand, accelerating our transition into a fully independent player in global affairs and leading to the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with a number of countries outside of the British Commonwealth. Moscow was the second non-Commonwealth capital in which New Zealand opened a diplomatic post, following an

exchange of notes completed on 13 April 1944. former member of Parliament, Charles Boswell, arrived in Moscow in August of that year as head of the New Zealand Legation.

Contact between New Zealanders and Russians goes back nearly 200 years. In June 1820, men of the ships Vostok and Mirny, commanded by Russian naval officer and explorer Fabian von Bellingshausen were hosted for eight days by members of the indigenous Māori population in the Marlborough Sounds on their way to Antarctica. The visit was a positive and respectful one, as illustrated by the fact that Bellingshausen and his crew performed traditional Māori war dances (or haka) learned during their time in New Zealand to keep their spirits up during their subsequent travels.

People to people connections have been diverse. The 1926 tour of New Zealand by legendary Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova made a particularly enduring mark on our country.

Economic and trade activity has been a key feature of the relationship, especially in the area of agriculture. New Zealand sheep-meat, butter and wool have long been a prominent feature in the Russian market. In the early 1980s the Soviet Union became New Zealand's largest customer for mutton, and in some years the Soviet Union accounted for almost five percent of New Zealand's total exports. Today, Russia remains a valuable market for our agricultural products as well as for a wide range of other products and services, encompassing consumer goods, services, and technology. New Zealand ingredients can also play an important role in ensuring that Russia's food manufacturing industry has access to high-quality inputs in food production.

New Zealand's commitment to strong and functional multilateral institutions is not an abstract matter of principle but one of self-interest. As a small trading nation with an open economy and a mobile, multicultural population, New Zealand's security and well-being depend directly on the stability and prosperity of our region and the world as a whole. Maintaining this stability and prosperity requires a predictable, rules-based framework for the peaceful resolution of differences between nation states. Reliable architecture provides an objective process for resolving disagreements. New Zealand would prefer the global community invested in strengthening the institutions which can help to avoid conflict, rather than relying on resolving conflict bilaterally.

New Zealand foreign policy will therefore continue to seek to strengthen the multilateral system in order to better meet the challenges of our increasingly turbulent world. We count on the full support of the community of nations in achieving this goal, and in doing so note that the privileges enjoyed by the permanent members of the UN Security Council imply a particular responsibility for them to act in a way that strengthens the international order.

Our time together on the UN Security Council demonstrated that New Zealand and Russia have a robust and mature diplomatic relationship, characterized by a shared readiness to speak our minds frankly and respectfully. This relationship allows us to cooperate successfully wherever our interests and values align. It also requires us to discuss our differences openly, with a view to finding common ground.

Our diplomatic relationship is one of New Zealand's oldest, and has grown substantially since we joined together to fight fascism in Europe. Our engagement in multiple multilateral fora both under the UN umbrella and within the Asia-Pacific Region exemplifies ways we can work productively together. We will continue to place value on dialogue with Russia on international issues of shared interest for the benefit of both our nations.

The 2nd International Practical Conference “Priorities of International Cooperation in Countering Extremism and Terrorism”

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On March 29, 2019, the Russian foreign ministry and the Russian Internal affairs ministry held the 2nd International Practical Conference “Priorities of International Cooperation in Countering extremism and Terrorism” at the V.Ya. Kikot Moscow University of the Russian Internal affairs ministry.

At present, all countries are encountering security challenges posed by terrorism. There is growing concern about the escalation of extremist manifestations, which provide breeding grounds for international terrorism. Importantly, the conference focused on Russia’s successful experience in promoting and facilitating international efforts to counter extremism and terrorism.

The participants discussed key counterterrorism objectives and the basic principles of international cooperation in countering this threat: ensuring the priority of states and their relevant authorities in combating terrorism and extremism at the national and international levels and taking concerted efforts as part of an international antiterrorism coalition on the basis of international law, the Un Charter, the relevant resolutions of the Un Security Council, and the Un Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2006).

Emphasis was placed on the need to abandon attempts to use the issue of countering terrorism and extremism for interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

It is particularly dangerous when support for the spread of extremist ideas, including the direct and indirect justification of terrorism and public calls to commit terrorist acts, occurs openly in the public space and the media, leading to the radicalization of the public.

In this regard, conference participants spoke in favor of closer international cooperation in countering the spread of terrorist and extremist ideology and propaganda. It was proposed giving consideration to developing and introducing the concept of voluntary counterterrorism restrictions for the media, public figures, officials, and politicians at the international and national level.

The forum adopted co-chairs’ recommendations, which correspond to the Russian vision of the aims of international efforts to counter terrorism and extremism.

A successful fight against international terrorism requires bona fide and responsible cooperation; the formation of an antiterrorist front with the participation of all countries, based on a well-defined international legal framework and the recognition of the central role of states and their relevant agencies in countering terrorism and extremism, as well as the abandonment of approaches putting political goals above the goals of fending off common threats. It is important to strictly adhere to the international principle of “either extradite or prosecute” with regard to persons who commit terrorist crimes.

States should actively expose any sly tricks used by terrorists and extremists, including the false notion that extremism in its violent and nonviolent forms can be a legitimate way of ensuring fundamental values and human rights. We believe that the goals of protecting society against terrorism and

extremism, on the one hand, and respect for human rights, on the other, do not contradict, but on the contrary, complement each other.

Close engagement with the media, which are used by terrorists for propaganda purposes and often publish materials inciting intolerance and hatred, also remains highly relevant. It is essential to formulate “voluntary counterterrorism restrictions” and codes of conduct for the media, as well as for state and government officials, including the rejection of media content that can provoke radicalization leading to extremism and terrorism.

The Art of Diplomacy: Andrei Gromyko as First Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, 1949-1952 (On the 110th Anniversary of His Birth)

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Thank you to the family of A.A. Gromyko for providing photographs and accompanying captions.

The actions of diplomats are determined by the history of the country they represent, the institutions that have formed in that country, the current geopolitical situation, and the work of the “concert of world powers.” It makes sense to interpret international relations as an unending concert of world powers, without restricting this term to a specific historical context.

Transformations are the tuning period of the concert of world powers: a change is occurring in the established configuration of relations among the leading countries; there is an adjustment of the bounds of the possible in their mutual contacts, a reformatting of spheres of influence, the establishment of a new role and capacity for small countries.

The first post-war transformation of international relations was prepared and implemented in 1943-1952. World War II altered the balance of power in the world. Western partners did not want the USSR to grow stronger. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s brief attempts to establish closer relations with the Soviet Union were apparently based on the assumption of the limited capacity of certain countries and the importance of establishing general rules of the game.

American analysts wrongly viewed Soviet strategy in the context of fear and traditional isolation. The Soviet Union was in fact starting to open up much more not only in Europe but also in Asia by concluding treaties of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance. However, this was a cautious opening up within the acceptable bounds of Stalinist diplomacy and a search for foundations of mutually beneficial long-term cooperation with friendly states.

In those circumstances, the foreign policy administration system in the USSR was changing. The People’s Commissariat was replaced by the ministry of foreign affairs, in which Andrei Gromyko became first

deputy to minister Andrei Vyshinsky in early March 1949. Gromyko's relationship with him was very complicated.

The scope of Stalinist diplomacy required maximum concentration, self-control and a knack not only for rhetoric but also verbal gymnastics.

Success in difficult times requires unflinching efforts and the ability to address several diverse problems at once – for example, problems associated with Trieste, the middle east command, Germany, disagreements with Iran. Only some of the challenges and issues in this list that Andrei Gromyko dealt with from 1949 to 1952 will be considered in this article.

Skilled reasoning, cogent adherence to the approved line, and openness to discussing difficult and unpleasant issues deserve the highest praise. It is important to see behind the conventionalism a willingness to develop mutually beneficial solutions. Gromyko's questions about new developments, and references to meeting venues and the responsibility of the parties are not incidental. Any meeting is always a chance – albeit sometimes only a slight one – to start constructive dialogue, to think about the future approach. The Stalin period was no exception to normal diplomatic practice. Gromyko's famous "no," which has been exaggerated in various accounts, actually meant "no" to oneness and "yes" to what is new and constructive. Partners had to hear this "no" and get used to it before Gromyko became minister of foreign affairs of the USSR.

It must be remembered that allied countries were more than just a safety belt for the USSR. More important was the fact that a new social and political model was being built that, as China is proving today, is capable of developing and demonstrating progress. Discussion about democratic choice in socialist countries should not be conducted opportunistically, outside of the historical context.

The post of first deputy foreign minister of the Soviet Union offered the opportunity to gain experience while at the same time solve important problems, to develop skills directing one of the most complex and most important state institutions, and to demonstrate a willingness to constantly be on the front lines of the battle for the interests of the country and the opportunity to realize the socialist experiment and its future success. The ideology that at that time was part of the national interest should not be separated from diplomatic activity. That was the reality. For Western counterparts, their ideological school played a lesser role. However, the belief in communism and its ideals did not mean abandoning rational actions and deliberate steps.

Resolving conflict through diplomatic means requires patience, continuity and strength. Subsequently, Gromyko's experience significantly strengthened the position of the USSR, since none of his partners were as well versed in the subject or had his negotiating skills. It was in 1949- 1952 that the foundation was laid for the future Gromyko diplomatic school, which still exists and continues to develop.

Something else should not be forgotten: a main feature of a transformation period is the mutual distrust of partners. However, it is hoped that history is capable of learning to not forget the glorious aspects of the past and to learn from mistakes.

Eastern Europe Before World War II: Problems and Contradictions

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World War I changed the political map of Central and eastern Europe.

In 1918-1919, the principle of state sovereignty prevailed throughout Europe ranging from the Aegean Sea in the south to the Barents Sea in the north, and this was undoubtedly a positive event. But the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both newly established and “old” states in the east of Europe proved to be very fragile. Within 20 years, some of them once again disappeared for a time from the map of Europe, while others had their borders redrawn and became economically and politically dependent on neighboring powers. During World War II, the region was one of the main theaters of war. one can also speak of the common history of the peoples of Central, eastern, and Southeastern Europe in the following period as well.

The issue of state sovereignty and its acquisition, maintenance or loss by the peoples of this region has been inseparable from “big European politics” for the last three centuries. Without downplaying the role of internal regional forces in the emancipation process, one must say that each new stage in this process, whether progressive or regressive, was somehow connected with the struggle between the great powers and their attempts to realize their geopolitical interests and goals.

The political “looseness” of eastern Europe and internal instability in some of its countries were due to a set of ethnic and territorial contradictions rooted in the 1919 treaties of Versailles and Saint-Germain and a number of subsequent international agreements.

The states of the region that were among the losers of World War I (Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria) were left with a feeling of “national humiliation,” because their interests were infringed. These three states lost significant territories, together with their inhabitants, as they were handed over to nations regarded by the victorious powers (Britain and France) as their allies (Poles, Czechs, Romanians, Serbs, and others). This created the problem of “annexed ancestral lands” and “disputed territories,” stimulated the development of “revisionist” tendencies among the vanquished, and led to tensions in their relations with the victors and their allies, which gradually destabilized the situation not only in the east of Europe, but also throughout the whole European continent.

The creation of states with several “titular nations” – Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia – had mixed consequences for the region’s future. Relations between peoples brought together in these states were marked by religious, political, and other contradictions, which had deep historical roots.

The initial economic situation after World War I was very difficult for countries in the region. all of them (except Czechoslovakia) were agricultural countries with relatively low labor productivity and a weak domestic market; all of them lacked investment and were largely dependent on trade with industrial countries.

The region's development was negatively affected by the absence of a “peaceful economic order” in Europe in the interwar period. The victorious powers followed a policy designed to consolidate their influence in the region, seeking to exclude Germany and the USSR from among their competitors, prevent a revival of German plans for creating a Mitteleuropa (middle Europe), and form an alliance of

countries in eastern and Southeastern Europe as a military counterweight to Germany and at the same time a cordon sanitaire against Soviet Russia.

The regional countries tried to mitigate the impact of the crisis through clearing arrangements in trade between themselves and with industrial countries. However, the transition to clearing trade had far-reaching consequences.

The state sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of eastern and Southeastern Europe were to be guaranteed by political alliances that emerged in the region after World War I and collaborated with the Western powers, primarily with France. But these alliances were unable to ensure the independence of countries in the region. By the beginning of World War II, some of them (Little entente, Balkan entente) actually ceased to exist, while others (Polish-Romanian alliance, Baltic entente) proved to be ineffective in times of crisis.

A characteristic feature of political alliances in eastern Europe was that they did not provide for policy coordination across their member states on a wide range of international issues. While expressing their willingness to coordinate their actions towards the state against which the alliance in question was directed, the partners retained their complete autonomy in all other areas, which seriously weakened the alliances and made them fragile.

When speaking of the tragic fate of the eastern European countries before and during World War II, we must clearly understand that their loss of sovereignty in that period was the result not only of external influences, but also of their own internal weakness, lack of unity, and inability to wage an effective fight for independence. This weakness and lack of unity were the result of flaws in the very design of the Versailles system, on the one hand, and of political mistakes and miscalculations made by the eastern European states, on the other.

Past experience deserves close attention, especially where it concerns part of Europe that in the last century and a half has proved to be particularly prone to social and political transformation. The three knots of contradictions in this region (between the major powers, between the major powers and regional countries, and between regional countries) that fueled and triggered the two world wars and, in large part, the Cold War in its "first edition" have yet to be finally untangled, although in many cases they have loosened or changed their form.

Shoulder to Shoulder With the Red Army: Allied Air Forces on the Soviet-German Front

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World War II was a coalition conflict. During the fighting, the troops of the participating 62 states were often mixed, so very often people of different nationalities were fighting alongside each other. and not only on the ground but in the air.

A striking example is the Battle of Britain (July-October 1940). fascist Italy's air force had limited involvement in it on the Luftwaffe side. The British were masters at mustering all (until the last person) who could be useful to them in the war. During this battle, at least one-fifth of the 2,927 Royal air force pilots were non-British.

Britain later continued to make extensive use of foreign pilots. after the U.S. entered the war, the British Isles became the main base of the American air force in Europe, and the Anglo-American air forces began joint operations.

The situation was different on the Soviet-German front. from the German side, not only the Luftwaffe but also the air forces of satellites of the Third Reich participated in operations against the Soviet Union from the very beginning. But it was only in 1943, and especially in 1944, that airplanes from the allied countries started to take to the air alongside Soviet planes.

There was, however, one exception: an operation in the fall of 1941 by British aircraft in the Soviet arctic.¹ Real combat interaction between the USSR armed forces and allied forces on the Soviet-German front began in the air. and the first allied military formation to arrive in Russia for combat was the no. 151 Raf Wing.

British pilots were tasked with taking part in combat operations while at the same time training Soviet pilots to fly the hurricane fighters; technical personnel were charged with showing the Soviets how to assemble and maintain these aircraft that were to be supplied to the USSR under the lend-lease program.

Alongside the British, Soviet aviators fought more confidently on the hurricanes, and soon they formed the backbone of the 78th fighter aviation Regiment of the northern fleet air force. The commander of this unit was Maj. Boris Safonov, a hero of the Soviet Union who by then was already a well-known Soviet ace.

Later, the British air force occasionally used Soviet airfields for operations in the naval theater and primarily to strengthen air cover for convoys.

The U.S. gained much more extensive experience than the British from basing its air force on Soviet territory. Washington very much wanted to get airfields in the Soviet far east to use in the war against Japan, but at that time, the Soviet Union absolutely did not want to vex Tokyo and did not show interest in discussing the relevant American proposals. Plans to send aircraft (and land forces) of the Western allies to the Caucasus also were not implemented. But using Soviet airfields in Ukraine was possible.

Preparations for stationing hundreds of American aircraft on Soviet territory demanded enormous efforts. The Red army had no such experience. The size of the American planes was impressive.

To manage the "shuttle" operations, the U.S. air force eastern Command was deployed in Poltava. Prior to the start of the raids, plans were made to conduct photo reconnaissance missions led by Col. Elliot Roosevelt, son of U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt.

Cooperation between the USSR and the U.S. during operation frantic was a unique example of a Soviet-American combat alliance despite ambiguity of some aspects of the story. The remarks that the American command delivered to the soldiers leaving Poltava included the words: "Remember... no other nation has done as much for us as the Russians."

France was another Western ally of the USSR that fought in the air on the Soviet-German front.

During the fighting on the Soviet-German front, the French carried out 5,240 combat missions, conducted about 900 air battles and scored 273 confirmed victories. The last of them, on April 12, 1945, was won by French pilot J. Henri, who died under fire minutes after landing. he rounded out a list of 42 pilots who did not return from battle.¹⁰ In total, 96 combat flight personnel were involved in combat.

The armies of eastern Europe (Poland, Czechoslovakia, and later Romania and Bulgaria) that fought together with the Red army put emphasis on ground troops although they did have some aircraft parts and units. The USSR gave them more than 1,600 aircraft. nevertheless, many of the planes were outdated models or even planes that had once been received from Germany. for example, to provide air cover for their (as well as Soviet and Yugoslav) troops, the Bulgarians flew Messerschmitts that the Germans had given them to repel allied raids through Bulgaria against Romanian oil fields in Ploeshti. But the Soviet air force provided the main air support for allied troops.

The Story of Austria Purging Itself of Nazism

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The world's main 21st-century objectives include eradication of neo-Nazism and radical nationalism, that harrowing legacy of former turbulent developments.

Since the 20th century, diverse manifestations of this heritage in various countries have often taken violent forms and caused not only multiple interpersonal rows and domestic political frictions but also fierce international conflicts. hopefully, rich historical experience will help put an end to fanatical nationalism, including in former Soviet republics, just as at various times an end was put to slavery, serfdom, and colonialism. from this point of view, the international experience of measures against Nazism may be an interesting subject to explore.

The actual denazification of Germany and Austria was on the whole a humane process. It was certainly quite a difficult and lengthy effort and had its strong and weak points.

In a Soviet-proposed Declaration issued in Moscow in October 1943, the governments of the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States described Austria as "the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression." This thesis later formed the basis for establishing an independent and neutral Republic of Austria.

But not all Nazi criminals received the punishment they deserved. Some Nazi activists saw the Soviet victory over the Third Reich as an existential catastrophe. There was a series of suicides among them when the Red army was approaching Vienna. Just as German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, some of the fanatics killed their families, including their children and elderly parents, before taking their own life, apparently in the fear of vengeance for their crimes.

Present-day Austrian writer and antifascist activist Hans-Karl Steckl believes that giving senior governmental posts to former Nazis was “a great mistake.”¹¹ For instance, the government of Chancellor Bruno Kreisky formed in 1970 included four (!) former national socialists, which outraged antifascist groups. Steckl believes it was “counterproductive and naïve” to hope that ex-Nazis would reform.

The treaty for the Re-establishment of an Independent and Democratic Austria (Austrian State Treaty), signed in Vienna on May 15, 1955, included provisions on denazification that became part of international law.

Moscow was closely involved in drawing up those provisions, which were to remain in force for an indefinite time and addressed risks of revival of Nazism in Austria not only in the foreseeable future but also in subsequent years.

In later years, Austria took part in various political and legal law initiatives to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and ethnic and religious discrimination.

According to the federal office for the Protection of the Constitution and Counterterrorism of the Austrian Interior ministry, there are marginal underground neo-Nazi groups in Austria that occasionally spread propaganda, mainly through the Internet, and resort to violence such as assaults, arson, flashmobbing, and vandalism, and sometimes terrorism.

The federal office for the Protection of the Constitution has set up a hotline to be alerted by ordinary people about possible neo-fascist activity so that it can take prompt countermeasures. In some government agencies, there are divisions specializing in deradicalization educational campaigns, that include anti-racist and anti-xenophobic activities.

It seems that Austria’s rich experience of overcoming Nazi legacy and combating neo-Nazism may be borrowed by countries plagued by radical nationalism, xenophobia, and violations of linguistic rights. It also proves that, in principle, even a seriously ailing society can recover and become reformatted.

Normalization With China: 30 Years (A Subjective Eyewitness View)

Author: L. Moiseyev

Ambassador extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

In connection with the 30th anniversary of Mikhail Gorbachev’s trip to Beijing, some incidents and stories come to mind that took place along the difficult path through historical deadlocks and prejudices that eventually led to the normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations.

In my opinion, the lowest point of this relationship was not 1969, when there were bloody clashes on Damansky Island and near Zhalanashkol. Those were provocations that resulted in numerous casualties, but they were nevertheless limited in scale and firmly suppressed after a short period of confusion on our part.

The shock did not last long. already in September of that same year, 1969, the premiers of the two countries agreed on priority steps to overcome the crisis. It was a kind of first mini-normalization. not a full-fledged one, but still a détente of sorts. Border talks resumed. The events on Damansky Island made it clear that Beijing was willing to stop at nothing to press its conception of the existence of disputed border areas.

In 1970, an exchange of ambassadors took place for the first time in several years. I had the chance to closely observe Liu Xinquan, the Chinese ambassador to Moscow, and Vasily Tolstikov, our ambassador to Beijing. I got the impression that both were sincerely striving for a breakthrough in relations and both were very worthy representatives of their countries. But it proved impossible to do anything at that time of bitter ideological disagreement.

A symbolic turning point that closed, as it were, the possibility of returning to the two countries' past relations occurred in April 1979, when the Chinese side declared the cessation, effective in April 1980, of the Stalin-era Treaty of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance between the USSR and China.

In Tokyo, I had to process a vast array of information, not only from Japanese sources, but also from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and meet with Japanese specialists on China. In the first months after arriving, it was discovered that the Japanese were noting indications of a change in Chinese approaches to relations with the U.S. and the USSR, and in a very encouraging direction for us. The embassy began to report this to Moscow – very discreetly, of course.

Apparently, our information differed from the assessments prevailing in the center, which was not seeing any positive response from Beijing to numerous Soviet initiatives and seriously feared the establishment of an American-Chinese alliance hostile to the USSR. To ensure the uniformity of information coming to Moscow from abroad, a circular was sent to all “observation points” containing Chinese policy assessments made by the Soviet embassy in Washington, which clearly predicted further Sino-American rapprochement.

A year or two later, few people doubted that a real thaw was starting in Soviet-Chinese relations. a modus operandi acceptable to the two sides was found at the border talks, the atmosphere improved during negotiations on bilateral relations that began in October 1982, and reciprocal trips became more frequent.

The key event during Gorbachev's stay in Beijing was a talk with Deng Xiaoping. It was during this talk that Deng's proposed formula of “close the past, open the future” was adopted. Thus, the sides relegated to the past the complex relations of tsarist Russia and imperial China, Soviet Russia's support of the revolutionary movement in China, the Comintern's tutelage of the Chinese Communist Party, the USSR's cooperation with the Kuomintang in the anti-Japanese war, joint participation with China in the Korean War, the anti-Japanese Soviet-Chinese Treaty of 1950, the older-younger brother relationship under Stalin, large-scale Soviet assistance to China after the victory of the Chinese revolution, the ideological disputes of the late 1950s-mid-1980s, border provocations, and much more.

However, Deng nevertheless lectured Gorbachev about this past, but the Soviet leader seemed to think it best not to respond. new prospects were looming: Moscow and Beijing for the first time in the 20th century began to build their relations on a nonideological, pragmatic basis, which just a decade and a

half later, in the early 21st century, would allow them to be satisfactorily characterized as the best they have ever been.

