

# **International Affairs: Vol.67 : №2, 2021: Summary.**

## **Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Message of Greetings on Diplomats' Day.**

*Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.*

COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS,

Today we are celebrating Diplomats' Day. I would like to sincerely congratulate you on your professional holiday – a holiday dedicated to all who have devoted themselves to serving the Fatherland, to upholding its interests in the international arena, to working hard despite being away from home and family in countries with a harsh climate and a difficult military-political situation.

Diplomacy has always been a highly respected profession. The nation's foreign service has always given truly extraordinary people who are able to think globally and who possess excellent writing and speaking skills an opportunity to apply their talents and abilities.

Friends,

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin have sent their messages of greetings commending the work of the Foreign Ministry. Messages from senior members of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, executive bodies, Federation members and representatives of business circles and the scientific community also have words of praise for us.

The trust that is put in us imposes special obligations on us, requiring us to work with great devotion and high professionalism. The diplomatic service still faces challenges in creating a favorable external environment for Russia's steady socioeconomic development and for maintaining strategic balance, security and stability in international affairs.

A key issue on our agenda is to continue working across the board to build a common "Eurasian home," harmonizing the integration processes unfolding in our continental space. The focus of our efforts remains consolidating the generally recognized international legal foundations of interstate relations, promoting the political settlement of crises and conflicts, and ensuring strategic stability.

Russia's foreign policy service is strong because of its traditions and the link between the present day and the continuity of generations. Even though this year we are celebrating Diplomats' Day amid the coronavirus pandemic, we have organized a number of events to perpetuate the worthy memory of our outstanding predecessors, including a historical documentary exhibition in the foyer of the ministry's main building dedicated to the work of prominent Soviet diplomats who have left their mark in the history of the country's foreign policy. We will continue to develop and strengthen the finest traditions of the national school of diplomacy.

In conclusion, I would like to wish you good health, well-being and new great achievements for the benefit of Russia. Special words of appreciation are due to your family members, who share with you the ups and downs and hardships of diplomatic service, ensuring a "secure home front."

I would like to express special gratitude to our veterans. Thank you very much for your continuing efforts to promote and advance Russia's interests, analyze global processes, cultivate a new generation of diplomats and generously share your invaluable experience with them. I wish you good health and all the very best.

Thank you, dear friends.

## **Russia's Human Rights Priorities at UN Agencies**

**Sergey Vershinin**, Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia; [svvershinin@mid.ru](mailto:svvershinin@mid.ru)

RUSSIA has always considered protecting and promoting human rights to be the cornerstone of a truly democratic, just and harmonious society.

According to the Russian Constitution, Russia is a social state prioritizing support and assistance to vulnerable segments of the population: women, people with a disability, senior citizens, young people, young families with children, unemployed people and migrants. A major component of Russia's social policy is guaranteed access to free and comprehensive health care and education, as well as to social security.

Russia consistently supports the development of its civil society. The activity of nonprofit nongovernmental organizations engaged in implementing socially important projects in the sphere of human rights and freedoms, as well as volunteer movements, enjoy substantial state support, including through an effectively organized system of grants.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought to the fore rights that are vital to people's life and wellbeing, primarily social and economic rights, as well as the right to development – i.e., rights that many Western countries, regrettably, still do not always recognize as human rights.

We are working actively and consistently to ensure that the global community and UN human rights agencies pay due attention to protecting the rights of national, ethnic and language minorities, indigenous people, children, people with a disability and young people; promoting economic and social rights; and countering manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, neo-Nazism and religious intolerance.

Russia helped draft the International Bill of Human Rights and was among the first countries to adopt it. Economic and social rights such as the right to health care, education, work and social insurance were recognized and codified in international law largely due to the USSR's efforts.

However, it is obvious that today not everyone is satisfied with the existing international human rights protection regime. There are ongoing attempts to rewrite it to suit one's own interests, unilaterally imposing an arbitrary interpretation of the fundamental provisions of international human rights agreements, as well as new obligations under those agreements, including by creating new categories of rights and so-called vulnerable segments of the population that require special protections. This approach leads to the fragmentation of international law and increases the risk of a potential collision of legal norms, which, in our view, would hardly be conducive to the effective exercise of human rights.

Regrettably, some countries are using human rights as a full-fledged tool for pursuing their own foreign policy agendas. Human rights rhetoric is being used to smear, discredit and delegitimize legitimate governments and justify unilateral restrictive measures imposed in violation of international law and aimed at isolating individual countries, destabilizing them and deposing governments.

Over the past four years, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), created in 2006 to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights, which had completely discredited itself, has become a platform for rolling out the aforementioned controversial initiatives. The HRC's current work is characterized by a high degree of politicization and confrontation between states.

Russia, which in October 2020 was again elected to this key human rights body in the UN system, will focus on overcoming these shortcomings. Russia's election to the HRC provides us with additional opportunities to get our international partners to appreciate the importance of establishing constructive

international dialogue on human rights protection and promotion, rejecting the notorious policy of double standards, and respecting the national, historical and cultural characteristics of each and every state in the process of democratic transformations without imposing extrinsic value systems on anybody.

It is important to focus the efforts of all actors in international relations on strengthening dialogue and cooperation and getting interested parties involved in the collective process of formulating and making decisions, including in the area of human rights. These are, in fact, our main priorities at the HRC.

## **Human Security as a Global Problem**

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This article was written as part of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research project No. 19-014-00001: "Managing Social Transformations in the Context of Global Processes and Problems."

THE YEAR 2020 left behind difficult memories and numerous questions about the future.

The world is growing more complex, faster than humans' ability to grasp it, giving rise to the human gap problem, described for the first time in 1979 in the report to the Club of Rome "No Limits to Learning. Bridging the Human Gap."

Issues of ethics – especially bioethics, the ethics of science and artificial intelligence – have come to the fore along with their real existential risks, which are especially manifest against the backdrop of an artificially inflated veneer of tolerance.

In January 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in an address to the UN GA that he sees "four horsemen in our midst – four looming threats" that endanger the future of humankind: geopolitical tension, climate change, global mistrust and abused new technologies that are pushing the world closer to the point of no return. "The first horseman comes in the form of the highest global geostrategic tensions. Terrorist attacks take a merciless toll. The nuclear menace is growing. Devastating conflicts continue to cause widespread misery. More people have been forced from their homes by war and persecution than at any time since the Second World War."

"Second, we face an existential climate crisis." One million species are in near-term danger of extinction. "The third horseman is deep and growing global mistrust. Disquiet and discontent are churning societies from north to south. Each situation is unique, but everywhere frustration is filling the streets. More and more people are convinced globalization is not working for them." "Confidence in political establishments is going down." "The fourth threat is the dark side of the digital world. Technological advances are moving faster than our ability to respond to – or even comprehend – them."

Later, the UN secretary-general added a "fifth horseman of the Apocalypse": "Since January, the COVID-19 pandemic has galloped across the globe – joining the four other horsemen and adding to the fury of each."

Now, in addition to global security issues, the international community is shifting its attention to the security of each person. Blindsided by the coronavirus pandemic, states proved unable to meet to the challenge.

"The current paradigm through which the most influential nations pursue security is incapable of addressing several dynamic threats to the survival of modern civilization."

The emerging concept of human security requires us to understand that the well-known Latin adage “if you want peace, prepare for war” has become too dangerous. In the history of human civilization, preparations for war all too often led to war. The Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution states that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.”

The obsessive aspiration for global domination and the desire to “lead the world” and “sit at the head of the table,” as Joe Biden openly put it in his presidential plan, do nothing to promote human security.

Comprehensive human security may seem like a distant ideal. But if promoted and supported, an ideal may bring positive changes that facilitate its achievement. Joint efforts by states to ensure human security can consolidate cooperation among states and even strengthen security within countries, removing external threats and freeing up economic, organizational and intellectual resources to meet human needs.

The global problem of inequality, which is acquiring bigger, even catastrophic proportions, and is fraught with social upheavals at points of extreme tension makes it even harder to ensure human security.

The global threats of the physical extermination of humankind and civilization as a whole are still real, and they are growing even more dangerous amid the irresponsible speculations of certain politicians and military leaders about a “limited nuclear war.”

The 2020 US presidential election campaign took place amid unprecedented encroachments on human rights and human security that sparked large-scale riots and humiliated human dignity. Their catalyst was the slogan “Black Lives Matter,” which frequently turned into violence against white people and overblown, provocative and destabilizing demands to protect the rights of the minorities. The principles of equality, freedom and democracy, the values nominally defining American society, were turned upside down by the apotheosis of destruction that flooded the country and, in many respects, threatened human security.

Progressivism as an ideology that promotes the notion that the Western path of development is the only correct path is being revised and increasingly rejected by other cultures and civilizations. The political exploitation and verbal fetishizing of the Western world’s freedoms, which are actually rather notional, are clashing more frequently and more dangerously than before with the moral and religious foundations of other communities inside and outside the Western countries in relations with national diasporas.

Today, security has become a global and comprehensive problem encompassing the whole world, humanity and every individual.

## **International Financial Organizations’ Efforts to Counter the Spread of the Coronavirus Pandemic and Help Affected Countries**

**Roman Marshavin**, *Executive Director at the Board of the World Bank Group representing the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic, Candidate of Science (Economics)*

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THE STATE of the global economy even before the coronavirus pandemic was cause for major concern.

The spread of the coronavirus pandemic led to a de facto “freeze” in several key sectors of the global economy, the disruption of global value chains, extreme volatility on commodity and financial markets and all-time high capital flight from emerging market economies. As a result, the world is facing the deepest recession since World War II, which is already double the scale of the 2008-2009 financial turmoil.

It is worth noting that while in the early stages of the pandemic, most experts believed that the outbreak would be localized to China, now it is obvious that at stake is a potential reconfiguration of many global economic processes.

At the same time, it seems that most business leaders would be unwilling to abandon the global division of labor, since multinational companies need global markets to ensure sales and high profitability levels. So, only a partial diversification of distribution chains is possible in the foreseeable future – for example, by partially relocating production facilities from China to Southeast Asian countries to avoid dependence on a single source of critical supplies (for example, medication and personal protective equipment, ventilators, etc.) in the event of a new global quarantine. However, it seems that a complete relocation of entire production chains is a long, drawn-out and costly process.

Similar trends should be expected in agriculture. The closure of borders between countries amid the pandemic has led to a situation where many food importers were unable to receive deliveries on time due to disruptions in logistics chains, the suspension of port operations, transshipment points, etc. In this context, countries will seek to increase strategic food stocks and develop agricultural production even under relatively unfavorable climatic conditions, which may lead to price fluctuations and shortages.

Under these circumstances, the World Bank continues to analyze the development of the food security situation in all countries, promote international cooperation and coordination, prevent the erection of new barriers and provide targeted aid to low-income groups via food stamps or direct monetary subsidies.

The hardest hit sectors include tourism, the oil and gas sector, the air transport industry, the automotive sector, retail sales, consumer electronics and microelectronic components.

On the positive side, the current pandemic will significantly accelerate the process of digitalization, automation and robotization that had started gaining momentum before the outbreak. The widespread introduction of distance learning has laid the groundwork for reforming the education system.

To minimize the risks of the second wave of the pandemic, the World Bank has significantly increased assistance to strengthen national systems of public health preparedness and social security.

Under the current circumstances, funding priorities include the purchase of ventilators, masks, other protective equipment and tests, the conversion of hospital wards into intensive care units, and medical staff training programs. The World Bank is also actively involved in the WHO Working Group on COVID-19 Vaccines.

Another priority for the World Bank is supporting social security systems, including by providing targeted aid to the most affected segments of the population in the world’s poorest countries.

A very important task for most countries right now is to prevent an escalation of social tension and protest sentiments due to falling incomes and living standards, not to mention interethnic and other conflicts, including geopolitical ones.

Amid global crises and increasingly daunting political and economic challenges, diplomacy and multilateral cooperation play a pivotal role. Having marked in 2020 the 75th anniversary of the Great Victory in World War II, we recall how the Soviet Union’s ideological opponents at the time were able to

join efforts with us in the name of defeating the common threat of fascism. Today, there is also a pressing need for all countries to join efforts to meet the coronavirus challenge and restore the global economy.

## **Environmental Problems in the Arctic: An International View**

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Currently, a new period of international cooperation on strategic issues in the Arctic region is under way – one that will go well beyond issues of merely culture and science. The modern world is witnessing the rapid creation of new technologies and the replacement of renewable energy sources. This necessitates the creation of new political constructs.

Opinions about global warming vary – some say it is temporary, others describe it as global and permanent – but we must establish our bearings with the current facts.

It seems important to highlight several of today's pressing issues.

The first is the definition of the boundaries of the Arctic region. There is no standard method for defining the boundaries of the Arctic, especially its southern border.

The second issue concerns the legal standing of the Arctic region. It should be noted that momentum is gathering to strengthen the legal mechanism under the influence of various factors, primarily climatic ones.

Environmental issues are now the most pressing, given the scale of the concentrated warming of the Arctic and the glaciers of Greenland. It is frequently said that we have passed "the point of no return".

The main causes of environmental vulnerability in the Arctic region are a combination of two factors: geographic and climatic. The extensive territories of the Arctic, including the waters and islands of the Arctic Ocean, encompass several types of ecosystems: coastal, marine and freshwater. It also contains distinct natural zones – tundra, forest-tundra and arctic wasteland. Each of the ecosystems and natural zones has its own set of ecological features with determinative climatic impact, significantly changing not only from north to south, but also from east to west. The mix of geography and an extreme climate, one in which the processes of chemical decomposition and recovery are slow, is what makes the Arctic region vulnerable.

Studies show that there are some exceptions to the warming trend: There are areas where new ice is accumulating or temperatures are dropping, but the prevailing trend in the Arctic is warming.

Over the last few years, the role of the Arctic in climate change has become much more obvious, since the region is actually a regulator of the Earth's climate, including weather conditions in Europe.

When conducting military maneuvers in the Arctic, the environmental component seems to be an important factor for preserving the region's natural stability. Rising temperatures and melting permafrost will probably require limitations on military activity, with the possible signing of multilateral treaties to that effect.

IN THE FACE of shrinking ice sheets and the resultant growth in maritime traffic, primarily along the Northern Sea Route (Russia) and the Northwest Passage (Canada), ensuring safety and the prevention of

marine pollution are of particular importance. Key points for environmental monitoring as sea navigation progresses are the Barents, Greenland and Norwegian Seas. It should be noted that seagoing activity, for both industrial and tourist purposes, will be constrained by two factors – technical and environmental.

The commercial importance of the Arctic region has always been significant, but it has increased markedly over the last 25 years. Considering that fishing is largely carried out in the economic zones of other countries, primarily in Norway and Iceland, and regulated by bilateral agreements on the exchange of catch quotas, bilateral international cooperation is of particular importance.

As activities expand throughout the region, there will likely be a need to complement existing norms and expand the remit of regional and subregional agreements.

It is important to note that almost all territorial sovereignty issues in the Arctic region have been resolved.

IN RECENT years, the Arctic has become a kind of frontier of global economic opportunity; the prevailing position is that international law in the region is sufficient, and there are no conflicts on the horizon. Nevertheless, it seems important to identify vulnerabilities as we examine Arctic policy in the medium term.

A natural course for Russia in the Arctic would be to develop mutually beneficial relations with all other member states of the Arctic Council, rather than clashing with them.

The key argument for exploring and developing the Arctic is energy.

However, recent events indicate the beginning of a reverse process – i.e., the refusal of global financial players to fund large [energy] projects. For example, in July 2020, Germany's Deutsche Bank announced its termination of funding for new energy projects in the Arctic.<sup>29</sup> Further such actions by other key financial institutions are likely to follow. Falling energy prices, coupled with a simultaneous decrease in demand, have meant a sharp decline in investment to develop new oil fields and a reorientation of capital investments toward [oil and gas] production with easy recoverability, which does not apply to Arctic or offshore projects.

If this happens and continues for a long time to come, then there will be neither an arms race nor a new oil rush in the Arctic region, but rather extremely costly economic competition in the environmental arena.

## **New Trends in Digital Diplomacy in the Time of COVID-19**

**Yegor Leonov**, *political analyst, Candidate of Science (History); leonovgeorge@gmail. Com*

THE YEAR 2020 was significant in terms of the development of digital diplomacy. This is due to two factors.

First, this year we can draw a certain tentative line marking the end of an entire decade-long phase in the development of digital diplomacy and draw initial conclusions.

Second, the events of 2020 have changed modern realities once and for all: The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated global digitalization, including in international relations, diplomacy and world politics.

The benefit of new digital solutions and technologies comes at a cost. Digitalization entails a long list of challenges – in particular, personal data leaks or total monitoring over the individual. The latter has become quite a living reality.

According to cybersecurity experts, Zoom is ideal for eavesdropping and accessing files shared in chat messages. Zoom and similar means of communication have come to present a tremendous threat, considering that amid this pandemic, videoconferencing has become more than just a way for friends and family to connect but is being used for official or even secret communications. There is a reason why the German Foreign Ministry has restricted use of the videoconferencing service among its employees. Similar steps were taken by SpaceX, Tesla and NASA.

Businesses may be dominating the technology field – i.e., in developing new digital technologies – but when it comes to creating information content and influencing the Internet audience, the state remains the main player.

COVID-19 has revealed the capabilities and scale of government's mechanism of influence on social network users more than ever before.

Today, we can say with certainty that humanity is moving into the age of big data diplomacy. For proof of this transition, consider the information campaign around the deployment of 5G networks. After a detailed analysis of hashtags, the tone of comments and posts in social media, and the sentiments of conspiracy-minded Internet users united by a common fear of the spread of COVID-19 and a negative attitude toward 5G, computer algorithms disseminated information about an alleged direct link between the rollout of 5G and hypoxia (abnormally low oxygen content in the body) – i.e., the main clinical sign of COVID.

In short, humanity is moving into a new age of digital diplomacy. At the same time, COVID-19 has provided markers for the further development of digital technologies, while also accelerating the transition to big data diplomacy. In 2021, the information dimension will continue to be defined by the coronavirus problem. The topic of vaccination will take center stage. The countries that are ahead in developing a vaccine will likely launch campaigns to promote their own vaccines, while at the same time discrediting others.

In addition, in 2021, the role of private actors in international relations, especially on social media, will continue to strengthen. The recent decisions to block Donald Trump's Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat accounts, and to block the Parler app, popular among his supporters, make that abundantly clear. The very foundations of modern international legal relations are being revised as freedom of speech is being restricted not by laws, but by the unilateral decisions of social media companies. It turns out that an individual or company can decide at any time to lock a state or an official out of their accounts on social media – the primary tool of government influence today. In any case, 2021 should be an eventful year for digital diplomacy.

## **Council of Europe: Safety Net of Human Rights Instruments**

**Marija Pejčinović Burić**, *Secretary General of the Council of Europe*

THIS YEAR, the Russian Federation will mark the 25th anniversary of its membership of the Council of Europe.

At the end of the 1940s, in the wake of the Second World War, European politicians and intellectuals were determined to learn from the mistakes of the past. The continent had just witnessed a degree of



violence and lawlessness that was unknown in modern history. Millions of lives had been lost through war, judicial and extra-judicial killings, and of course the Holocaust. Instead of having rights, individuals and minorities were too often subject to poverty, persecution and the arbitrary exercise of power and politics.

A year later, after the Council of Europe was formally set-up, an innovative human rights treaty, the European Convention on Human Rights, was signed by twelve member states in Rome (Italy) on November 4, 1950 and entered into force on 3 September 1953.

THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION was the first and the most important of the Council of Europe's conventions. It broke new ground because it put the needs and the dignity of the individual at the center of European justice. It codified the rights to life, liberty and security, privacy and a fair trial; freedom of expression, association and conscience and religion; and freedom from torture, servitude and discrimination. While these key rights have already been stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention had two important and additional features: the right of individual petition and the binding nature of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, which oversees the Convention's implementation.

In November 2020, we marked the 70th anniversary of the European Convention. Over the past seven decades years, this treaty has evolved thanks to the caselaw of the European Court of Human Rights whose interpretation of the Convention ensures its status as a "living instrument," able to adapt to the changes taking place in our societies and the rights relating to situations that could not have been anticipated in the 1950s when the Convention was first adopted.

Over the last 18 years, the Committee of Ministers has monitored some 3,000 cases on the Russian Federation, and some 1,200 of them have been closed by final resolution – i.e., the Committee of Ministers has considered that the Russian Federation has adopted all the necessary measures of individual and general character, in response to the violations found by the European Court.

Positive changes brought about by the execution of judgments include the reform of the judicial review procedure to guarantee legal certainty, improving prison conditions, the introduction of compensation for judicial red tape, putting an end to the automatic deportation of HIVpositive foreign citizens and foreigners who have violated the immigration rules, the protection of the property rights of bona fide buyers, new legal safeguards for military servicemen, and the protection of the electoral rights of convicted persons by lifting a blanket ban on prisoners' voting.

THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION, alongside the European Social Charter, comprises the basis of human rights on our continent today. Together with the network of 223 legally binding treaties and other instruments applying the Convention's principles to specific issues, they create a unique human rights safety net that protects every individual, every community, and every state on the European Continent.

The Russian Federation benefits fully from this. It has ratified almost 70 Conventions and Protocols, including in such vital areas as the prevention of torture and inhuman treatment, the protection of national minorities, the suppression of terrorism, the prevention of sexual abuse of children, and the protection of archaeological heritage, as well as the European Cultural Convention and the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

In November 2020, Russia was among the 17 member States to create a new Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Observatory of History Teaching in Europe. In the context of rising populism, history education that encourages multiperspectivity and critical thinking is key to the development of a culture of democracy.

THROUGH the network of its treaties and conventions, the Council of Europe exercises two of its crucially important functions: standard-setting and monitoring. Based on the Conventions, the

Organization establishes practical standards in a wide number of areas and carries out Europe-wide and country-specific monitoring on how countries implement their obligations under specific conventions and live up to the standards set.

MAINTAINING dialogue with the authorities, parliamentarians, civil society and the media of member States provides a co-operation platform for all of Europe. This was foreseen by the founding fathers of the organization and is another vital function of the Council of Europe. Dialogue is conducted at various levels, in various forums, and with various means of participation.

THE EUROPEAN Convention of Human Rights, the European Court, the network of treaties, partial agreements and monitoring procedures, and the work of our Human Rights Commissioner, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and our Venice Commission – which has become the world's most respected group of constitutional experts and provides independent advice to more than 60 countries – amounts to an extraordinary achievement, which no other continent has ever matched.

But in recent years, we have witnessed throughout the continent an increase in hostility both to the values for which the Council of Europe stands and to multilateralism itself, as well as emergence of new risks. This threat cannot go unanswered.

Of course, some issues flare quickly or arrive unexpectedly: few could have predicted the migrant influx in Europe in recent years, and even though the Council of Europe has no mandate to manage migration, the European Convention on Human Rights does apply to every individual who arrives in our common legal area, and their rights must be respected.

In the Russian Federation, in-service training courses for Russian civil servants have now run for twelve years. They comprise a specific platform for dialogue between our Organization and decision-makers from some 30 federal ministries, agencies and courts, addressing important, pan-European issues, and are in fact the longest co-operation project that has taken place in Russia's quarter-century membership of the Council of Europe.

THE STATUTE of the Council of Europe calls for peace based on greater unity. Seventy years after its ratification, the European Convention on Human Rights remains the foundation stone of that unity. The founding fathers of the Council of Europe could not have imagined the world we now live in, or the scale and depth European Convention's impact today.

## **Open, Equal, Democratic Dialogue: These Are the Principles on Which We Develop PACE**

**Pyotr Tolstoy**, *Deputy Chair of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, head of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), vice-president of PACE, head of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA), head of the State Duma delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union; [tolstoy@duma.gov.ru](mailto:tolstoy@duma.gov.ru)*

IN THE SUMMER OF 2019, an event took place that we had been waiting for for several years: Russia returned to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the rights of the Russian delegation were fully restored.

When Russia joined the CoE in 1996, many felt that we were joining something aspirational. So we diligently strove to change ourselves and fit in, but, as it has become patently clear in recent years, the

attitude toward us has not been changing. Our country has often been criticized and openly attacked by members of the organization. The tension in relations between Russia and PACE peaked in 2014-2015. The reason this time was the return of Crimea to the Russian Federation.

Efforts to restore the rights of the Russian delegation to PACE have been ongoing since the start of the seventh convocation of the State Duma in 2016. At that time, the decision was made to appoint me head of the Russian delegation to PACE, once the delegation was formed. That could happen only after the all the sanctions illegally imposed on our parliamentarians was lifted. We faced a long and difficult path to overcome the crisis in our relations.

Our experience working in the OSCE PA taught us a lot. First, it allowed us to understand and appreciate the goals and objectives of Russian participation in interparliamentary dialogue. In addition, the work helped build an atmosphere of mutual trust, establish direct contacts and keep our foreign colleagues informed about our positions on the entire range of international issues.

On March 10, 2017, Russia took part in a meeting of the PACE Standing Committee in Madrid. During this meeting, it was important for us to convey Russia's position on issues unilaterally discussed in the Parliamentary Assembly in recent years – namely, the situation in Ukraine and Syria.

The results of the Madrid meetings allowed us to move on. First, representatives of European delegations to PACE openly said that there could be no full-fledged European interparliamentary body without Russia. Next, almost everyone, except for the representatives of Ukraine, agreed with Russia's position on the unacceptability of limiting the powers of national delegations. And finally, the leadership of the Assembly was ready to search for solutions.

But not everything in interparliamentary relations depends on the goodwill of those directly involved. We had to contend with many factors that influenced the pace and effectiveness of the negotiations.

An obvious turning point in the protracted negotiations occurred on May 17, 2019 at the 129th meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Helsinki, during which Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stressed that “the systemic crisis affected the work of the main body of the Council of Europe – the Committee of Ministers,” and “truly equitable intergovernmental cooperation within the Council of Europe is no longer perceived as a value”.

It was the head of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who indicated the most urgent task: restoring consensus in the Council of Europe. Lavrov's words were heeded.

The Russian delegation came to the summer session in Strasbourg, but did not enter the hall until all the changes in the rules were adopted and our rights were fully restored: We were fully prepared to leave Strasbourg at any moment.

UNDOUBTEDLY, Russia's return to PACE was a victory for Russian parliamentary diplomacy. But even after resuming our work in the Strasbourg Assembly, I often hear hard-hitting questions from my voters. There are many of them.

My answer is this: If illegal actions are taken against a person, this person goes to court, hires a lawyer and pays him or her money – a lot of money, by the way. This, too, is a case of defense, but of defending the honor of an entire state.

We will continue to defend Russia's interests in all international platforms; we will continue to debunk the myths of Western propaganda. Russia really needs help from those who preserve Russian traditions, culture and language abroad despite and regardless of aggressive Russophobic attacks, and who disseminate objective information about modern Russia in their countries of residence.

As for current challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed a huge challenge to our collaboration with fellow parliamentarians from other countries. The work of all interparliamentary organizations, such as PACE, the OSCE PA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and several others, has moved online. At the same time, in my opinion, the pandemic situation gives the Council of Europe a rare opportunity to monitor the best and worst practices of the governments of all 47 member states with respect to a specific issue. This is a rare case where it is possible to put politics aside and remember that human rights also have a social and economic dimension.

We do not exclude possible crises in our relations with the Council of Europe in the future, and we are ready for them. However, on our end, we are doing everything to prevent this. I believe that these risks stem from the fact that PACE has not yet renounced all its self-appropriated powers to levy sanctions, in contradiction of the Helsinki Accords.

## **Cooperation Between the Russian Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council of Europe: History, Achievements and Prospects**

**Tatyana Moskalkova**, *Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation, Honored Lawyer of Russia, Professor, Doctor of Science (Law), Doctor of Science (Philosophy)*

TODAY, we can hardly overestimate the role of integration communities in strengthening the safeguards of human rights and freedoms that are constantly being tested, challenged and threatened in our turbulent world. The Council of Europe plays the leading role on the European continent. It remains the most respected international entity for setting standards for the rule of law, human rights, democratic development and cultural interaction.

It was set up “to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realizing the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress.

Throughout its history, the Council of Europe has been consistently consolidating the foundations for the sustained development of the human rights space on the territories of its members. The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the European Convention on Human Rights),<sup>3</sup> signed in 1950, serves its legal foundation – its Constitution of sorts that created the mechanisms for the collective protection of human rights and basic freedoms on the European continent.

The European Convention on Human Rights conceptualized absolute values that should be preserved under any circumstances.

As distinct from other international acts, the Convention envisioned the creation of a supranational judicial authority: the European Court of Human Rights (Article 19).

The Council of Europe expanded the European Convention on Human Rights with a set of documents: the European Social Charter, the European Cultural Convention, the European Convention on Extradition, the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), etc.

It has also created monitoring mechanisms and institutions to consolidate and protect human rights and freedoms.

In 1996, the Russian Federation joined the Council of Europe; on March 30, 1998, it ratified the European Convention on Human Rights, thus recognizing the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. These events were powerful determinants of Russia's integration in the European and marked a new stage in the development of law enforcement in Russia.

In 2014, the delegation of the Russian Federation in PACE was deprived of the right to vote because of events in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine and the reunification of Crimea with Russia.

In late June 2017, the Russian Federation (whose financial contribution was usually one of the biggest together with the contributions of France, Germany, Italy and the UK) suspended its payments to the Council of Europe, since its delegation was absent from PACE.

In 2019, Russia together with its European partners overcame the protracted institutional crisis. The PACE summer session began with the adoption of a resolution that its members' "rights to vote, to speak and to be represented in the Assembly and its bodies shall not be suspended or withdrawn in the context of a challenge to or reconsideration of credentials," which fully restored the rights of the Russian delegation.

ENCOURAGING and supporting national human rights commissions is a key function of the Council of Europe. Based on an analysis of the results of monitoring national human rights commissions and summarizing their best practices, several fundamentally important documents consolidating their regulatory framework have been developed and adopted.

IN RUSSIA, the post of human rights commissioner was instituted by the Russian Constitution passed by general voting on December 12, 1993, and confirmed by Point "d" (Part 1) of Article 103 of the Constitution.

In recent years, the Commissioner, acting jointly with the Council of Europe, has implemented three joint projects:

- Russian public monitoring commission (PMC) – new generation
- International Human Rights Standards and Mechanisms for Russian federal and regional human rights commission administration officials
- cooperation in implementing the Russian National Action Strategy for Women (2017-2022)

The project "Cooperation in implementing the Russian National Action Strategy for Women (2017-2022)" was implemented by the Commissioner jointly with the Council of Europe, Russian Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Russian Foreign Ministry. As part of the project, a wide range of events took place on preventing violence against women, promoting their well-being and expanding their involvement in political and public life.

The Commissioner and the Council of Europe hold regular consultations on topical human rights issues. Between 2018 and 2020, we held over 25 consultations to discuss systemic problems and specific cases.

Overall, cooperation with the Council of Europe in the last three years has yielded positive results on several cases related to the lives of specific individuals.

All too often, human rights are used as an instrument of political pressure, while the fates of specific individuals are put on the backburner. Certain states try to weaponize the bright ideals of human rights advocacy for the sake of economic, political and reputational gains.

## Russia in the Council of Europe: 25 Years of Legal and Judicial Cooperation

**Mikhail Galperin**, *Representative of Russia at the European Court of Human Rights, Deputy Minister of Justice of Russia, Professor, Department of International Law, National Research University-Higher School of Economics, Doctor of Science (Law)*

FEBRUARY 28, 2021, marks a quarter century since our country joined the Council of Europe. This anniversary date is a grand opportunity to evaluate our experience and determine further priorities for cooperation.

In joining both the Council of Europe and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the main result for Russia is that it has actively joined the system of international human rights protection and implementation of international standards in the country's legal system.

In recent years, both Russian legislation and its law-enforcement practices have undergone important changes, some taking place under the noticeable influence of rulings by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The positive nature of those changes has been continually reaffirmed over time.

Measures taken under the influence of ECHR practice have enabled us to make strides in solving other problems and drafting innovative legislation.

Many problems of the Russian judicial system that seemed urgent and even insurmountable at the time they were identified by the ECHR have been successfully dealt with or have lost their urgency and relevance, thereby removing any basis for noisy political outbursts by our opponents in the global arena.

And yet we cannot neglect to mention serious problems associated with the activities of the ECHR itself, which must be jointly resolved by the states of the Council of Europe. For example, among these is the not fully transparent system for selecting and moving cases, wherein the European Court almost always gives priority to cases in which the applicants are opposition figures, and court procedures are set in motion even though there is no evidence that the Convention has been violated or that domestic remedies for legal protection have been exhausted. Meanwhile, "ordinary" applicants are forced to wait years to have their cases heard in the ECHR.

A serious challenge for the ECHR has been interstate complaints, which raise political issues and public outcry, inevitably posing a threat to the court's reputation.

The Constitution of the Russian Federation explicitly proclaims that the human being, vested with human rights and freedoms, is the highest value. The recognition, observance and protection of human and civil rights and freedoms are obligations of the state. Neither in the Russian Federation's previous Constitution, nor in the updated 2020 version, is there conflict between Russian law and international law.

Russia is not alone in encountering contradictions between rulings of international bodies and its own foundational legal documents. For example, several of Germany's Constitutional Court rulings, including some related to ECHR decisions, have indicated that an international treaty has the status of an "ordinary statute" and that the state has the right to disregard it in cases when it contradicts constitutional values.

The conflicting interpretations of legal texts by international and national bodies, including courts, inevitably affect the fundamental elements of these states' legal systems, the relationship between law and politics, and the content of fundamental rights and freedoms – even the very concept of "democracy."

Engaging in such a constructive dialogue, with consensual decisions worked out and implemented, will enable states to comply more effectively with the provisions of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It will also increase trust in the ECHR and other institutions in the Council of Europe, as well as ensure the unity of our peoples on the path toward creating a common and, naturally, a better future.

## **Security Challenges in the Baltic Region**

**Yury Zverev**, *chief specialist, Institute for Geopolitical and Regional Studies, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, Kaliningrad, Russia, Associate Professor, Candidate of Science (Geography);*

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THE FUNDAMENTAL economic, political and medical challenges before us are universally recognized. Discussion is centered around a second question – namely: How are these challenges effecting global and European agendas? With respect to the East European security agenda, there has been practically no effect. In 2021, the United States and NATO will step up their military activity in Poland and what are known as the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – and try to create as much trouble as possible for Russia and Belarus. Russia will be the hypothetical adversary in the planned Defender-Europe 21 command post exercise, as in preceding Defender-Europe exercises. This was common knowledge for a long time, but everybody avoided discussing it publicly. That has changed.

NATO formulated its strategy for the Poland/Baltic region some time ago. NATO has kept four multinational “enhanced forward presence battlegroups” in Poland and the Baltic countries on a six-month rotational basis since 2017. US troops make up the largest single proportion of the group deployed in Poland. Germans, Canadians and Britons form the largest single proportions in the groups stationed in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, respectively.

The United States continues to rotate US units deployed in Europe, as it has since 2017: All personnel and armaments of an armored brigade combat team and a combat aviation brigade (an Army helicopter force) are replaced after a nine-month stint, and various logistical units rotate too.

Infrastructural and other arrangements are being made for the United States and other NATO countries to rapidly build up their armed forces in Poland and the Baltic states.

On November 20, 2020, a new forward headquarters was ceremonially opened in Poznan for the US Army’s V Corps. It was announced that about 200 troops would eventually be assigned to the unit in Poland. The headquarters is to be fully operational by November 2021. The duties of V Corps include a key role in the planned Defender-Europe 21 exercises, which will take place in the Balkans and the Black Sea region in spring 2021.

NATO units deployed in Poland and the Baltic countries include air forces, which are also rotating.

The United States is continuing to enlarge its forces stationed in Poland. Under the US-Poland Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) of August 15, 2020, the United States is to boost its military personnel in Poland, currently 4,500, by at least 1,000.

Although Poland has failed to persuade the United States to station a permanent base (provisionally named Fort Trump) on Polish territory for hosting a division- or at least a brigade-sized unit, and US

troop increases in Poland have been comparatively small, those personnel enlargements should not be underestimated.

Russia is anxious about the Redzikowo base plan, not only because the base would pose a potential threat to Russian missiles, but also because the vertical launching systems (VLSs) to be installed at this base, just as those already installed at a US missile defense base in Romania, are similar to those US warships are fitted with and can launch not only interceptor missiles but also Tomahawk cruise missiles, including Tomahawks with nuclear warheads.

Poland and to a lesser extent the Baltic states are modernizing and enlarging their arsenals.

But COVID-19 scuttled these plans. On March 11, 2020, the US European Command (USEUCOM) announced that the number of American troops slated to participate in Defender-Europe would be cut.

Despite allegations that exercises by NATO and individual member nations of the alliance have purely defensive objectives and are not directed against Russia, they include simulated offensives against an unnamed adversary that is nearly as powerful as NATO, and that can only be Russia.

Legitimate Russian responses to NATO military activities are presented as threats, and concrete plans are announced for military counteraction.

It needs to be admitted that relations between the United States and Russia in general and their policies in the Baltic region are essentially rivalries and will remain so for a long time to come.

The paramount task for 2021 is to prevent the Baltic countries and Poland from becoming the source of a global conflict. Other, more complicated aspects of building a regional security system, though important, should be seen as long-term tasks.

## **Armenia After the Karabakh Conflict**

**Alexander Ananyev**, *Senior Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, retired*; [a-ananjev@yandex.ru](mailto:a-ananjev@yandex.ru)

ON NOVEMBER 9, 2020, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and President of Russia Vladimir Putin signed the Statement on a Ceasefire in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The postwar political situation in Armenia reached critical dimensions mainly due to the collapse of prewar idyllic ideas about the Armenian army's battle-worthiness and exalted faith in the country's leader.

Daily reports of the official media from the front line bred unfounded hopes of an impressive victory, so the agreement under which Armenia retreated from the "safety belt" and part of Karabakh territory came as an unexpected blow.

The opposition capitalized on the indignation that came after the stupor; it organized large-scale protests and demanded a change of government.

Protestors called Pashinyan a traitor and started issuing ultimatums for him to resign, which Pashinyan, after recovering from the shock, calmly ignored. He did not even need to resort to harsh methods against the protesters; several legal actions against the most active opponents were enough to quell the protests.



IN THE two and a half years since seizing power in the “velvet revolution,” Pashinyan has been working hard to establish control over the “fourth branch of power.”

Some journalists suspected the authorities of inciting attacks on opposition media.

For obvious reasons, Armenian leaders needed stronger positions in the country’s information space, so people close to the “powers that be” were appointed to top posts in agencies regulating public TV. In June 2020, the republic adopted a new version of the Law on TV and Radio of the Republic of Armenia, implying the transfer of most privately owned TV channels from the publicly accessible multiplex to satellite and cable platforms.

The current authorities are sparing no effort to consolidate their positions in the information space by using loyal mass media and social networks, whose role in spreading political information across the country is steadily growing (Facebook, in particular) and is not far behind TV. The younger generation is more interested in pro-Western media.

The “fake news” and “troll” factories are run by certain figures in parliament and government. Each of them sets up groups within their department to monitor and respond to information in real time.

THE INFORMATION campaign of the ruling party has produced positive results: A fairly big segment of society still believes in the revolutionary government and remains convinced that it should not be changed. The resignation or removal of the prime minister would be a double disaster for these people.

As of January 2021, the My Step Alliance parliamentary bloc, still led by Pashinyan, held the constitutional majority in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia VII convocation with 88 out of 132 mandates.

Pashinyan is refusing to resign not only out of fear for his own safety after stepping down, but because he intends to restore his reputation amid the new geopolitical realities. That is what his “velvet revolution” comrades-in-arms are insisting on. They are urging their leader to push aside the “velvet” and restore stability and order with the help of law enforcement forces.

Today, now that the war is over and Russian peacekeepers are in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian authorities are obviously striving for mutual understanding with Russia’s political leaders.

According to the opposition, despite their continual deference to Russia, the majority of those who sided with Pashinyan and were brought to power by him are receiving American grants and have a pro-Western orientation, so under favorable conditions, the ruling elite will not miss the chance to align their practical steps with their own convictions.

According to Armenian political analysts, if supported in the early elections, Pashinyan will continue the purge (lustration) of the “old elite” in all spheres (political, legal, media, scientific and cultural), which will not bring the consolidation necessary to overcome the crisis and will only widen the divisions in society.

ACCORDING to the opposition, the top priority is Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s resignation, which it intends to pursue along four avenues.

First, the prime minister resigns on his own accord; second, the parliament discusses his removal at an emergency meeting; third, the Prosecutor General’s Office brings a criminal charge of high treason; fourth, at the request of two-thirds of its members, the government convenes an emergency meeting to discuss the resignation of the prime minister.

The opposition explained why it prefers not to talk with Pashinyan about early elections: An election campaign would distract people from their work and precipitate an economic and humanitarian

collapse; crowds and rallies, usual features of all election campaigns, would create even more problems with COVID-19, while nobody would discuss security issues with the authorities.

According to Tevanyan, that could bring the country to the brink of civil war.

ON THE WHOLE, many in Armenia expected that the people would revolt against Pashinyan and remove him with just as much indignation or even wrath as when the people led by Pashinyan removed Serzh Sargsyan in spring 2018. But it quickly became clear that the political activeness of Armenian society was low, in large part because of the apathy that typically comes with defeat.

It seems that without a “third force” reflecting the hopes and aspirations of the majority of the republic’s population, people will not be interested in the coming elections. In December 2018, when the revolutionary euphoria was at its peak and the mobilization of Pashinyan’s supporters was strong, less than half of eligible voters came to the polls. Today, the turnout would likely be even smaller. This means that most Armenians will hardly accept the results as legitimate.

## **Russia’s Energy Relations with Saudi Arabia**

**Envarbik Fazelyanov**, *Senior Adviser, International Institute of Energy Policy and Diplomacy at Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MIEP MGIMO), Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary; Fenvarbik@hotmail.com*

THE CURRENT RELEVANCE of the topic of Russia’s “energy relations” with major energy-exporting countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is largely determined by the threat of the coronavirus pandemic and the economic crisis. Compromise and the ability to coordinate efforts to ensure energy security are distinctive aspects of these relations.

The global interests of Russia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) – two energy superpowers that help maintain balance in the world oil market – complement each other and at the same time require their energy sectors to reduce their dependence on crude oil and their government budgets to become less dependent on oil and gas revenues.

In the early 2000s, Russian foreign policy underwent significant adjustments reflecting the intensification of old problems and the emergence of new challenges and threats to international, economic and regional relations. Russia’s geopolitical and economic interests prompted a shift towards its traditional global role: ensuring sustainable growth and consolidating the country’s external economic position.

A distinguishing characteristic of the present stage is active international energy cooperation and diplomacy, where Russia’s relations with leading energy organizations and companies have played an important role. Russia’s foreign energy policy is usually within the purview of its foreign policy and energy authorities, which sometimes have to work together with strategic companies to maintain the country’s image as a key player in the global energy market and create conditions for normal interstate relations in the energy sector.

Important changes have taken place in the political and economic relations between the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, opening up qualitatively new horizons for cooperation. An essential feature of these changes was the launch of a mechanism for interaction in the energy sector.

Indeed, the intensive and meaningful interaction between Russia and Saudi Arabia in recent years has become a significant phenomenon in the Middle East, North Africa and the Muslim world as a whole.

One of the initiators of this process was Yevgeny Primakov, an outstanding Russian statesman, Arabist and patriarch of Russian diplomacy. He was well aware that cooperation with Saudi Arabia, the leader of the Arab Muslim world and a top oil producer, would open a wide window of opportunity for our country.

Over the past 15 to 20 years, Russian-Saudi relations have been uneven, as they are today, with a fluid understanding of the new format in the energy sector. For a while, Russia and Saudi Arabia even found themselves in opposite camps over a “diplomatic incident” in the energy field following the collapse of the OPEC+ deal on March 6, 2020.

But past years have shown that the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can be partners and even allies, not just competitors, as it was previously believed.

In November 2015, Vladimir Putin met with the King of Saudi Arabia on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Antalya, where they discussed the monarch’s future visit to Moscow. The King’s state visit to the Russian Federation – the first official visit by a reigning Saudi monarch in the history of bilateral relations – took place in October 2017. The parties’ special attention to expanding and diversifying energy cooperation can be inferred from a discussion on stepping up Russian-Saudi cooperation as part of an agreement between OPEC and 11 non-OPEC oil-producing countries to cut oil output that was signed in December 2016 with Moscow and Riyadh playing an active role. The parties also discussed opportunities for revitalizing this agreement in order to achieve positive results and stabilize the oil market. A memorandum of cooperation on the peaceful use of nuclear energy was signed, and the sides discussed developing cooperation in the petrochemical industry and the oil sector.

In 2015-2019, trade and the number of joint projects between Russia and Saudi Arabia grew.

During the talks in Riyadh in October 2019, President Putin commented that Moscow saw Russian-Saudi coordination as an essential element of ensuring security in the Middle East and North Africa. The King of Saudi Arabia, for his part, emphasized that Riyadh appreciated Russia’s active role in the region and in the world.

Successful energy diplomacy has enabled Russia and Saudi Arabia to maintain their position in the market, to have a deficit-free budget, and improve their macroeconomic prospects.

Starting in August 2020, OPEC+ began to test the robustness of the oil market recovery by transitioning to the next stage under the May agreement to gradually ease production cuts from 9.7 mb/d to 7.7 mb/d. Citing a certain recovery in demand, Saudi Arabia and most members of the cartel had advocated loosening the curbs from August until December 2020, in order to prevent the market from overheating in the event of a slight excess of supply or a supply shortage.

There are notable changes in how the key players in the global hydrocarbon market build partner relationships, primarily within the Russia-Saudi Arabia-US triangle. As for Russian-Saudi energy relations, they are of strategic importance and largely determine the level of interaction between the two countries, serving as a platform for finding win-win solutions to problems of regional and global energy security, as well as for developing an international energy security strategy.

## **The Current Situation in Ukraine and Prospects for Its Development a Year After the Normandy Format Summit in Paris: Russian and Czech Experts’ Roundtable**

**Armen Oganesyan**, *Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs*

A YEAR AGO, the leaders of Russia, France, Germany and Ukraine met in Paris to discuss and establish certain agreements for resolving the conflict in Ukraine. The “Normandy Format” meeting at such a high level suggested an impending breakthrough of the impasse in the southeastern Ukraine, but the Ukrainian side backpedaled once again, abandoning the already signed agreements. The civil war in Ukraine is still a bone of contention between Russia and Europe, affecting the security of the entire European region. The domestic conflict continues to destroy the Ukrainian state and economy while further splintering the country’s population. What’s next for Ukraine and the Donbass? To what extent is the Minsk process working for its participants?

**Jaroslav Bašta**, *politician, diplomat, former ambassador of the Czech Republic to Russia and Ukraine*

I HAVE BEEN interested in the situation in Ukraine since when I worked there. In addition, as a member of the Association of Independent Media, I deal not only with human rights issues, but also with the issues of freedom of speech and free journalism. So I take a rather critical view of the situation that has developed in Ukraine. I am concerned that Ukraine, as a center of instability, poses a danger to all its neighbors, including the Czech Republic, even though we have no direct borders.

**Vladimir Zharikhin**, *Deputy Director of the Institute of CIS Countries*

OF COURSE, we are all worried about the fate of Ukraine, not only because we are related Slavic peoples, but also because Russian-European relations and peace of mind on the European continent largely depend on the situation in Ukraine. Therefore, when the Minsk agreements were signed, there was hope for the end of active hostilities and for the stabilization of the situation in Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian leadership at that time did not want to abandon the geopolitical choice it had made during the coup in the country, and the United States, which has great influence on Ukrainian politics, in my opinion, was not interested in implementing the compromise that had been reached between the representatives of Europe and Russia.

At the time the Minsk agreements were signed, the Ukrainian leadership was in a desperate situation.

The United States unequivocally supported their approach. Moreover, taking advantage of the incomplete independence of European countries in international affairs, to put it bluntly, the US seized the initiative. It is no coincidence that negotiations between Vladislav Surkov and Kurt Volker became the main platform for finding a solution to the problem.

Now, Ukraine is not in the condition it was in six years ago, and it has absolutely no intention of complying with the Minsk agreements. Meanwhile, over the years, the possibility of shaping the country as originally envisioned has practically disappeared, because both the DPR and the LPR are unable to imagine themselves as part of the current Ukrainian state.

A crisis, similar to the one that took place 2014 – that is to say, with large-scale military operations – is unlikely. Neither side is interested in that, and nor is the US, which largely determines the situation.

**Vladimir Prorok**, *political analyst, lecturer at Jan Amos Komensky University*

THE GOAL of the United States, in my opinion, is to cut Ukraine off from Russia. This also corresponds to the concept advocated by Zbigniew Brzezinski, who said that Russia can be defeated only when it loses Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia. As for Europe, it supported the coup in Ukraine, hoping that the latter would become an integral part of the West’s economic space and that goods from Europe to Russia would go through Ukrainian territory. First, Europe did not anticipate that Russia would impose customs restrictions. Next, the West hoped that Russia would fall apart without Ukraine.

It hoped that Russia would admit defeat and hand Ukraine over to the West. Instead, Russia acted the way it did, and the West lost that round.

In general, creating hotbeds of tension on the Russian border is an opportunity to drive a wedge between Western Europe and Russia. The Americans have a reason to be horrified at the thought that Russia and Germany could unite.

If Ukraine starts cooperating with Russia, the sanctions will be lifted, which means that the Western elites would lose face. They cannot afford that.

In principle, Ukraine has foreign debt it is unable to pay. And someone in the West must realize that Ukraine can only pay off its debts through trade with Russia, but this option is unlikely to suit the West.

**Rostislav Ishchenko**, *political analyst*

THE QUESTION before us is: "What to do next"? To answer it, we need to understand the condition Ukraine is in today. It must be said that for both the West and for Russia, this condition is deplorable. Speaking strictly hypothetically, I think that coming up with a more or less adequate response to the events taking place in Ukraine would be extremely difficult and I would say altogether impossible under the current conditions.

Ukraine is a split state in which both sides are hostile – moreover, they are irreconcilably hostile and unwilling to compromise. They live in a completely virtual world.

The world in which Ukrainian politicians and, most importantly, the Ukrainian people live is fundamentally different from the one in which we live.

People still say, and for a good reason, that all modern Ukrainian politicians and the entire modern Ukrainian oligarchy were created by Kuchma during his administration and by his efforts. Compared to the privatization that Kuchma carried out in Ukraine, the Russian loans-for-shares auctions were child's play.

The Ukrainian oligarchy emerged from scratch, and society was left with an acute sense of social injustice, which constantly grew. Since Ukraine was split, this sense of social injustice was expressed in two diametrically opposed methods of struggle and in two diametrically opposed foreign policy orientations.

Western and Central Ukraine preached the idea that it was enough to simply join the EU, and after that, everything would settle down somehow. Eastern Ukraine felt that it was necessary to restore, if not the Soviet Union, then some semblance of a common state with Russia, or at least strengthen integration processes with Russia, and then everything would work out by returning to the happy Soviet past.

As a result, when Ukraine fractured in 2014, a rather curious entity, which I call a Nazi-oligarchic regime, formed in the larger part of the country that remained under Kiev's control. That is, cosmopolitan oligarchs remained in power who are far from any ideology and who do not care at all what regime is established in the country, so long as it does not interfere with its further plundering. But they rely on militant formations with a completely obvious Nazi bent.

no matter how much the West supports its part of Ukraine, and no matter how much Russia supports its part of Ukraine, neither can satisfy the innermost needs of the people who seek to somehow create a state that they consider a return to the "golden age." Therefore, the part of Ukraine that remained under Kiev's control now harbors a certain rejection of the West.

Now, by the way, Kiev politicians are in favor of restoring pragmatic relations with Russia, because, if the IMF, the EU and the US are not giving out any money, then let Russia give money. Let's go back to the days when we traded so well, and we will make money this way. But those days are not coming back,

either. Because the Ukrainian economy is practically destroyed, and it cannot be restored. Whatever they used to sell to Russia is now being produced in Russia.

Even if the West and Russia together offer Ukraine some kind of bright future, we will face the fact that both parts of Ukraine do not want this bright future. They do not want to live the way Russia is offering them. They do not want to live the way the West is offering them. They want to live in their own way. There is nothing wrong with that, even if, in the end, one side won or if they separated and each lived their own way. The problem is that they cannot live in their own way without outside support. And this outside support has to increase every year.

Apparently, the chain of events in Ukraine must reach a certain logical conclusion, and then it will become obvious that it's over, that this stage has been passed and a new one can start. The Ukrainian crisis must run its course, and it hasn't yet.

**Maksim Grigoriev**, *member of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation (OPRF), director of the Foundation for the Study of Democracy*

OUR EVENT marks the one-year anniversary of the Normandy Format summit, which took place in Paris on December 9, 2019. The agreements adopted at the summit included an agreement to ensure a complete comprehensive ceasefire. ... In fact, shelling from the Ukrainian side is a daily occurrence. There is no ceasefire. By the way, this is all happening deliberately, openly, in violation of all agreements.

The Minsk agreements include a provision on introducing amendments to the Ukrainian Constitution regarding a special status for the Donbass. However, no changes have been made, not in all these years; moreover, the official position of Ukraine is that there will be no changes.

In 2018, the Supreme Rada adopted a law rejecting the dialogue with the Donets Basin required by the Minsk agreements. Kiev is not complying with the provisions on amnesty for those in the DPR and LPR. The blockade is only getting worse. There is one more example. In 2020, local elections were held in Ukraine. Under the Minsk agreements, Ukraine was obligated to hold those elections in the DPR/LPR as well. However, the Supreme Rada passed a law this year that prohibits holding elections in southeastern Ukraine. There are many such examples. Ukraine clearly declared its position, stating that it would not implement most provisions of the Minsk agreements and summit agreements.

Ukraine consistently rejects prior agreements. So we can say that, unfortunately, there are currently no prospects for settling and ending the civil war in Ukraine, and the President of Ukraine and the official Kiev authorities bear full responsibility for this situation.

**Jan Campbell**, *Czechoslovak Foreign Institute Supervisory Board member*

AS FOR Ukraine, we can say, "Smile today; it will be worse tomorrow" ... That is how I see the situation.

In terms of normalizing the situation in Ukraine, it would now be possible to talk about the Novorossiia project, which could include Lugansk, Donetsk, the Kharkov region and Kherson. If such a zone came into existence, there would be no Ukraine. In fact, some high-level Kiev officials are talking about it as well.

In terms of economic indicators, Ukraine ranks near the bottom of the list of countries, even below Libya. A large stream of migrants is flowing to European states that give them work permits, primarily Poland. Today, Ukrainians constitute the largest group of criminals in the Czech Republic, as the chief of police can confirm.

I think that Ukraine can't expect money from Europe. Biden is unlikely to help them, either. The Polish window to Europe is nothing more than a round of applause from grateful youth.

As for the war in the Donets Basin, according to Kiev, the ceasefire has been holding for 133 days – the longest stretch since the beginning of the war. Nevertheless, Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel continue to hold exercises, especially with drones. The Ukrainian military is sending military equipment to the line of contact with the self-proclaimed LPR and DPR, and they plan to use Turkish drones as well.

One gets the impression that the current Ukrainian government is temporary and is not solving anything. When the time comes, Russia and the United States will come to an agreement. I'm relying on Putin's levelheadedness, and I hope that he will not agree to any provocations.

**Yevgeny Baklanov**, *head of the Foundation for Humanitarian Economic Cooperation*

OUR FOUNDATION studies legal and human rights violations, as well as violations of the rights of ethnic minorities in Ukraine. I would like to raise an issue seemingly not directly related to the Donbass conflict, the Minsk agreements, and the results of implementing the communiqué signed in Paris a year ago. The Minsk agreements provide for the return of the Donbass to Ukraine. Therefore, in my opinion, the situation in Ukraine proper constitutes a very important topic, because the issue of returning the Donbass concerns not only territory, but also people. Thus, the issue of respect for human rights in Ukraine is very important.

Unfortunately, over the years of fighting, Ukraine has become a completely different state compared to the pre-Maidan year of 2014. I strongly doubt that Donbass residents want to return to a country where anti-Russian and Russophobic policies are being pursued, where, for example, the Law on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as a State Language is in force – a law prescribing total Ukrainization aimed at squeezing the Russian language out of public life, media, education, medicine and so on. Where laws on education, on complete and universal secondary education have been adopted according to which, starting on September 1, 2020, Ukrainian has become the language of instruction in all Russian-language schools. Where church buildings are being seized and the rights of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church and Orthodox believers are violated. Where history is distorted and Nazi collaborators are lionized. Where right-wing radicalism is rampant.

Right now, in their current formulation, I think that the Minsk agreements can be fully implemented only on one condition. This condition is early parliamentary elections and a government reset that takes into account that center-left parties and parties that are sufficiently willing to interact with Russia will be elected to parliament as a majority and form the majority there.

## **The Eurasian Arc of Instability and New Challenges to Russia**

**Vladimir Kolotov**, *Chair, Department of the History of Far Eastern Countries, St. Petersburg University, Professor, Doctor of Science (History); [v.kolotov@spbu.ru](mailto:v.kolotov@spbu.ru)*

**Alexey Maslov**, *Acting Director, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Professor, Doctor of Science (History); [ifes@ifes-ras.ru](mailto:ifes@ifes-ras.ru)*

ON NOVEMBER 27-28, 2020, St. Petersburg University's Ho Chi Minh Institute held its 11th international academic conference in the series "Eurasian Arc of Instability and Security Problems from East Asia to North Africa." The conference, which was an online event, had an extension to its title – "Preliminary Results of 2020."

Speakers commented that today's international relations are marked by systemically mounting tensions and more extensive sanctions policies, trade wars and armed conflicts.

China's economic surge, increasing international influence and global and regional initiatives make it the main threat to the global domination of the United States.

China's main vulnerabilities are its territorial dispute with India, which sparked repeated border clashes in 2020, and its sovereignty disputes with Japan and Southeast Asian nations over islands in the South China Sea. The US tries to destabilize the situation in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Tibet and Hong Kong, habitually accusing the Beijing regime of human rights violations and branding it as undemocratic. The US's skillful use of proxy forces enabled it to create painful problems for Moscow in Afghanistan and afterward in the Caucasus. This American model of using proxy actors to harm rivals has proven effective, and Washington obviously has no intention of abandoning it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the international situation. China quickly managed to cope with the virus in the first half of 2020 by imposing strict quarantines. The US, on the other hand, too focused on economic and digital sanctions, was late in responding to the coronavirus and became the country with the most coronavirus fatalities.

The situation in East Asia is increasingly characterized by growing political, economic, military and technological rivalry among the region's main actors.

China's position was significantly strengthened by an agreement that created the world's largest free trade bloc – the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The inclusion of Southeast Asia, a key region from the viewpoint of the global balance of power, into the Chinese sphere of influence means the further strengthening of China. And because neither India nor the US sees China as a friend, it simultaneously means the weakening of India and, indirectly, the US, since India is clearly currently under American influence.

Instability is quickly exported to neighboring and more distant regions. In 2017, compact Islamic State<sup>1</sup> groups with combat experience that were relocated from the Middle East to Myanmar and the Philippines stress tested those two countries' ruling regimes, calling their stability into question. Simultaneously, in Russia, a powerful foreign-orchestrated media campaign was launched condemning "anti-Muslim genocide" in Southeast Asia. A big role in that phantom campaign was played by widely disseminated photos of Buddhist monks surrounded by corpses. This media attack soon triggered rallies in Russian cities and assaults on Buddhists. It somehow escaped the attention of the defenders of Southeast Asian Muslims that the main religion in Myanmar is Theravada Buddhism, whereas the aforementioned photos showed Tibetan monks – Tantric Buddhists – helping army troops dig through rubble after an earthquake in Tibet several years before the alleged genocide in Myanmar.

Destabilization in North Africa and throughout Eurasia, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Arctic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, is obviously a systemic effort.

The alpha and omega of today's neocolonial policy in Eurasia is to disintegrate the latter by stirring hostility, unleashing information wars and creating other sources of tension. This has led to the establishment of a continent-wide system of arcs of instability that already consists of eight sections.

The "color revolutions" in Georgia and Ukraine, ongoing efforts to cut off the "Belarusian bulge" by destabilizing the situation in Belarus, and the new crisis in Kyrgyzstan are obstacles to Eurasian integration and threats to Russia's economic, security and cultural interests.

Russian is undoubtedly a language of interethnic communication and needs to be promoted as such. But we will have limited knowledge of our eastern neighbors with whom we have long lived in the same country if we do not have specialists in their languages and cultures, and this may cause us costly mistakes. Economic cooperation is pivotal to stability. It should involve building numerous and effective production chains, seeking self-sufficiency for Eurasia, which is a huge market, and encouraging



coordination, including forming cartels of the type of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus (OPEC+). All this would minimize damages from US trade wars and sanctions.

Creating a stable, independent and profitable air transportation system for Russia and Eurasia in general would be completely in line with the objectives of the National Wealth Fund.

Eurasia faces a wide range of political, military, economic and cultural problems. Continuous comprehensive analysis and accurate forecasting are indispensable for coming up with solutions.

## **The SCO and Eurasian Security Issues**

**Bakhtiyer Khakimov**, *Russian President's Special Representative for SCO affairs, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary; [sco@mid.ru](mailto:sco@mid.ru)*

I HAVE studied the conference materials with great interest. The topic is especially important and relevant, considering that Russia has just concluded its year-long presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The year 2021 will mark 20 years since the establishment of the SCO. This is not very long by historical standards. However, during this time, the SCO has not only firmly asserted itself, but is attracting increased attention and emerging as a platform for addressing a broad array of issues – above all security, sustainable development and humanitarian cooperation – through consensus and by taking into account the interests of each state. Today, the SCO space encompasses almost all of Eurasia – from East and Southeast Asia to Europe (including member states, observers and dialogue partners) – which is home to more than 40% of the world's population and accounts for a quarter of global GDP. The SCO has two permanent members of the UN Security Council and four nuclear powers among its participants. In short, there is great potential for development. Taking all factors into account, I believe that joining forces will have a synergistic effect that will serve the interests of all states of Greater Eurasia.

In this context, I would like to recall the Russian president's initiative regarding the Greater Eurasian Partnership, which envisions combining the potentials of the SCO, the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and in the future, also the European Union.

The international conference on the Eurasian arc of instability has already become a kind of brand of St. Petersburg State University, particularly its Faculty of Asian and African Studies. I believe that this is a highly relevant topic that requires further development. In my opinion, it is advisable to include participants not only from member countries, but also observers and SCO dialogue partners.

It is important to hold not only theoretical, but also pragmatic, applied discussions. It is essential to analyze events that have already occurred and outline possible turns of events, making specific forecasts and proposals with relevance for foreign policy practitioners.

I wish you success. May your discussions be constructive. I am sure that next year we will meet again, but in St. Petersburg, within the hospitable walls of the university. Good luck and good health!

## **CSTO Model Lawmaking as a Response to Challenges and Threats from the Eurasian Arc of Instability**

**Sergey Pospelov**, *Executive Secretary of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly, Associate Professor at the State University of Management and the Russian Foreign Ministry's Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Candidate of Science (Economics)*

OVER the past several decades, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has evolved as an internationally recognized instrument of ensuring regional security and the collective protection of allied states against external aggression.

The parliamentarians of CSTO member countries face the task of synchronizing and harmonizing national laws and improving them based on accurate forecasts, and monitoring the military-political situation in the CSTO's area of responsibility.

In the context of "soft power," modern challenges and threats to stable international development go beyond classic warfare, intruding into digital, economic and humanitarian domains.

Thanks to systemic and comprehensive approaches, the CSTO's model legal framework is up to date and in some cases even ahead of the curve, and is characterized by a high degree of implementation at the national level.

A prime example of expert cooperation is the Parliamentary Assembly's yearslong participation in the Eurasian Arc of Instability project run by St. Petersburg State University's Faculty of Asian and African Studies that makes it possible to quickly use pertinent and timely academic insight in the course of parliamentary monitoring of the military-political situation in the CSTO's area of responsibility and along its borders.

The value of such interaction was clearly demonstrated amid the political crises in the Republic of Belarus and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, as well as during the "hot stage" of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Work in all of the aforementioned areas will remain relevant for future interparliamentary cooperation. Corresponding goals and activities were included in the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly's Program for Coordination and Harmonization of National Laws 2021-2025, which was adopted in November 2020.

The results achieved so far make it possible to assert that model lawmaking has proven to be an effective mechanism for achieving the CSTO's statutory goals, harmonizing national laws and developing observer and partner institutions in Greater Eurasia.

## **Use of the Subjunctive Mood in Polish Historical and Geographical Discourse**

**Vladimir Nikanorov**, *member of the Journalists' Union of Russia; [nikanorov\\_vs@mail.ru](mailto:nikanorov_vs@mail.ru)*

In the 1970s, I was serving in the Northern Group of Forces, a Soviet Army group stationed in Poland. The office of the divisional newspaper where I was working at the time was situated in Borne Sulinowo, a town about 20 kilometers from Szczecinek.

The Federation of Expellees (Bund der Vertriebenen, BdV) was quite vocal in West Germany. This organization brought together Germans of East Prussia and Silesia who were forced to leave their

homes after World War II and move to the western part of Germany that soon received the name Federal Republic of Germany. Altogether, about four million people moved. They were not all old.

Under the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (Two Plus Four Agreement), unified Germany stated that it claimed none of any other country's territory and pledged to have no such claims in the future, but it was only in 1990 that this accord was signed. So my Polish friend had good reason to see the Soviet Army as secure insurance against a new *Drang nach Osten*.

Unfortunately, a lot of people in Poland did not understand this. Anti-Soviet and anti-Russian propaganda had started already. It was not massive, but it was insidiously and surreptitiously starting to seep into the minds of people who were too young to have experienced the horrors of war.

Not long ago, a publication appeared on the Internet in which some Polish professor made interesting use of the subjunctive mood in speaking about the history and geography of the 1930s and 1940s. "We could have found a place on the side of the Reich nearly the same as that of Italy, and definitely better than that of Hungary or Romania," that pseudo-scholar argued. "As a result, we would have ended up in Moscow with Adolf Hitler and [Edward] Rydz-Śmigły [commander-in-chief of Polish Armed Forces during the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939 – Trans.] reviewing a parade of victorious Polish-German forces." I can imagine the contemptuous peals of laughter that references to Breslau, Stettin and Danzig as the Polish cities of Wrocław, Szczecin and Gdansk would have set off in the Third Reich in 1939. Those who made such references could very well have been sent to the correctional facility in Auschwitz (Oświęcim), which was still not a Polish town yet, either.

To be fair, Poland is still "occupied" by Soviet soldiers. Especially the part once held by fascist Germany. They will never leave. There are 600,000 of them – soldiers who died while liberating the country from the Nazis. Many Poles remember their liberators. They look after monuments to Soviet soldiers and Soviet war graves. They do their best to prevent the severing of ties between our Slavic peoples.

Unfortunately, there are other misled or malevolent people who are trying to erase historical facts from the public memory. They destroy Soviet memorials and vandalize Soviet graves. They seek to make Poland the tip of a NATO eastbound spear. Many of them hold senior government positions. Leveraging their authority, they go out of their way to persuade NATO to station military bases in Poland. The Fort Trump project alone says enough.

During the Cold War, the West had less than peaceful plans for the East. NATO was set up in 1949, but it was only in 1955 that the Warsaw Pact, the eastern response to it, came into being. After the disbandment of the Warsaw Pact and Moscow's voluntary withdrawal of Soviet forces from Europe, Eastern Europe might have become a demilitarized zone and a site for peaceful cooperation among nations. But it did not. NATO armed forces were quick to advance right to Russia's borders, with the North Atlantic alliance's leadership again citing a mythical threat, this time from Russia, not the Soviet Union. And although NATO proclaims itself to be a beacon of peace, not only for Europe but for the entire planet, Russia is inevitably the adversary in its military exercise scenarios.

Over the past few decades, Polish governments have eagerly been making Polish territory available for various NATO military exercises. But it is curious how historical memories at times surface in the consciousness of advocates of the NATO military machine. One example is an article on a prestigious Polish website about NATO's Noble Jump 2019 exercise.

Wow, I thought. I had been to Świątoszów on business many times before but had not known that it had formerly been called Neuhammer. Granted, every village and town in that region had a different, German name before the war. The author of the article remembered that. But he didn't remember, or didn't want to remember, that it was because of the Red Army that that region became part of Poland. Moreover, according to him – and this may have been his sincere belief – this territory needed to be

defended against Russia, and this defense would be provided by NATO tanks, primarily German. He has very friendly descriptions of meetings with German tank crews in his extensive article.

NATO had planned an annual military exercise for 2020 to take place in some European countries close to Russian borders involving some 40,000 troops. The maneuvers, bearing the lofty codename DefenderEurope 2020, were to be held from February to June. But then the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. Germany canceled its participation in the exercise, which threatened to disrupt its main phase that was to take place on German and Polish territory. Other countries also started wondering whether joining the maneuvers was a good idea. So eventually DefenderEurope 2020 wasn't a large-scale event.

That was logical: The Russian threat was a myth, but the coronavirus was a fact.

Russia is open to constructive relations with all European countries. There are reasons for cautious optimism. Despite the rhetoric of those advocating the flawed policy of sanctioning Russia, various European Union politicians believe that EU policies should be ultimately determined by the interests of EU peoples and economies. "We are willing to talk to the European Union under any circumstances," said Lavrov. "In fact, that's what we are doing now."

## **International Information Security Threats as Side Effects of Modern Technologies**

**Sergey Boiko**, *Department Head, Russian Security Council, and leading expert at the Center for International Information Security and Science and Technology Policy, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Science (History); [boiko\\_sm@gov.ru](mailto:boiko_sm@gov.ru)*

INFORMATION and communication technologies (ICTs) provide humankind with unprecedented opportunities. Mass communication technologies, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, blockchain, big data, e-government, digital medicine, and cryptocurrencies have become part and parcel of our life.

But at the same time, new ICT achievements bring new threats and challenges – primarily to international peace, security and stability, and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.

The first international warning about those threats came from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It was issued in the Agreement among the Governments of the SCO Member on Cooperation in the Field of Ensuring International Information Security of June 16, 2009.<sup>1</sup> The main threats, the agreement says, are the "development and use of information weapons" and the "preparation and waging of information war."

Between 2010 and 2015, key information security threats were analyzed at the UN by groups of governmental experts on advancing responsible state behavior in cyberspace in the context of international security (hereinafter GGEs).

"The global network of ICTs has become an arena for disruptive activity," the report reads. "The motives for disruption vary widely, from simply demonstrating technical prowess, to the theft of money or information, or as an extension of state conflict."

"The source of these threats includes non-state actors such as criminals and, potentially, terrorists, as well as states themselves. ICTs can be used to damage information resources and infrastructures," the report says. But the main conclusion was that, "because they are inherently dual-use in nature, the

same ICTs that support robust e-commerce can also be used to threaten international peace and national security.”

The international community is showing signs of growing polarization over the ways to build a system that, according to Russia, could reliably guarantee security and stability for the global information space.

The aggressive character of the cyber strategies and doctrines of some Western countries, including members of NATO, and statements made by their leaders makes clear that threats to international peace, security and stability, and to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states are on the rise.

In a summary of the strategy, the US Department of Defense promises to “disrupt or halt malicious cyber activity at its source,” and says that the strategy directs it to “prepare for war by building a more lethal force.”

NATO is not supporting initiatives by Russia and most other countries aimed at preventing cyber conflicts. The alliance has been seeking to lay down its own rules for using cyber weapons. It has been developing its own principles for cyberwarfare, deploying cyber command structures, building up its military cyber potential in a bid to create a “more lethal force” for cyber offensives, and taking measures to integrate the resources of various countries for such offensives.

A cyber arms race are certainly not the best path to security and stability in the global information space.

Cyberattacks against nuclear facilities are particularly dangerous.

Hackers inflict millions and even billions of dollars of damage to critical infrastructures and prevent them from being used to meet vital public needs.

The general accessibility and anonymity of the Internet allow terrorist organizations to use social networks to recruit thousands of intermediaries to raise substantial amounts of money to fund their activities. Crowdfunding is a new online source of terrorism financing. Modern technology makes it a simple and generally accessible method. Some people who make donations through social networks do not even suspect that their money is being used to support terrorists.

Aggressiveness spread through social networks and mobile phone systems stirs hatred, encourages discrimination, incites violence, and causes political, social and economic instability.

The Internet is rapidly becoming a instrument of destruction of the moral and cultural values of various nations.

In a bid to harm their ideological adversaries, some countries use their embassies abroad to incite local opposition groups to protests. Such embassies regularly publish online announcements about the rallying points for unauthorized protest demonstrations and post online appeals to join them.

The refusal of ICT companies to share information about the vulnerabilities of their products and services and methods for managing these vulnerabilities is a new threat to developing countries seeking to build their own digital economies.

Most nations share Russia’s view that an international information security system can guarantee strategic stability and equal strategic partnership in the global information space, and prevent the destructive use of ICTs. Helping establish such a system is the goal of Russian state policy in the field of international information security.

## **White Hat Hacking Development Prospects, or Life on the Wave**

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THE EVENTS of 2019 and 2020 have turned everything upside down and transported us to a radically different reality. This is one of those instances where we have all said, in one form or another: “Life will never be the same again.” It is true. The pandemic continues to “reshape” human consciousness, forming a conceptually new paradigm of the world order, unequivocally immersing an increasing number of familiar processes in the digital space. Whereas before ICTs were mainly considered a luxury, a privilege and a means to increase comfort, today they have become the one and only way to maintain habitual life processes.

It’s better to start moving away from impulses and emotions and toward reason, balance, and rational thinking and implementing constructive solutions.

Now is the perfect time to take advantage of the opportunity to set up the system in such a way that Russian interests are taken into account and advanced to the highest possible extent, and the proper level of trust and security is ensured. Otherwise, our life will be determined by a system established by other players in the international arena.

The demand for cybersecurity experts today and tomorrow is very high. That is why the popularity of all kinds of career advancement courses, specialized training, and inter-university education programs is growing rapidly.

The International Cybersecurity Congress organized by Sberbank, Skolkovo CyberDay, cyber exercises organized by Rostelecom group, training exercises conducted on Infotex’s cyber ranges, and the Kuban Cyber Security Conference (autonomous non-profit organization Analytical Agency for Computer Security) have acquired the status of the most significant and promising Russian platforms.

Moscow Technical University of Communications and Informatics (MTUCI) managed last year to hold a “dolphin race”: the final round of the inter-university cybersecurity competition MOSCOW CAPTURE THE FLAG (M\*CTF), which ended in December. The strongest school and college teams demonstrated their skills online. MTUCI is the leading university in organizing M\*CTF inter-university cybersecurity competitions among Moscow universities.

A real hunt for cutting-edge developments in information technologies, or digital technologies, is on the rise. Consequently, the importance of security in providing public services to citizens and protecting personal data, privacy, confidential information and information constituting bank secrecy have not merely justifiably increased: The issue of cybersecurity has become critically important for the entire system of public administration. If the requisite conditions are not in place at the global level, we risk drowning in Band-Aid solutions and attempts to “put out spot fires,” where success is far from guaranteed.

So, the global challenge calls for a global response. Since reaching agreements and adopting top-level documents on an international scale takes a considerable amount of time, we will be proactive and work ahead of the curve – i.e., train highly qualified specialists who can rise to the new, sophisticated challenges of our times.

In conclusion, I would like to note that international institutions such as APEC, BRICS, RCC, the G20, ITU, and a number of others are now ready to become the flagship support team for CTF competitions. We look forward to the year 2021, which will be productive in that sense.

## **Russian Initiatives on Countering Cybercrime**

**Ernest Chernukhin**, *Special Coordinator on issues of political use of information and communications technologies, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, head of a section at the ministry's Department of International Information Security*

THE DIGITAL revolution that began a few decades ago provides tremendous development opportunities to nations, but also creates more opportunities for criminals and makes crime more complex and sophisticated.

Cybercrime is steadily growing in scale. Digital crimes are increasingly diverse and destructive. Their planning, execution and coverup are becoming more ingenious. Individuals, companies and government agencies are increasingly vulnerable to them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant increase in the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs), but also to the emergence of new threats of their abuse and a rise in cybercrime due to lax information security protocols.

The pandemic has had a much clearer effect on cybercrime than on any other form of organized transnational crime.

Cybercrime is following the evolutionary trajectory of street crime, which has historically depended on population numbers. It primarily targets ordinary people and digital networks.

According to the New York-based research company Cybersecurity Ventures, the use of various kinds of malware will likely skyrocket very soon. Ransomware attacks were made on companies worldwide every 40 seconds in 2016, every 14 seconds in 2019, and are expected to be made every 11 seconds in 2021. This may force the global business community to spend more than \$120 billion on cybersecurity in 2021.

In our view, actually, de facto losses are much bigger than what is officially reported. Many governments and companies keep information about their losses secret out of fear of reputation damage and litigations.

Talks at the United Nations are the only way to find an effective solution to global cybercrime. Therefore, Russia and its supporters propose that norms be developed that would be accepted by all interested parties and lay the basis for effective and transparent international cooperation in fighting cybercrime. Such norms could take the form of a UN convention on combatting ICT-related crimes that would consider the interests of all countries and be based on the principles of sovereign equality of parties and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

No country, no matter its level of technological development, can take effective action against cybercrime single-handedly. Cybercrime is a global phenomenon and cannot be successfully dealt with by regional measures alone.

For too long there were practically no focused legal debates on the cybercrime problem, and consequently, due to the absence of a UN-sponsored anti-cybercrime treaty, there are no security guarantees for the legitimate use of ICTs.

Given the politicized and non-consensus character of the cybersecurity issue, it is remarkable that support for the Russian initiatives grew so much over one year, with 47 states co-authoring the 2019 resolution compared with 36 co-authoring the 2018 document. This shows increasing demand for a legally binding treaty on countering cybercrime.

Russia and its allies see the planned convention as yet another universal and comprehensive international law instrument focused on combatting ICT crimes.

Each vote to support the planned convention will be essential for achieving a just and equal digital world order.

## **International Cooperation on Protecting Personal Data: Council of Europe Activities**

**Dmitry Reutsky**, *Acting Director of the Information Security Department of the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation*

**Natalya Babekina**, *Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media of the Russian Federation;*  
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IN RUSSIA, extremely close attention is paid to the processing of personal data. Without clearly regulated data processing principles and information security mechanisms capable of fending off present-day threats, it is impossible to achieve the desired level of trust and security when using information and communication technologies (ICTs).

There is growing interest among the population in protecting their rights and legitimate interests in the processing of personal data. This is largely due to the fact that a wide range of both public and commercial services are currently provided online. This explains today's unprecedented demand for solutions that can guarantee the security of personal data.

International cooperation is the only way to ensure the global protection of personal data and to create a safe environment for the cross-border flow of this data.

Russia is a signatory to the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Individuals With Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108), a legally binding global treaty on personal data protection. Russia ratified the accord in 2013.

In May 2018, a protocol (CETS No. 223) was adopted amending the convention to strengthen its implementation mechanism.

The convention's supreme executive body is its Consultative Committee (T-PD), which consists of representatives (and, if necessary, deputy representatives and aides to representatives) of all the signatory states.

The Committee's functions and responsibilities include proposing ways to facilitate or improve the application of the convention; drafting legal instruments to be submitted to the Council's Committee of Ministers for approval; issuing opinions and recommendations; drafting proposals for amending the convention and stating its opinion on amendments proposed by others; monitoring compliance with the convention by the signatories and recommending measures to pressure a state to comply with the treaty if it fails to do so; and stating its opinion on personal data protection standards in states seeking to join the convention.

The September 28-30, 2020, meeting of the Consultative Committee Bureau was the first to be attended by Russian members of the Committee who had been invited to it as non-voting participants.

The Bureau directs the Committee's work between plenary meetings.



Now that it is represented in the Bureau, Russia plans to more actively advance its interests in the Council of Europe in the next two years in light of Moscow's information security and ICT policy in order to properly enforce the convention as well as draw up other Council of Europe regulatory mechanisms on data protection.

Russia is, moreover, seeking a more prominent role in other specialized Council of Europe bodies. For instance, Mintsifry officials have been included in a Russian permanent interagency delegation to the Council of Europe's Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI).

## **Russia's Representation in the Global Online Information Space**

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**Alexander Sharikov**, *Professor, School of Communications, Media and Design, HSE University; asharikov@hse.ru*

THIS ARTICLE aims to show what place Russia occupies in the global online information space among the leading countries and suggests ways to expand and deepen the study of Russia's image in the international community – research that is highly relevant in the current global situation. We will start with a general look at Russian-language scholarly literature on the subject and then follow principal trends in its study. Then we will point out which parts of this very complex scholarly field remain poorly explored, formulate new methods of research, and present the findings of a pilot project based on these methods. This study was conducted in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

RUSSIA'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE has frequently been studied. There is quite a lot of historical literature in the Russian language that cites and analyzes descriptions of our country and its ethnic groups by foreign authors and travelers since ancient times.<sup>1</sup> Nor is there anything new about the foreign press trying to form an image of Russia.

This tradition of fostering the country's image continued for centuries and in the 20th century became an aspect of ideological propaganda.

In the mid-1980s, things began to change. The Western media, in covering developments in the Soviet Union, shifted from portraying the country as an enemy to portraying it as a partner. In that period, Russian scholars were increasingly interested in how the USSR and then Russia were perceived worldwide.

Between 2000 and 2018, Russia's image in the Western media devolved from being perceived as a partner to once again being perceived as an enemy.

WE WILL EXAMINE the principal trends in the analysis of Russia's image in the Russian-language literature. The main trend is a rapid increase in the number of works on this subject. Among works registered by RINTs, 58 came out between 1991 and 2000, 973 between 2001 and 2010, and 3,075 between 2011 and 2020.

This quantitative growth has led to the differentiation of research areas. There are two principal channels. One is geographical.

The other channel can be called multilevel research. Its simplest form is selective analysis of content in a specific media outlet in a specific country – for instance, The New York Times.

There is, furthermore, a salient trend in Russian image studies that has emerged as a result of scientific and technological progress – namely, the spread of the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs). In the 20th century, such studies were based on the content of print media, and, with the proliferation of audio and video recording, on transcripts of radio and television programs. In the 21st century, however, when most conventional media have been posting content on the Internet, the basis has been laid for research encompassing sources all over the world. Online resources offer extensive opportunities for fourth-level empirical analysis. However, this is an extremely difficult field of analysis, as there exists a huge number of websites.

Studies of Russia's image aimed to identify negative, neutral and positive portrayals of our country in various information resources. In terms of the three-factor model, the Evaluation factor was practically the only of the three factors used as a criterion in these studies. Use of the Potency and Activity factors would make it possible to assess the significance of Russia's global image and its quantitative changeability.

Naturally, a researcher should compare the frequency of references to Russia with that of references to other countries. Quantitative analysis would also make it possible to understand dynamic characteristics of Russia's image (a version of the Activity factor), if several measurements are made at different times. It is these two factors that we focused on in our study. We skipped axiological judgments (a version of the Evaluation factor) for the time being.

Russia led the eight-category language group in 2020. The United States came second and Germany third. South Africa, Canada, and Brazil were mentioned least of all.

However, Russia held different ranks in various language categories. It led in the English and Russian categories but did worse in the other six categories, ranking, e.g., fifth in the Chinese category and eighth in the Portuguese and French categories. The United States was second in all eight categories.

Who are the individuals Russia was usually associated with in 2020? Predictably, Russian President Vladimir Putin was the most frequently mentioned Russian in the 25-language mass of content. The then-US president, Donald Trump, was the second-most cited person.

Opportunities provided by the expansion of the Internet and the emergence of projects to monitor tens of thousands of websites with millions of items posted on them in many languages have been instrumental in furthering the study of Russia's global image. The findings of our pilot study cited in this article show quantitative characteristics of our country's image that have not been studied before.

Our findings open a new page in the study of Russia's global image, and hopefully methods will be developed that will make it possible to discover unknown facts and give practitioners new guidelines in building a powerful, dynamic and positive global image for Russia.

## **23rd National Information Security Forum (InfoSec Forum 2021)**

ON FEBRUARY 4-5, 2021, the 23rd National Information Security Forum (InfoSec Forum 2021) took place in Moscow to discuss the key information security challenges facing Russia. The forum brings together leading national experts, representatives of federal and regional governing bodies, scientific communities and business circles.

This large-scale annual event is traditionally organized by the Russian State Duma Security and Anticorruption Committee and the Office of the Russian Security Council.

More than 2,000 representatives of Russian federal and regional governing bodies, the scientific community, business circles and organizations attended the event titled “Russia’s Sustainable Development in the Digital Age: Managing Information Security Risks.”

The ISF’s agenda included an array of issues related to ensuring Russia’s information security: protection of the state’s critical information infrastructure, the reliability of the national payment system, the development of the information space of Russian regions and cities, the stability of state and municipal e-services, personal data protection and privacy, etc.

The event included an awards ceremony for winners of the Silver Dagger professional information security award, which, according to the organizers, recognizes contributions to the development and advancement of a secure information society in the Russian Federation.

Notably, ahead of Diplomats’ Day, the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Information Security Department received the award for its “outstanding contribution to promoting Russia’s approaches to building an international information security system.”

## **The 130th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Mexico and the Russian Federation**

**Marcelo Luis Ebrard Casaubon**, *Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico*

This year, Mexico and Russia celebrate the 130th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, originally formalized on December 11, 1890. This occasion allows us to renew our commitment to the ongoing strengthening of our ties, under the conviction that working together will bring tangible benefits to both societies.

Over the years, there has been remarkable interaction between illustrious painters, poets, musicians, writers, historians and social activists. Perhaps the best-known episode is the visit to Mexico by filmmaker Sergey Eisenstein, in the early 1930s. This diversity of contacts has brought a nexus of understanding and cooperation, as well as a deep and rich dialogue between our societies. It has given strength, content and continuity to relations between our peoples.

This cultural exchange marking the beginning of our relationship continues to contribute significantly to our friendship.

Among the many commemorative activities in honor of the 130th anniversary, we will hold a joint exhibition of historical documents and photographs on the richness of our relationship. The Mexican Government is also working to expand its presence in the vast territory of Russia, having celebrated the Mexico Days in Samara last year and currently preparing for the next edition in Novosibirsk.

On the basis of sympathy between societies, there is fluid dialogue between governments, which has been enriched by the long and illustrious tradition of Mexican and Russian diplomacy. We are convinced of the importance of international cooperation and are respectful of the principles of international law, including the legal equality of states.

Mexico and Russia have shown their commitment to the multilateral order. We both actively participate in various international forums where our mutual interests are shared. We are convinced that they are

the best option to agree on coordinated actions such as the fight against poverty, inequality and climate change, and to work together in favor of international peace and security.

At the United Nations, our agenda is broad and diverse. We appreciate Russia joining the consensus that led to the adoption, by the UN General Assembly, of resolution 74/274, promoted at the initiative of Mexico and co-sponsored by 179 countries, last April, in order to ensure global and equitable access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment.

In the G20, we are very clear about our respective priorities and we both seek to be constructive actors.

Mexico and Russia are, respectively, the 15th and 11th largest world economies. We work together to continue increasing multidirectional trade and investment flows from business missions. The recent reactivation of the Russia-Mexico Business Committee of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, its expanded membership and its ambitious work program reflect the interest in approaching Mexico in the economic field. In addition, the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation will meet next year, as part of our efforts in achieving an inclusive and sustainable recovery.

Our countries have had a Technical and Scientific Cooperation Agreement in force since 1996, and we are working to strengthen this part of our relationship. We seek to take advantage of the existing potential in sectors such as aerospace and information technology, where we have taken initial steps and have strengthened contacts, visits and agreements between various universities and institutions in both countries. We also seek to generate cooperation in training medical specialists.

In the field of tourism, until the COVID-19 pandemic, exchanges between our countries had been experiencing one of their strongest historical moments, for both nations.

For all of the above reasons, Russia is and will continue to be an important partner for Mexico. Our relationship is strong, and the prospects are positive. We will continue to work together to deepen our ties, broaden our dialogue and understanding, and intensify our collaboration in all areas. All the conditions are already in place.

## **On the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Zimbabwe and Russia**

**Sibusio B. Moyo (1960-January 20, 2021)**, *Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Republic of Zimbabwe*

TODAY marks the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the predecessor state of the Russian Federation, on February 18, 1981.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries was a formalization of the bonds of friendship and solidarity that had been forged between our two peoples during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, for the history of Zimbabwe's independence cannot be complete and fully comprehended without mentioning the critical role and sacrifice of the Russian people. Russia and its sister republics in the USSR, provided moral, diplomatic and material support for our liberation struggle. There is no gainsaying the fact that Russia was, indeed, a cradle, in all its forms, for our liberation fighters who were equipped by this great nation with the skills, tactics, sophistication and materials that were requisite in prosecuting the guerrilla warfare that eventually gave birth to a new Zimbabwe in April 1980. The debt of gratitude for that support will always be deeply etched in the hearts of the Zimbabwean people.

Throughout the last four decades, the Russian Federation has continued to open its doors to Zimbabwe for cooperation. Over the years, the cooperation between our two countries has grown both in its strength and scope.

The ever broadening and deepening cooperation between our two countries is underpinned by the Zimbabwe-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Trade, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, which, since its inception has held three sessions, with the Fourth one, which was due to be held in 2020 being postponed owing to the unforeseen circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have watched with such keen interest Russia's success in developing the SPUTNIK vaccine against COVID-19. This is thanks to the ingenuity and hard work of Russian scientists. We offer our most sincere congratulations to the Russian people for this great achievement. The threat of this pandemic once again illustrates the need for multilateralism, which has been endangered in the last few years.

True to our two countries' time-honored relationship, whose longevity we are today celebrating, the Russian Federation has again been forthcoming in providing Zimbabwe with much needed material support to combat the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, even at a time when Russia itself has been terribly affected. This is the true hallmark of a sincere friendship. For this, Zimbabweans are again most grateful.

Beyond their natural boundaries, the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Russian Federation continue to enjoy each other's support at various fora, including the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement and continental and regional bodies, in pursuit of the two countries' shared vision of a just and peaceful world order, especially in these times of increasing threats to global peace and security.

Long may the bonds of friendship between the Republic of Zimbabwe and the Russian Federation continue to endure and thrive well beyond the auspicious celebrations of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. May these relations also flourish into the next 40 years and more!

## **The Soviet Union and Great Britain in Afghanistan: Uneasy Normality of 1943**

**Yury Bulatov**, *Honorary Professor, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Doctor of Science (History); [mo@inno.mgimo.ru](mailto:mo@inno.mgimo.ru)*

SOVIET and British leaders were informed by their intelligence services about Directive No. 41 that Hitler had signed on April 5, 1942. The directive confirmed that the Wehrmacht was ready to launch a large-scale offensive against the Red Army at the Soviet-German front in spring and summer of 1942: "Our aim is to wipe out the Soviets' remaining defense potential, and to cut them off, as far as possible, from their most important centers of war industry."

On December 12, 1942, Afghan Public Works Minister Rahimullah Khan, well known in ruling circles as the most enthusiastic pro-German politician, unabashedly told Soviet Ambassador Mikhailov: "We Afghans were convinced that in the war with Germany, the Soviet Union would not only be unable to withstand German weapons and offer any serious resistance to their troops, but would quickly and inevitably decay politically and disintegrate."

It was only on February 22, 1944, that Prime Minister of Afghanistan Mohammad Hashim Khan (1929-1946) thanked the Soviet Union. This happened during the visit of the recently appointed Soviet Ambassador Ivan Bakulin to the state residence of the Nader Shah dynasty: "When the Germans had

reached the Caucasus and sought to move further, we were confronted with a real threat – the Germans were moving toward our borders. We thought that our small country could be of little interest to them in its own right. Brought to our borders by the course of events, they would have been interested in our country as a bridge and the only road to India. ... Nothing would have saved us from the German boot trampling down our land. ... This would have been a national catastrophe. So our hearts overflow with warm gratitude to the Soviet Union that saved our country from the inevitable disaster that would have occurred had German arms triumphed at the Soviet-German front.”

The sides agreed that the first meeting between Soviet and Afghan officials was warm and friendly. We should bear in mind, however, that this official meeting took place after the victories of the Red Army at Stalingrad and Kursk Bulge, when the Soviet Union had finally and completely seized the strategic upper hand at the Soviet-German front.

It should be said that throughout 1943, during the peak of the fighting at the Soviet-German front, Mohammad Hashim Khan and his younger brother Shah Mahmud Khan, Afghan minister of war, carefully avoided the Soviet Embassy.

But top officials of the Kingdom of Afghanistan never missed official events at the legations of the Axis Powers.

The Soviet diplomatic mission carefully followed all these “diplomatic maneuvers” of the Afghan leadership and adequately assessed them.

The Soviet Embassy in Afghanistan repeatedly drew the Afghan leadership’s attention to the hostile activities of the diplomatic missions of the Axis Powers in Kabul.

In 1943, the Soviet Union and Great Britain carried out several joint special operations to neutralize Abwehr activities in Afghanistan. Under an agreement of summer 1943, the intelligence services of the Soviet Union and Great Britain became the curators of Bhagat Ram, an Indian Political Intelligence agent. The British had planted him in the Abwehr before the Great Patriotic War. In Moscow, the Soviet and British double agent was known as Rom; in its reports, the Abwehr referred to him as Rahmat Khan.

Highly regarded by Berlin, Bhagat Ram acquired direct access to the diplomatic elite of the Third Reich in Kabul. He was in contact with head of political intelligence of fascist Germany Karl Rasmuss, an officer of the Abwehr registered as a commercial attaché at the German legation.

To further strengthen his positions in German intelligence structures in Kabul, Moscow and London presented their common agent as a fighter against the “hated British colonial regime.” It was decided to reveal to the Third Reich a “secret” about the existence of the Indian National Revolutionary Committee (INRC), alleged to be a clandestine organization led by Ram.

In January 1943, after certifying Ram’s reliability within the “INRC file,” Karl Rasmuss, the German resident intelligence officer in Kabul, gave him the task of finding a suitable person for a long-term “business trip” to Tehran. He was expected to become naturalized in Iran and establish contacts between Abwehr officers and their “colleagues” in Afghanistan. Later, it became known that the Rasmuss group was expected to organize subversive activities at transportation hubs along the Karachi-Zahedan-Mashhad railway. With this goal in mind, the Abwehr resident intelligence officers in Kabul were expected to establish contacts with German intelligence groups operating in Iran.

The Germans expected that in 1943, they would establish the main front of the secret war at the Indian-Afghan border. Acting under instructions from Berlin, Bose, as commander of the “Indian National Army,” ordered Ram to stir up activity in the Pashtun tribal area.

It was decided in Berlin that Ram should go to Waziristan to establish direct communication between the Abwehr and Faqir Ipi. For obvious reasons, the Soviet and British double agent bided his time. Bose

repeatedly asked the German agents in Kabul whether Bhagat Ram had finally met with Faqir Ipi, and if not, how come. In response, Ram said that he was very busy with INRC business, so the meeting with Faqir Ipi kept being postponed. As it turned out later, Berlin dismissed Ram's objections and demanded that he immediately travel to the area occupied by the Wazirs, leaving Ram no choice but to obey.

On March 12, 1943, representatives of Britain's intelligence services – the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service), IPI (Indian Political Intelligence) and MI-5 (Military Intelligence, Section 5) – met in Oxford to discuss the situation. British intelligence presented a report based on information obtained by Soviet Cheka officers.

In his book *Tegeran-43. Bolshaya troyka na puti k pereustroystvu mira* [Tehran-43: The Big Three on the Road Toward the Reconstruction of the World] Alex Bertrand Gromov wrote that during Leonid Brezhnev's official visit to India, S. Guha, a leader of the Socialist Party of India, gave him a document with questions related to Bose. The letter went unanswered. A similar letter was sent to Mikhail Gorbachev and later to Russian President Boris Yeltsin with the same result.

On May 14, 1943, the NKID SSR received a telegram from the Soviet Embassy in Kabul in which Ivan Samylovsky, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, informed the Center that Secretary of the UK legation W. R. Connor-Green, known in Moscow to be a member of British intelligence, had visited the embassy to inform the Soviet side that with the consent of the Soviet Union, British Ambassador to Afghanistan Francis Wylie intended to visit the prime minister of Afghanistan to make a statement on behalf of his government.

In Moscow, Kerr spared no effort to persuade Molotov that under British pressure, the Afghan government had promised to discuss the possible expulsion of diplomats of the Axis Powers engaged in anti-British subversive activities. The British ambassador unexpectedly concluded his meeting with Molotov by saying that his government had taken into account the fact that the British recommendations had been favorably received by the Afghan side and that the British side was expecting positive results without Soviet support.<sup>41</sup> The Soviet side took this into account.

On June 8, 1943, Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan Konstantin Mikhailov, acting on instructions from the Soviet government, issued a demarche to the Afghan Government, saying that it was doing nothing to prevent any anti-Soviet subversive activities of the German and Italian legations in Afghanistan.

On June 14, 1943, People's Commissar Vyacheslav Molotov received Afghan Ambassador to the Soviet Union Sultan Ahmad Khan to discuss relations between the two countries. The Soviet Foreign Minister deemed it necessary to comment that as neighbors, their countries should maintain good relations.

On June 28, 1943, Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Ali Muhammad summoned Soviet Ambassador Mikhailov and gave him a written answer of his government to the statement of the Soviet ambassador of June 8, 1943, which said in part: "The royal government of Afghanistan declares that it refuses to take any actions against Afghans and foreign nationals stemming from the demarche of any other country. The Afghan government does not want to stir up misunderstandings in its country or endanger peace inside it, because, first and foremost, it has no information about the crimes allegedly committed by Afghans or foreign citizens."

The British diplomats who spared no effort to persuade Afghans to trim the number of German and Italian diplomats in Afghanistan wanted to preserve their leading positions. When talking to Afghan officials, they tried to persuade them that "the Afghan Government, as a neutral one, should not allow the legations of the Axis Powers to use their territory for anti-British plots and spying. The British government expects that the Afghan side will take effective measures to live up to its obligations."

The British side could not persuade the Afghans that its statement and advice were not intended to undermine the independence and honor of Afghanistan but were intended to consolidate its sovereignty and ensure its basic interests amid the very complicated political situation in the country.

The “pendulum” of Afghan neutrality had swung toward the Allies. Prime Minister of Afghanistan M. Hashim Khan was astounded by the size of the German and Italian spy network that had been uncovered almost throughout his country. Afghan counterintelligence confirmed the information supplied by the ambassadors of the Soviet Union and Great Britain in their memorandums. And Khan ordered to transition from selective arrests to massive detentions of Afghan and foreign citizens suspected of cooperating with the German and Italian legations in Kabul.

Strange as it may seem the Afghan government did not include Rasmuss, an Abwehr agent and head of political intelligence of the Third Reich in Afghanistan, in the list of expelled German diplomats. The British also remained silent about this point. In October 1943, Russian intelligence, after exposing Rasmuss, paralyzed the German spy network in Afghanistan.

The decisions of the Tehran Conference marked the beginning of a new stage in Allied relations: Soviet-British cooperation in Afghanistan, too, acquired a new lease on life ahead of the imminent rout of Nazi Germany.

## **95th Anniversary of the Steamship and the Man**

**Pyotr Barulin**, *Deputy Head of the Center for the History of the Russian Diplomatic Service*

TWO Soviet diplomatic couriers were riding Moscow-Riga train No. 2220. One of them was Theodor Yanovich Nette, to whom Vladimir Mayakovsky dedicated his well-known poem “To Comrade Nette – the Steamship and the Man.” The other courier was Johann Adamovich Makhmastal.

At 5:30 a.m. on February 5, 1926, at the last way-stop, the conductor made his way through the train carriage, announcing that the train would soon be arriving in Riga. Suddenly, passengers heard a startled shout: The conductor was running along the corridor with his arms raised. He was followed by several men wearing black masks and holding guns.

When Nette saw an armed man at the door of the diplomatic compartment, he opened fire. Nette was on the upper berth, covering the diplomatic mail with his body. He was killed with a shot to the heart. Makhmastal was severely wounded, but managed to protect the valuable cargo.

Theodor Nette was buried on February 9, 1926, in Vagankovo Cemetery. The diplomatic courier was sent on his final journey in a grand funeral, attended by numerous delegations of workers’ collectives. Red banners with black ribbons were everywhere. His coffin was lowered into the grave to the sound of factory whistles and artillery salvos.

Makhmastal, who recovered from his wounds, continued to work in the diplomatic courier service of the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, but was arrested and released on the intercession of Mikhail Kalinin, with whom he had at one time worked at a plant. On February 2, 1942, Makhmastal died of heart attack in the village of Bagaryak, Chelyabinsk Province, and was buried in a local cemetery. In 1989, on the initiative of civic activists, a large monument to the heroic courier was unveiled in a school courtyard. A steamship was also named after him.

Every year, on the day of Nette’s death, his colleagues – diplomatic couriers of the Russian Foreign Ministry – come to his grave at Moscow’s Vagankovo Cemetery to pay their respects and to honor the



memory of their late colleagues. This is the beginning of a ritual known as “Remembrance Day for Diplomatic Couriers Who Died in the Line of Duty,” or simply “Remembrance Day.” This day is sacred for diplomatic couriers.

This year marks the 95th anniversary of the couriers’ heroic feat. Regrettably, due to well-known restrictions, it was not possible to commemorate the event as it is traditionally marked each year.

On February 5, representatives of the diplomatic courier service, led by Sergey Lukyanchuk, director of the Foreign Ministry’s Department of Diplomatic Courier Service, laid flowers at the memorial plaques in the foyer of the ministry’s main building. A minute of silence was observed, and the Russian anthem was played.

Then baskets of flowers were laid at Theodor Nette’s tomb.

We bow our heads to the memory of our diplomatic courier colleagues who are keeping alive the memory of Theodor Ivanovich Nette and Johann Adamovich Makhmatal, and ensuring that our sense of pride for their exemplary performance in the line of duty and their heroism of 95 years ago will never fade away.

## **To Russia With Love**

**Marina Kravchenko**, *First Secretary, Department of History and Records, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*

The Department of History and Records expresses its gratitude to Ambassador Anatoly Leonidovich Adamishin for transferring to the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation the letters of Clementine Churchill.

THE PUBLIC, humanitarian and, to a large extent, diplomatic activity of Winston Churchill’s wife, Clementine, is inextricably tied with the Soviet Union and its struggle against German fascism. This dynamic and selfless effort in support of our country during those difficult years of the war fully revealed to the entire world not only a strong business acumen, exceptional organizing abilities and leadership, but the highest standard of this wonderful woman’s personal qualities.

It would be safe to assume that it was Clementine Churchill’s role as head of the Aid to Russia Fund under the British Red Cross that brought her out of her spouse’s shadow, making her an independent historical figure and earning her international stature and acclaim that have stood the test of time.

In the absence of any “centralized” financial aid for several months, our Embassy was receiving an abundance of letters with donations from individuals. Those sums were generally not very large, but what was striking was their number and the all-encompassing sincere desire on the part of all strata of the British population to somehow aid the Soviet people in their struggle against Nazism.

The Embassy did its best to thank and give proper due to each donor. In addition to notices of receipt, they sent out personal responses.

It was in these conditions that the idea arose under the auspices of the British Red Cross to create a special Aid to Russia Fund as a structured and orderly system to collect funds and organize purchases (primarily of medicinal items) and deliver them to the USSR.

The Prime Minister enthusiastically supported his wife’s initiative and did everything he could to support her in its speedy implementation.

Maisky repeatedly acknowledged Clementine's ongoing care and sincere enthusiasm for the new organization's efforts, as well as her unwaveringly active personal involvement in resolving all complex issues.

The Red Cross Aid to Russia Fund initiated its activities on October 7, 1941. The campaign met with great support throughout all segments of British society. Clementine later commented: "The British people saw an opportunity to express deep admiration and sympathy for the Russian people in their hard struggle."

She was so active in fundraising that her organization became inseparably associated with her, and everyone began unofficially to call the Aid to Russia Fund simply "Mrs. Churchill's Fund."

What is noteworthy is that it was not so much the members of the elite as ordinary Britons who eagerly donated to the Soviet cause, even as they themselves were experiencing all the hardships and deprivation of wartime.

By January 1945, the Fund had amassed a total of 4 million pounds' worth of goods that were sent to the USSR.

Among the most significant achievements of the Fund was the restoration and refurbishment of two hospitals in Rostov-on-Don – the Clinical and the Central City hospitals – at a cost of 400,000 pounds.

By the end of the war, total donations reached a sum of over 7 million pounds. The Soviet government appreciated the humanitarian aid provided by Clementine Churchill and, not long before the war's end as a sort of culmination of the Fund's activities, invited her to make an official visit to the USSR.

Clementine's reception in the USSR was put together with much forethought and extravagance. This visit was looked upon as more than just an official ritual to demonstrate the Soviet leadership's gratitude. On one hand, this was the Soviet people's symbolic expression of sincere and deep appreciation to Clementine and, through her, to the people of Great Britain. On the other, it was a demonstration of the Soviet people's strength, resilience and creative potential in spite of the postwar devastation of the state economy.

Her meeting with Joseph Stalin, at the beginning of the trip, was mostly formal and done to draw attention to the high status of this guest. As can be seen in the notes of the conversation, both Clementine and Stalin, being people of high diplomatic pedigree and tact, fulfilled their given roles in this situation perfectly.

Over the course of her trip, Clementine saw with her own eyes the level of destruction and the depths of sorrow that the war had wrought on the Soviet land. Nonetheless, she was struck by the perseverance of the Soviet people, their unfaltering optimism, and their efforts to return to normal life as quickly as possible.

The Aid to Russia Fund's activities continued after Nazi Germany's defeat, and even after Winston Churchill gave his famous speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. Donations continued to be accepted until January 1948, bringing the collected total to 7.5 million pounds. Deliveries of humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union that these funds afforded continued until the late 1950s.

These were outstanding achievements for a female leader, given the era in which they transpired. Naturally, social status played a key role, but personality is always the deciding factor. She was the one who held the keys of charisma, trust, and leadership.

What is unique and remarkable about the phenomenon of Clementine Churchill's diplomatic success is that, without taking on any public or political roles, but simply remaining a caring, sensitive and sympathetic woman, she had a massive impact. Perhaps it was this feminine warmth, care, and

compassion that allowed her to achieve so much more than cold calculation and soulless rationality could.

## **Citizen Diplomacy Between Russia and the US Needed Like Never Before: On the 60th Anniversary of the Dartmouth Conference**

**Alexander Yakovenko**, *Rector, Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Doctor of Science (Law)*; [avyakovenko@yandex.ru](mailto:avyakovenko@yandex.ru)

AMID the coronavirus pandemic and an unprecedented presidential campaign in the US, the 60th anniversary of the Russian-American Dartmouth Conference went unnoticed. Yet, it would seem that this time-tested tool of citizen diplomacy, or “Track II diplomacy,” is needed now more than ever in the past 30 years. The book *Breaking Barriers in United States-Russia Relations: The Power and Promise of Citizen Diplomacy* – written by Philip Stewart, the American co-chair of the Dartmouth Conference, and published in Russian by Aspect Press – is filling this gap. The book is dedicated to Harold Saunders, a former US Assistant Secretary of State instrumental in advancing civil diplomacy, and Yevgeny Primakov, who himself first attended the Dartmouth Conference in 1971 and with whose blessing the event resumed in 2014, after a 24-year hiatus.

As the historical West grows “weary,” European politics is visibly becoming more limited to its own region and, in a way, retreating into itself. ... Basically, regions are taking matters into their own hands, without waiting for outside intervention. This kind of conflict resolution bears the imprint of the region’s shared history and cultural-civilizational roots.

The fact that efforts to achieve a political/diplomatic settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh went nowhere for some 26 years, along the way often reverting to open conflict, is another argument in favor of tried and tested citizen diplomacy – which has been totally absent here. Thus, the experience of the Dartmouth Conference, which has benefited Russian-American relations in both the past and the present, is taking on universal significance.

In such interactions, participants are intellectually open and strive to understand each other, including on an emotional and psychological level.

Established with the consent of President Dwight Eisenhower and the Soviet leadership, this process has proven its effectiveness from the outset, as far back as the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

After the tragic experience of the two world wars, diplomacy went beyond the narrow confines of formal negotiations. Life itself demanded such expansion, as it introduced new themes and new actors into the diplomatic process. This is what British writer Harold Nicolson described compellingly in his late 1950s book *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method*. Further diffusion of diplomacy through many channels, including civil society, may be of service in today’s unprecedented conditions, too, where part of the American elite is literally obsessed with the issue of “Russian meddling.” This idea is poisoning the domestic political agenda as McCarthyism once did, to the detriment of solving America’s real problems.

Discussions among competent, open-minded people behind closed doors, rather than under the media glare, without the imperative of merely repeating ad nauseam the official lines of their governments, would undoubtedly help [the US and Russia] return to a more positive agenda in bilateral relations.

Citizen diplomacy could also help foster favorable public opinion toward proposed solutions and compromises in both countries, and to overcome deep-seated prejudices and myths about one another.

As Yuri Shafranik, the Russian co-chair of Dartmouth, notes in the Foreword, even in the current trying situation, the Conference's initiatives and recommendations have produced positive results in terms of establishing interaction in a number of conflicts. They have also helped reanimate cooperation in countering international terrorism, as well as in such humanitarian spheres as education, cardiac surgery, pediatric medicine and cancer treatment.

In this book, Philip Stewart convincingly demonstrates that the theory, creative methodologies and practices developed by the participants in the Dartmouth Conference over the past 60 years, including with assistance from the Kettering Foundation, are by no means obsolete today.

## **North American-Style Populism Through the Eyes of Russian Experts on America**

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**Lidiya Kulyabina**, *Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Political Philosophy, Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Science (Political Science); [iamp@dipacademy.ru](mailto:iamp@dipacademy.ru)*

HAVING barely recovered from the shock caused by the election of a nondemocratic candidate as the 45th US president, the Russian academic and expert community, where only avowed "optimists" had bet on a Trump victory, began searching for reasons and explanations for what had just happened. During Donald Trump's term in the White House, a record number of scholarly and quasi-scholarly works were published in Russian.

The collective monograph *The Trump Phenomenon* [in Russian]\* by the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences (INION) in a way rounds out the multidisciplinary research efforts of the past several years.

Commenting on the publication (a month and a half before the end of the 2020 election cycle in the US), Alexey Kuznetsov, coordinator of the team of authors, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Science and INION director, described the monograph as an analysis of the phenomenon of new populism in American history.

Populism in its new hypostasis – i.e., Trumpism – is the focus of each of the monograph's 37 chapters, arranged in seven sections. The chapters are authored or co-authored by 37 prominent Russian experts on America, who represent not only the INION (although virtually two-thirds of the monograph were in fact written by its representatives – 23 authors), but also the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for US and Canadian Studies (the chapters on Trump's economic and social policies, the impact of his personality on social polarization and his impeachment); the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economics and International Relations (chapters on the US dimension of populism, scientific and technical policy and US policy in the Indo-Pacific region and the Middle East); Moscow State University (cyberpolicy, arms control and Trump's "philosophy"); the National Research University-Higher School of Economics (the chapter on the correlation of economic trends and election cycles); and the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Europe and Institute of Latin America. The sheer diversity of the aforementioned topics indicates the broad scope of the project that involves experts across the entire spectrum of social sciences and the humanities – political scientists, economic experts, lawyers, cultural theorists, linguists and literary critics.

The publication has a rather catchy title but forgoes the subtitle that generally accompanies fundamental scholarly works. But it should not be forgotten that INION is not only a research center, but also a library and a publishing house. So the monograph not only takes the scholarly discussion to a new level, but also plays a utilitarian function: The authors have sought to gauge the readership of the voluminous work that is focused on a vibrant and popular personality.

SURPRISINGLY, most chapters are based on the premise that Trumpism is not always associated with the personality of Donald Trump and can be analyzed in isolation from it.

The ideological platform of Trumpism is defined in the monograph as the product of neoconservatism, libertarianism, paleoconservatism, the alt-right, economic nationalism and post-liberalism.

IF ANY part of such a voluminous work will attract the attention of the broad public, which is increasingly losing the ability to digest long texts, it will undoubtedly be the chapters concerning the peculiarities of Donald Trump's political communication style, "fake news" and The Donald – posts on "Donald Troll," aka "Dollar Trump," who runs the US like TrumpLand.

DONALD Trump is also analyzed in the monograph on the micro level, by constructing his personal speech profile.

The authors of *The Trump Phenomenon* knowingly draw a line under Trump's four-year term in the White House, writing that during that time, "the US became a different country" (p. 625). A. V. Kuznetsov, concludes that in a situation where the Democrats' agenda does not have a clear understanding of long-term prospects, the transformations initiated by Trump "simply have no viable alternative" (p. 626). And while it is also obvious that Donald Trump has not offered any consolidated development model (he has mostly undermined stability), there is no reason to expect that Trumpism will quickly fade away, regardless of the outcome of the 2020 presidential race.

## **What Will Happen on the Korean Peninsula Within the Next Decade?**

**Alexander Vorontsov**, *Head of the Department of Korea and Mongolia, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Candidate of Science (History); [vorontsovav@yandex.ru](mailto:vorontsovav@yandex.ru)*

As we all know, since 1945, the Korean Peninsula has been one of the world's powder kegs and will remain so for the indefinite future.

The author of these lines made the simple point at the roundtable that, although it is customary for a new US administration to revise, often radically, the foreign policy principles of its predecessor, the new administration of President Joe Biden would be well-advised not to completely destroy what Donald Trump has achieved in his Korean policy, much as he is disliked by his successors.

Relations between North Korea and South Korea, another important dimension of the problem, also continued to swing like a pendulum from hostility to reconciliation and back.

The kaleidoscope of events and alarming phenomena simply reflected the very challenging, intense and multifaceted work that foreign and defense ministries, diplomats, intelligence services and media outlets do day in and day out.

So it is very gratifying to see a book come out in Russian that seeks to offer a comprehensive theoretical analysis of those extremely challenging processes: *Modern Korea: Metamorphoses of the Turbulent Years 2008- 2020* [in Russian] by Anatoly Torkunov, Georgy Toloraya, and Ilya Dyachkov. A better title for the book could not have been chosen – what was going on on the Korean Peninsula issue in those

years was indeed a continuous chain of metamorphoses and turbulences, and then the COVID-19 pandemic came into the picture, too.

One of the book's strongest points is that it addresses all political, economic, social and especially foreign policy factors in the development of the two Korean states in 2008-2020, and makes a comprehensive study of developments in those years concerning the so-called Korean Peninsula problem – most importantly, the region's nuclear problem.

It has been a while since such a holistic view has been presented in a single book.

It should be acknowledged, of course, that the first such attempt was made by Anatoly Torkunov, Valery Denisov and Vladimir Li in *Koreysky poluoostrov: metamorfozy poslevoyennoi istorii* [The Korean Peninsula: Metamorphoses of Postwar History], a book published in 2008.

The authors of *Modern Korea* mention this. They speak of the two books as parts of the same detailed study.

These two books combine to make a seamless broad, monumental study of key political, economic and other processes that directly affect the security interests of Russia. It is particularly significant that both books represent Russian viewpoints and that their authors demonstrate detailed knowledge and deep understanding of Moscow's policy on Korea and Northeast Asia in general.

It is probably no coincidence that the publisher of *Modern Korea* is MGIMO, recognized as Russia's center for Korean studies. There is every reason to expect that the book will be a key aid to lecturers and students at many universities, not only in Russia but also abroad, and a valuable asset to researchers.

The mainly chronological arrangement of the content in *Modern Korea* is not accidental. This explains why the same situation or event may be addressed in different parts of the book – it will be examined from various viewpoints in different places.

Brief though it is, this review makes clear that *Modern Korea* addresses an incredibly broad range of subjects and problems, knowledge of which is crucial to comprehending the Korea issue. Political developments have proven many of the conclusions drawn in the book to be correct.

Obviously, the book will also be in demand abroad, where it will be read by many students and professional Korea specialists.

## **Belarus During the Great Patriotic War**

**Vladimir Andreyev**, *Deputy Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Department for Relations with Compatriots Abroad*

IN 2019, as I was preparing to represent the Russian Embassy at a major and very important event with our compatriots in Minsk, I read a book that had just been released by Andrey Gerashchenko, a Belarusian writer, journalist, historian and chairman of the Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots' Organizations in Belarus. Regrettably, the book, titled *Opalyonnaya voynoi Belorussia* [War-Scorched Belarus], had a very small print run. Its author, who participated in the upcoming event, wanted to use the opportunity to bring the book to the attention of his colleagues, associates and veterans of the Great Patriotic War (GPW) who were invited to the meeting, as well as to a wider circle of readers, primarily young people.

Thanks to considerable and timely assistance from the Russian Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, the book was published with a significant print run. It has a modern, “high-tech” design, and its digital version is available on the Internet and social networks. Personally, with my good old traditional social notions, I believe that it is perhaps even more significant that the book is being widely distributed in schools, universities and libraries across Belarus.

It would be a good if this book were read and reread by our young and middle-aged people, i.e., students and teachers, as well as all those who think that they have already studied and learned everything and know everything. So that they would know or recall that people in Russia and Belarus should not only understand the Great Patriotic War with their mind, but also accept it with their heart, using the moral and patriotic standards established by the victors to evaluate what is going on around us today – at least some of the most significant things that are happening now.

In his book, Andrey Gerashchenko writes in simple, clear, succinct, carefully-chosen and at the same time vivid and persuasive language about things that today, amid the massive, deliberate and insidious falsification of the history of the Great Patriotic War, should not only be talked about, but loudly proclaimed from all possible rostrums, podiums and platforms, including official and international ones – things that we must defend and uphold in any discussion – be it personal, familial, scholarly, academic, public, social, political, international, official or whatever. Incidentally, today, perhaps this especially applies to official discussions.

Andrey Gerashchenko’s book is a series of short factual, patriotic and emotionally charged stories devoted to the most memorable events of the Great Patriotic War and places on Belarusian soil, especially the republic’s war memorials that are known to the entire world.

In his foreword, the author aptly described his concept: “This book is about our tragic history, about many millions of people who died, were tortured to death, killed or burned alive; about our Belarusians and how they lived and died for the sake of our future. It is about “sovoks” [derogatory slang for a person of ingrained Soviet mentality – Trans.] and “vatniki” [derogatory slang for dim-witted, unquestioning patriots – Trans.] who believed in their country and who – amid the famine and cold, inhuman suffering and ordeals – brought us victory and freedom from Nazi occupation. It is about our grandfathers and great grandfathers.”

Based on historical events and well documented facts, the author exposes the real ugly face of traitors and names them, drawing special attention to those who are today perceived in certain quarters as proponents of some Belarusian “national ideology,” but in fact, essentially an ideology of nationalism and national betrayal.

Andrey Gerashchenko vividly and convincingly demonstrates the “historical continuity” between Nazi occupation police, traitors and other Nazi henchmen and collaborators during the Great Patriotic War, on the one hand, and Belarusian nationalists of the revolutionary and civil war period in Russia, on the other, as well as those who are currently trying to use shameful nationalist “white-red-and-white” symbols for political and propaganda purposes – for example, activists of protracted domestic protests in Belarus, who, as always, heavily rely on wide-ranging subversive support from the West.

Overall, the book, which provides both traditional (for Russia and Belarus) and largely new, modern evidence of the unparalleled feat of the Soviet people, the victors in World War II, is a fitting tribute to the heroes who saved the Fatherland and the world from Nazism.

## **A Word of Hope**

RECENTLY, the Moscow Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) published an impressive volume dedicated to the 85th birthday of Metropolitan Juvenaly (Poyarkov), an auxiliary bishop to the Patriarch of Moscow. Such publications are produced not only by religious organizations, but also by secular institutions and for the most part are complimentary albums designed to celebrate their main subject. In this case, we have a book that is unexpected in both its concept and apparent conclusions.

As head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department of External Church Relations and ruling bishop of a major diocese in Moscow Province, Metropolitan Juvenaly was a member of the ROC's top hierarchy and played a part in building a new model of relations between the church and the state in the USSR during the perestroika years.

The granting of religious freedom involved the lifting of restrictions on various aspects of religious service, including the canonization of saints, where Bishop Juvenaly became a key figure, heading a relevant synodal commission. Its most important achievement was the study of religious persecution during the Soviet era, including the heroic deeds of clergy and lay members who were unlawfully persecuted and killed, but did not renounce their faith, which culminated in their glorification as new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church of the 20th century at the 2000 Council of Bishops.

At the same time, the metropolitan became actively involved in restoring his diocese. When he took over in 1977, there were only 132 churches and no monasteries or convents. Everything was in ruins.

The book was conceived as a chronicle of only the last five years of Metropolitan Juvenaly's service. The authors sought to show how vibrant and meaningful religious life has become in recent years, as if the flow of events and the scope of achievements has increased exponentially over the past 30 years.

The book is replete with photos of churches in Moscow Province before and after restoration. This is cause for grief (how could that have possibly happened?) and joy: Beauty and hope are returning to people. Today, the charity foundation's experience is being drawn upon in many ROC dioceses, where there are still remnants of the Soviet persecution of religion.

Metropolitan Juvenaly has repeatedly stressed the importance of not only building churches, but also reviving the temples of human souls. In this context, it is extremely important to implement various spiritual, cultural and educational programs for all categories of the younger generation.

Our society has gone through several identity crises within a very short historical period, and it needs to avoid at all costs a condition that has since time immemorial been described as not remembering one's national origins, descent and ancestry.

The book published for Metropolitan Juvenaly's birthday is not only and not so much about wishing him many happy returns (although perhaps that was its original purpose), but is a very important historical narrative that helps connect the past, present and future in the Orthodox Christian consciousness, which is designed to help the individual rise to see God and not only feel like an heir to "sublime historical experience," but also have hope to possess the future, which will ultimately make it possible to touch eternity.



