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Summary.

The Role of Economic Diplomacy in the System of International Relations

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THE TERM “system of international relations” has become part and parcel of the professional vocabulary of historians and political scientists. A system of international relations or a world order is a form of organization of international relations that reflects the entire spectrum of relationships among members of this system (actors) and their hierarchy. These relationships are based on principles that are enshrined in international legal documents, namely treaties and agreements.

In Russian political science, there exists a view that relations among countries that existed during and before the Middle Ages also represented systems of international relations. The chief medieval actors were the Holy Roman Empire, the Catholic Church led by the pope, monarchies, major feudal lords, and cities.

Governments were the main players in all the aforementioned systems, but each system had different rules and hierarchies of actors.

These systems are analyzed in a work edited by Alexey Bogaturov,² and in a study edited by Anatoly Torkunov and Mikhail Narinsky.

The Westphalian system emerged after the Thirty Years’ War (1618- 1648) and was based on peace treaties signed in the Westphalian cities of Münster and Osnabrück on October 24, 1648.

The Congress system (also known as the Vienna system) was based on decisions by the Congress of Vienna, held in 1814-1815. It gave rise to a European order that followed the Napoleonic Wars – a series of wars between coalitions of European states and Napoleon’s France – and was based on the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, signed on May 28 (June 9), 1815.

The Versailles-Washington system was based on the results of World War I and existed for only 20 years, from 1919 to 1939.

Scholars continue to analyze the reasons for the intrinsic weaknesses of the Versailles-Washington system and the League of Nations.

The Yalta-Potsdam system was essentially based on conclusions drawn from World War II. To prevent new wars and conflicts, a new international organization, the United Nations, was set up in 1945. The Yalta-Potsdam system represented a bipolar world order that rested on two blocs of states headed by two world superpowers – the US and the Soviet Union.

Some researchers view the collapse of the bipolar order following the breakup of the Soviet Union as effectively the end of the Yalta-Potsdam system. However, key elements of that system remain in place and, moreover, are becoming stronger.

An analysis of the history of systems of international relations makes it possible to trace their evolution.

Alexander Dunayev says that governments, international organizations, and transnational corporations hold leading positions in today’s international relations system, but the legal use of force, including the use of armed force, remains a state prerogative.

Despite the growing role of nonstate actors, most researchers still consider governments the chief actors in world politics.

From an economic standpoint, the US can be called the world leader. But its power in the global economy is not overwhelming, despite its obvious global financial domination.

The chief element of the current system is that diplomacy is the means for dealing with most problems. The UN continues to play a prominent role. Significantly, the five member states of the UN Security Council have veto power, which allows them to block decisions they oppose.

Economic methods of pressure are more applicable to current post-Cold War realities than military methods. Scholars claim that economic sanctions play an increasing role as a potential replacement for armed force.

Understanding the history of the current system of international relations, for which humankind has paid with bloody wars and countless lives, helps us see the importance of a world order that provides maximum opportunities for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The core elements of the modern system of international relations are diplomatic methods of dispute resolution, as well as the dominance of economic agendas and economic forms of rivalry. So it is imperative that Russia put more effort into building diplomatic mechanisms for advancing its economic interests.

The Impact of Financial Globalization on the Formation of the European Economic and Monetary Union

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IN THE context of financial globalization, international financial markets have had a strong impact on the traditional structure of corporate governance in Europe. Of course, the scale and depth of this transformation has differed between northern and southern European countries on account of the distinctive features of the local business culture and differences between the socioeconomic development models practiced in these countries.

Nevertheless, in the competition for international markets and to meet shareholders' continuing demands to maintain high profitability, European exporters have started to frequently use price competition mechanisms, often at the expense of the quality of their products.

It should be recalled that, in the context of globalization, the architects of the single European currency saw it as a tool for countering the financial and economic expansion of the US. However, the Euro did not create adequate competition with the US dollar.

Paradoxically, in the context of the dominance of the monetarist vision, the influence of financial markets ended up having a stronger disciplinary effect on the EMU countries than the fiscal rules prescribed by European legislation.

MOST economists (James Meade, Robert Mundell, Tamim Bayoumi, Barry Eichengreen, Jeffrey Frankel, etc.), when studying the basic prerequisites for the transition to monetary and financial integration,

have focused mainly on the structural compatibility of integrating countries and the degree of correlation of their business cycles.

A number of other economists, noting the importance of ensuring mobility and the correlation of business cycles as the basic conditions for monetary integration, nevertheless allow for a shift in emphasis in integration policy toward a more active use of the currency factor.

The 2008-2009 global financial crisis revealed that for most countries in the Euro zone, the actual level and quality of development of their economies did not meet the requirements of real convergence that theoreticians had set for an optimum currency zone.

Starting in 2015, in an attempt to resolve those accumulated systemic problems in the Euro zone, the ECB and EU leadership began the active phase of implementing new concepts of monetary policy, substantiating and applying complex strategies for managerial decisions, and implementing institutional reforms aimed at improving the quality of the regulation of integration processes and ensuring sustainable economic growth, employment, and financial stability.

Despite some progress in the implementation of the ECB's quantitative easing programs, official documents characterize the prevailing situation in the Euro zone since the mid-2010s as a systemic crisis [Informal European Council, 2015].

THE MODEL of European corporatism based on coordinated interaction between the state and businesses under the conditions of open deregulated markets cannot compete with the Anglo-American model of innovation focused on financial capital. As a result, the European business community is moving toward Anglo-American standards of corporate culture, accounting, and financing through capital markets.

The real chance to enhance the Euro's competitive position lies in carrying out structural and institutional reforms on the basis of the "Union of Unions" with the aim of solving the fundamental problem of increasing competitiveness in the European economy. But this will take at least six to seven years (no earlier than 2025), and most likely even longer.

Brexit Opens Pandora's Box: What the Separatists' Victory Means for Britain and Europe

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IT IS FINISHED! Consummatum est! In the final hours of 2020, at the tail end of a nerve-racking blitz chess match, Great Britain and the EU finally managed to choke back at least some of their vitriol to reach a "divorce" settlement that was not too painful but by no means pretty.

Exhausted by the tension and debate over Brexit, and keenly aware of voters' chronic fatigue with the protracted farewell, British parliamentarians met on December 30 for an emergency session to stamp the 80-page long synopsis of the nearly 2,000-page document severing their privileged matrimonial relations – the so-called the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill.

The sides agreed on a free trade zone and declared the establishment of "a new economic and social partnership." Zero tariffs and zero quotas on products and services are a key point.

The agreement covers a wide range of areas of interaction: regulation of investment activities and compliance with rules of fair competition.

The list is long and impressive: transparency in tax collection; transportation; personal data protection; coordination of social insurance measures, etc.

The second cluster of the agreements relates to internal security and human rights across the EU and Great Britain.

The third group of agreements is mainly technical, dealing with accountability, monitoring, and dispute settlement instruments and mechanisms.

Citizens of continental Europe can no longer come to the British Isles uninvited and stay as long as they want. Those who wish to settle in Great Britain must join a long queue; those who want to cross the English Channel for permanent settlement must be evaluated on a “point system” to be accepted.

FISHING rights and quotas in the seas around the British Isles touched off the longest and most vehement discussions. The “fish bone of contention” vexed negotiators, who finally reached a compromise that nobody liked but that everybody accepted as inevitable in order to prevent the issue from becoming a deal-breaker.

WHO won and who lost the haggling? The final tally has yet to be taken. Today, it is clear that Britain has paid more for its exit ticket than the EU countries.

JANUARY 2021 came, and with it, the first outbursts of discontent – from disgruntled British supermarkets and suppliers who did not have time to adjust their purchasing and logistics algorithms.

ANOTHER burden is the value-added tax. “This is adding 22% on to our costs, which in a competitive market is an absolute killer” – this cry from the heart of David Lee concerns the 22% VAT that his engineering firm Torqueflow-Sydex, which has production facilities in Italy, has to pay for the simple reason that it is British.

Fleeing across the English Channel has become a norm. Jochem Sanders, a business development manager at the Holland International Distribution Council, a nonprofit body that he describes as a “matchmaker” for Dutch logistics firms, said that he is contacted by at least one British company a day looking for warehouse space.

Post-Brexit sentiments do not encourage London bankers. John Liver, head of financial services regulation at the consulting firm EY (Ernst & Young), is convinced that the process “is going to last at least 18 months or two years.” Today, the majors in the banking community are showing a much greater desire and “restless urge to relocate.” They are ready to transfer nearly £100 billion in the form of assets to EU jurisdiction.

Apocalyptic sentiments dominate in the ideas of the true Scotsman: “If a genuine reinvigoration is not achieved, or if it is botched, then the separation of England from Scotland, and possibly Northern Ireland, would lead to a full-blown political crisis.” And in that case, Esler says, “the break-up of the UK is inevitable ... and it’ll be even messier than Brexit.”

Paradoxically, today Britain has found itself, to a certain extent, in the position of Kemalist Turkey, which although it has opted for the “European development vector,” is still an Asian regional power deeply rooted in Islamic religious and cultural traditions. Post-Brexit Britain is somewhat reminiscent of post-imperial Turkey, trudging along its own path by the side of the European highway.

ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and Skyrocketing US-Chinese Tensions

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IN MID-2019, the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) approved a report titled *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*.

For more than 10 years before that, the idea of the Indo-Pacific as a new regional configuration in the area of the Indian and Pacific Oceans to replace the Asia-Pacific Region construct had been bounced around at various international expert forums and in government circles of some countries, primarily the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. ... Each of them sought to develop its own concept for a new regional formation while regularly attempting to coordinate positions with the other three in unofficial meetings on Indo-Pacific issues.

The quartet got a second wind after China rolled out its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) strategy, which was later renamed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Calling the BRI a Chinese geopolitical and geo-economic expansion project, the four countries responded in November 2017 with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD or the Quad). The Quad was focused on the security of the Indo-Pacific, a region that the four nations unequivocally regarded and referred to as a new reality, even though they had differing understandings of the region's physical boundaries, not to mention its other parameters.

Work on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific required a series of discussions by foreign ministers and senior officials. According to media reports, some differences – for instance, between Indonesia and Singapore – failed to be ironed out and still are not completely resolved.

Nevertheless, the final version of ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific was approved on June 23, 2019, during the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok.

There is no need to establish any new multilateral mechanisms to ensure that cooperation prevails over rivalry in the Indo-Pacific, the report states.

Immediately after the publication of ASEAN Outlook, many commentators and experts claimed that the report suggested that ASEAN was anxious about the growing rivalry between the US and China and was avoiding siding with either country.

The governments of the Quad countries and circles close to them made very telling comments. The US hailed the report.

China and Russia pointedly refrained from making detailed comments, critical or approving, about ASEAN Outlook, but warned that neither Beijing nor Moscow could accept America's Indo-Pacific concept.

Of course, ASEAN Outlook was not designed to reproach the US for its destabilizing maneuvers or to scold China for being too persistent in trying to implement its plans. With true ASEAN Way tact, the report tried to persuade both countries to show restraint and willingness to compromise.

In declaring its objectives in the report, ASEAN, first, insisted on remaining the central figure in the future Indo-Pacific format; second, it firmly ruled out any need to establish new dialogue mechanisms for the Indo-Pacific to replace or supplement the EAS, ARF, or ADMM-Plus; and third, it called for more extensive multilateral cooperation, primarily economic, as a means of fostering regional unity.

The problem, however, is that ASEAN Outlook is proposing a set of means that ASEAN already had at its disposal by the start of the 2010s. Those means proved powerless to deal with the challenges that existed back then. So is it reasonable to expect that they will be effective at coping with the problems caused by the current deterioration of American-Chinese relations if they didn't work in a less tense situation?

IT SURE seems that ASEAN Outlook has failed to be realistic, much less proactive, in terms of assessing regional processes, setting goals and proposing ways to achieve them. Worse than that, those failures are hardly accidental, even though ASEAN is customarily praised for its pragmatism and common sense.

Using COVID-19 as a pretext to sharply ramp up and systematize pressure on Beijing, Washington was exacerbating the effects of the pandemic and simultaneously offering its services as a guide through the chaos wrought by the virus to regional countries that had their own grievances with China.

DEBATES among foreign analysts of Indo-Pacific issues resurged seemingly spontaneously in late 2020 after repeatedly flaring up and fading away ever since the initial attempt to create the Quad. Remarkably, this resurgence happened after the most recent US presidential election. It's not just the future of the Quad that is being discussed but suggestions for reshaping the Quad in the image and likeness of NATO with obvious hints that it might make sense to also get non-Quad countries involved in such a project.

Until we have proof of the contrary, I'll take the view that US-Chinese relations more or less passed the point of no return in the late 2010s, turning into a relationship in which elements of confrontation were paired with interdependence, and productive cooperation sharply and firmly transformed into a relationship in which elements of confrontation prevail over everything else.

Taiwan: The Bone of Strategic Contention Between China and the US

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THE WORLD is accustomed to perceiving the Taiwan problem exclusively within the context of Sino-American relations and the well-established claim that "Taiwan is an integral part of the People's Republic of China." However, that inertia is deceptive, especially today.

Another inertial force is that few people are considering the prospect of a conflict between the two nuclear powers, albeit in a new format. Previously, it was the confrontation between the US and the USSR/Russia that was expected to lead to a nuclear conflict. Today, when the center of geopolitical confrontation has shifted to Asia, the threat of an armed US-China conflict is growing, and its most fragile linchpin is the Taiwan problem. Unfortunately, no diplomatic solution is possible in the near and medium terms.

ON JANUARY 1, 1979, the US established diplomatic relations with the PRC and the Government of the PRC as China's sole legitimate government, acknowledging that "there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China." This wording was used in the Joint Communiqué, also known as the Shanghai Communiqué (1972), as it reflected the official position of both China and Taiwan.

To normalize relations with Beijing, successive US presidents made concrete promises in the Three Joint Communiqués adopted in 1972, 1978, and 1982 that to this day officially serve as the foundation of China-US relations.

Today, no one can predict when and under what circumstances Taiwan will join China. However, the island is under the strategic guardianship of the US, enshrined de jure by the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. It states that the US has "terminated governmental relations between the United States and the governing authorities on Taiwan." It also justifies the need for the comprehensive development of diverse relations with the "people on Taiwan" and encourages the separatist sentiments of the local elite.

By adopting the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances, both Republican and Democratic administrations in the US were deliberately eroding the basic bilateral agreements on Taiwan contained in the Three Joint Communiqués. In American political circles, it was believed that Taiwan should be self-sufficient in defense matters.

It is not without Washington's full support that the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and its current leader, President Tsai Ing-wen, are able to consolidate public sentiment in favor of maintaining the status quo: More than 80% of Taiwanese still reject reunification with mainland China.

Lawmakers are discussing the possibility of changing the nation's name to the "Republic of Taiwan." However, most Taiwanese understand that any change in the status quo would inevitably result in a military response from the mainland.

IT IS also important to note that both the US and China are constantly ratcheting up military tension around Taiwan through shows of military force.

In addition, in September 2020, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement in support of the 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague that invalidated China's claims over disputed territories in the South China Sea as untenable under international law.

Beijing currently lacks effective opportunities to influence the behavior of its American partner, and it does not see any real prospects for a diplomatic solution to the Taiwan problem. Additionally, all of China's attempts to establish constructive dialogue with Taiwan's ruling elite and to turn the political vector of Taiwanese society toward China have not yet yielded tangible results. The main reason for this is the persistent counteraction of Washington, which encourages Taiwanese separatism.

In a telephone call with Joe Biden on February 11, 2021, the Chinese president said that "matters related to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang were China's internal affairs, and a China-US confrontation would definitely be disastrous for both countries and the world."

Globalization 2.0: What Lies Ahead?

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HUMANITY is going through a painful process of deglobalization. Whether this process is inevitable or not (and if not, then who is responsible for it) is a matter of debate. In any case, the global financial crisis of 2008- 2009 and the postcrisis period of 2010-2013 made it abundantly clear that globalization's linear development, to say nothing of its exponential development, is a thing of the past.

Globalization, however, will return under pressure from two powerful factors that will become even stronger over time, no matter what the antiglobalists are saying. First, the steadily increasing pressure of common problems – from climate change to the threat of pandemics – requires global society to work together for the sake of common survival. The selfpreservation instinct of the human population must manifest itself one way or another. Second, technological progress is accelerating, year after year creating new opportunities for all kinds of remote communication. The planet's physical space and resource potential are shrinking, while geographically spaced models of work, study, and socialization are expanding. Napoleon's "geography is destiny" is no longer axiomatic.

GLOBALIZATION of the late 20th and early 21st centuries coincided with the historical peak of the US's international influence.

The new round of globalization will be different; the US will not necessarily become the source and main driver of Globalization 2.0. It remains to be seen whether the world will need another motivated global hegemon to restart globalization.

WHEN Globalization 1.0 began, it was expected that the waves of globalization would radiate mainly from the economic, political, and technological core of the contemporary world (the “aggregate West”) to its periphery through several big so-called “semi-peripheral” countries – Russia, China, India, Brazil, etc.

But the waves of Globalization 2.0 will probably move in the opposite direction – from the periphery to the core: limited migration, revived protectionism, repatriated production, and rising nationalism and xenophobia will separate the “aggregate West” from the periphery.

Today, the aggregate West is generally much more deeply involved in globalization processes than the aggregate non-West. It remains to be seen, however, which of them will become the main driver of future globalization processes.

During the 30 years of its development, globalization divided the world into winners and losers, and the dividing line does not necessarily run between “successful” and “unsuccessful” states. More often than not, it runs inside states: between social, age, and professional groups; big urban metropolises and rural areas; rich and poor regions – i.e., between those who one way or another fit into the new way of life and those who were sidelined by it.

During Globalization 2.0, ensuring the transition to a sustainable development model will likely replace high economic growth rates as the main criterion of success for individual states. Social equality, quality of life, the environmental agenda, personal and public safety, fighting climate change, etc., will be at the top of national agendas. Consumption in all forms and its linear increase will be relegated to the past, and even the “consumer society” concept will change beyond recognition.

GLOBALIZATION 1.0 was always driven by transnational financial corporations.

There are reasons to believe that the main drivers of Globalization 2.0 will be social, not financial.

THE GLOBAL processes of the early 21st century reflected the public demand for freedom that dominated the late 20th century.

The global political pendulum peaked and started moving in the opposite direction in the 2010s. It seems that public demand for justice and fairness will become much more apparent and insistent.

The transition to Globalization 2.0 will inevitably raise the issue of the correlation between the planetary universalism of globalization and the pluralism of national economic and political development trajectories.

Globalization 2.0 will not insist on the movement of all of its participants toward liberal democracy; it must be flexible enough to accept participants with different political systems. Multilateral global projects will be based on common interests rather than on common values.

The process of uniting humankind will be naturally complemented by the efforts of individual societies to preserve their traditions and unique individuality.

GLOBALIZATION 1.0 was based mainly on Western development and security institutions inherited from the Cold War period in expectation that their geographical and functional expansion would unite humankind and solve its problems.

Let us hope that the main international organizations will survive in the era of Globalization 2.0, yet a large share of international activity will no longer percolate around and within rigidly organized

bureaucratic institutions, but around specific political, social, ecological, and other problems. Old hierarchies will gradually lose their significance.

In the era of Globalization 2.0 the bipolar political and economic world will be aligned along the North-South rather than the West-East axis typical of the last century.

The liberal system is no longer as efficient as it once was. The North is gradually losing its former monopoly on “modernity,” so the South is regarding it less and less as an absolute pattern to follow. Moreover, the geographic boundary between North and South is becoming increasingly tenuous.

If humankind fails to agree on a synthesis of civilizations, Globalization 2.0 might end as pitifully as Globalization 1.0.

Unchanging Priorities and New Challenges of Diplomacy

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“RUSSIA strives to act as constructively as possible in the international arena” – this is one of the most significant statements that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made at an annual press conference on the results of Russian diplomacy. And it is fundamentally important today, when major changes in the global situation, triggered this time by the coronavirus pandemic, have made it an urgent task for international actors to develop the most rational approaches to the new challenges and to ensure national interests in the new situation.

The evolution of international relations always requires that assessments be updated, and an analysis be made of the applicability of foreign policy guidelines to them.

The key to success here is to rely on key foreign policy principles – naturally, in combination with proper situational assessments and prompt responses to changes.

For our country, that means such basic concepts as pragmatism, multivectorism, and the promotion of national interests, which in practice are closely related to the priority tasks of ensuring the security of the Fatherland, creating the most favorable conditions for successful domestic development and sustainable economic growth, and consolidating Russia’s role as a world power with major influence on the formation of a new international order based on multipolarity, and consideration and respect for everyone’s interests.

We believe it is significant that most observers consider it a strength of Russian diplomacy to be able to formulate a policy in the foreign arena earlier than others and in a responsive manner that takes into account the changing circumstances. The need for such an approach, especially in the face of crises, is becoming increasingly apparent to most nations.

One conclusion of the prevailing assessment is that international relations are going through a stage of profound transformation, the consolidation of new political and economic centers of influence, and, on this basis, movement toward a more stable world order – moreover, increasingly in the discourse of polycentricity. This process, however, is unfolding in the context of growing challenges and threats to both international security and the system of interstate relations that is based on compliance with the

universally recognized norms of international law, which is also widely assumed to be characteristic of the current stage.

Promoting the concept of complex polycentricity is the basis of the Russian approach to the world order and is seen as the main window of opportunity in the current situation for future Russian diplomatic efforts.

Washington has not abandoned its reliance on the policy of sanctions and ultimatums, and it does not conceal its interest in obtaining unilateral advantages. It seems, however, that the current tension in world politics should objectively prompt the realization of the need to improve relations between the two powers. Therefore, we would like to count on building a realistic model and sufficiently effective mechanisms for contacts and equal, pragmatic dialogue.

Regional diplomacy has an important role to play in improving the international situation in today's conditions.

In general, what seems crucial in today's changing conditions is the awareness of all participants in cross-border cooperation that it is essential that their foreign policy activities be based on strict consideration of the balance of interests and on the understanding of the role of diplomacy as a means of reaching agreements, wherever possible, that meet the fundamental interests of the world community, with the goal of improving the overall atmosphere in international relations.

In general, it is possible to conclude that today, various "windows of opportunity" exist in multiple areas of international relations, and they should be consistently utilized to ensure security, development, and prosperity at all levels of global and regional development of the peoples of the changing world, with the fullest possible consideration of their national interests within the framework of a joint movement that is convenient and voluntary for each participant. The gradual recovery of humanity from the pandemic suggests that this goal is quite realistic. And the way events on the world stage are currently developing makes it possible to predict that increasing foreign policy efforts in this area will yield satisfactory results.

The Realities of Digital Sovereignty in the Modern World

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ACHIEVING and ensuring cybersecurity is a global problem and a security challenge for all nations in the digital age. At the international and national levels, rules for regulating cyberspace are being discussed and developed, and solutions to the challenges of global Internet governance are being sought. Digital sovereignty is inevitably becoming a focus of international and national agendas.

The concept of digital sovereignty is a matter of a wideranging debate in the scientific community for the following reasons.

First, there is a contradiction between digital sovereignty and the "spirit" of the Internet: The concept of classical state sovereignty contradicts the principle of the unlimited freedom of cyberspace.

Second, the principle of the freedom of speech in cyberspace is at odds with the practice of state restrictions on the free exchange of information in order to ensure cybersecurity.

Third, according to the concept of cybersecurity, the main subject of cyberspace governance are the primary subjects of international law, which contradicts the existing model of a multilateral Internet governance regime. This contradiction has led to the emergence of two theories: decentralized and centralized Internet governance structures.

The US, the most technologically advanced country, where 45% of the tech companies on the Top 100 Global Technology Leaders list were headquartered in 2018,⁹ is the largest tech market in the world as of 2020, representing 32% of the total, or approximately \$1.7 trillion for 2020.

Among the regions, Western Europe continues to make a significant contribution to the IT sector, accounting for about one out of every five dollars spent on IT worldwide.

The coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), which swept and affected the entire world in 2020, has underscored the vital role of the high-tech sector in ensuring the continuity of social life, business, and governance, and it has accelerated contemplation about the need for digital sovereignty in the European Union.

There are increasing calls in the EU for building a European cloud and information infrastructure to strengthen European digital sovereignty and address the fact that today, the cloud and information storage market is almost exclusively dominated by non-European suppliers, with potentially detrimental consequences for the security and rights of EU citizens.

China has clearly established itself as a major player in the global technology market.

According to China's policy documents, one of the country's main economic goals is to achieve global leadership in various technological fields. China is currently preparing to release the China Standards 2035 plan, which will lay out a blueprint to set global standards for emerging technologies.

In November 2019, Russia introduced new legislation that creates a legal framework for centralized Internet governance within Russia's borders – the Sovereign Internet Law. ... This framework will lead to tighter state control over society, which reflects the concept of state-centric Internet governance. The regulations are expected to accelerate the balkanization of the Internet (splinternet). However, these recent changes aim to protect the Internet in Russia from external threats. In fact, they establish a crucial legal framework for creating a centralized system for the state management of the Internet, making it theoretically possible to isolate Russia's network from the global internet.

Since 2012, Russia has been actively criticizing the dominant position of the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) in global DNS coordination, IP address allocation, and Internet governance. At the same time, Russia has been promoting an alternative model of Internet governance, based on the concept of digital sovereignty, within the framework of the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

In May 2015, Russia and China signed a bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of international information security and identified a wide range of forms that this cooperation could take. The agreement provides for establishing communication channels and contacts to jointly respond to threats, exchange information on legislation adopted by the two nations for ensuring information security, and cooperate on developing and promoting international legal norms for ensuring national and international information security.

The efforts of the Russian-Chinese cyber alliance are significantly changing the paradigm of state control over cyberspace, as the number of supporters of this concept is growing – for example, among countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Today the prospect of a splinternet, where segments of the Internet are controlled and regulated by states based on national or regional criteria, is more probable.

Technological diversity and choice is a balance between a multilateral Internet governance regime and ensuring digital sovereignty. Countries' free choice of ways to develop cyberspace and models for managing it is the foundation of technological democracy.

The Role of Social Networks in Russia's Diplomatic Practice

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GLOBALIZATION has led to the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) that impact modern society. ICTs influence international affairs, since they provide means of communication with the global audience in a worldwide format.

The modern world views informational impact in the international context as a form of "soft power."

Individuals who actively use various devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.) have a hard time imagining life without social networks. These networks significantly influence the development of the global community, shaping preferences and priorities. Digital diplomacy should use its "soft power" potential appropriately in order to influence public interests in favor of the national strategy.

At the same time, negative trends in the development of Internet-related global technologies are also evident. Informational and network wars are triggered by unreliable, poor-quality or patently false information.

Diplomacy moved to an open communication format quite recently. Previously, diplomatic relations were part of a system that was closed to ordinary citizens. Representatives of Russia's Foreign Ministry now officially have an online presence, including on well-known platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, vk.com, and others. They choose the most popular social networks to reach the widest possible audience.

If we view public diplomacy as a communications strategy, then modern society makes it possible to establish dialogue between specific politicians and influential bloggers. The younger generation in particular now actively "subscribes" to the social pages of popular bloggers.

Successfully promoting political and diplomatic accounts is an established strategy of competently publicizing the state's position. Many people pay attention not to the official political pages of diplomatic organizations, but to specific accounts of diplomats and politicians, because society is interested not in impersonal ideas and promises, but in the opinions of specific people.

In the modern world, the largest transnational corporations play an important role as subjects of the global information sphere along with states. Consequently, the prospects of digital diplomacy should also be relevant to leading transnational corporations that may represent their respective countries in the international arena.

Russian diplomacy can use crowdsourcing to develop digital diplomacy and pay attention to building interactive diplomatic communities that would be of interest primarily to the younger generation of active Russian citizens who reside not only in Russia but abroad as well.

Information security on the international and national levels remains paramount. State bodies must employ modern experts with skills working with large volumes of information and dealing with Internet cybersecurity.

Communication with young people should be conducted in the appropriate format. Therefore, the “soft power” strategy, based on the social network presence of the Russian Foreign Ministry, has become widely adopted.

Digital diplomacy, as a phenomenon in the Russian diplomatic community, has emerged fairly recently. However, in the past few years, the Russian Foreign Ministry has utilized popular social networks to communicate with the target audience, thereby increasing popular interest in its activities and facilitating the development of progressive society in the context of increasing globalization.

Can the Business Community Help Revitalize Negotiations on International Information Security?

Olga Melnikova, *Senior Adviser, Department of International Information Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia*; dmib@mid.ru

STATE activities in the field of information security are determined by a whole range of interrelated tasks that include protecting state sovereignty; preventing interference in internal affairs; preserving internal political stability; ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens; promoting the development of the national economy and the social sphere; strengthening the rule of law and order; and maintaining the stability of the financial system, close interaction with international organizations, and cooperation with foreign countries.

The diversity of these tasks is reflected in the state’s information policy, which includes two components – identifying and neutralizing external threats and counteracting unfavorable internal factors that could harm the state authorities per se or various elements of the state information system.

It is obvious that when addressing information security problems, the state is primarily concerned with ensuring public interests and protecting information of national importance. As for the information security of the private sector of the economy, ensuring such security is generally the prerogative of companies and individuals.

Russia’s approach to solving problems of safe ICT use differs in many aspects from that of some Western countries. Russia insists that the unconditional right under international law to self-defense is inapplicable to the ICT sphere in the event of alleged aggression.

Several technologically advanced states, led by the US, are mounting major opposition to the development of cyberspace “rules of the game” that would be acceptable to the entire international community.

The coronavirus pandemic merely exacerbated the situation, triggering explosive growth in the number of users of digital tools and, as a result, an increase in cyberfraud and malicious acts in the ICT environment. A tremendous surge in information crime, a manifold increase in the number of cyberattacks, and growing economic damage from illegal online actions have been recorded.

Businesses invest enormous amounts of money in technical security provisions, but, at the same time, they are acutely aware of the objective vulnerability of their assets.

An objective opportunity for the business community to contribute to the development of international law in the field of IIS may appear in connection with the work of the new United Nations Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security in 2021-2025 for a five-year period, created on Russia’s initiative.

Russia has repeatedly emphasized that all countries should equally participate in international dialogue on ICT security issues, and the UN should become the principal platform for this process in order to develop and adopt a unified legal and regulatory framework for international cybersecurity.

Russian experts, including with such companies as Norilsk Nickel and Sberbank, have developed certain best practices, interesting ideas and proposals in the field of information security that could serve as tangible intellectual contributions to international discussions on IIS.

At the same time, while recognizing that protecting the information resources of Russian companies is an indisputable factor of Russia's economic security, it is fundamentally important to understand that the participation of nonstate players in IIS negotiations should not be interpreted as an attempt to equate their international legal status with that of sovereign states and should never become a detriment to making specific political decisions. Developing universal approaches and agreements, as well as coordinating ways to address existing ICT problems should remain the prerogative of states, which have exclusive sovereignty in the digital sphere. The activities of business entities can complement and support state institutions in advocating their position on international information security.

The Role of the SCO in Contemporary International Relations: A View From Uzbekistan

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OVER the past 20 years, despite certain gaps in its activities, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has managed to transform into a full-fledged regional organization, having established practical cooperation on security – particularly, in combating terrorism, extremism, separatism, and drug trafficking. It can be said that SCO work in this area has been highly institutionalized. The Executive Committee of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) has been successfully operating in Tashkent since 2004.

nce 2004. Foreign experts differ in their assessment of the SCO's role in ensuring stability and security in Central Asia.

In our opinion, the SCO's contribution to strategic stability and security in Central Asia requires a broader analysis.

First, stability and security are broad concepts that cover not only such issues as ensuring sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also sustainable development and social stability.

Second, many foreign analysts overlook the fact that the principal founding documents of the organization – the Shanghai Declaration and the Charter – define it as a structure aimed at “strengthening cooperation in the political, economic, cultural, humanitarian, and other spheres.”

Third, critics of the SCO pay insufficient attention to the concept of the “Shanghai spirit,” its deeper meaning and role in the Organization. The “Shanghai spirit” includes the following principles: “mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural diversity, and striving for joint development.”

A KEY event in the history of the SCO in recent years was undoubtedly its expansion in 2017, when it included two large Asian countries – India and Pakistan. These states are not just “new members,” but clearly two major rival “geopolitical players” with significant political weight.

On one hand, the SCO has become one of the largest transregional organizations.

On the other hand, since India and Pakistan have joined the SCO, the organization has become more internally “diverse.”

AS ONE of the founding states of the SCO, Uzbekistan is seeking to realize its full potential by building practical cooperation in high-potential areas that satisfy the vital interests of all participating countries.

If we analyze Tashkent’s activities within the framework of the SCO in recent years, we can highlight the following new trends.

First, the SCO should continue to remain an important multilateral platform for Uzbekistan, primarily for the purpose of ensuring stability and broad cooperation in Central Asia. Tashkent is convinced that, despite the expansion of the SCO in 2017 to include India and Pakistan, Central Asia must remain the “geographical axis” of the Organization.

Second, there is a significant increase in the constructiveness of Tashkent’s approach to the SCO. We see a shift toward engaging with topics from which the country had previously distanced itself.

Third, Uzbekistan’s multilateral diplomacy, including within the framework of the SCO, is characterized by growing initiative and pragmatism. Tashkent’s proposals to expand multilateral cooperation, while pursuing the national interests of the country, are also aligned with the priorities of strengthening stability and cooperation in the region.

Uzbekistan advocates constructive and productive interaction within the SCO and is ready to support the initiatives of other parties in the interest of “joint development,” as stipulated in the SCO Charter.

It is important to imbue the activities of the SCO with new content, expand its agenda in such promising areas as building interregional transportation and transit corridors, fostering innovative and digital development, searching for new sources of economic growth, and consolidating member states’ efforts to combat climate and environmental threats.

“Checkmate Maduro” Strategy as the Basis for Operation Gideon

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SOME of our sources gave us a very interesting tip; they said we should check out an interview with Venezuelan writer, lawyer, and scholar Juan Carlos Sosa Azpúrua. Sosa Azpúrua is described as an essayist, observer, and a professor with degrees from Harvard University and Venezuela’s Andrés Bello Catholic University. He is also described as a career official who spends much of his time in corridors of power, giving recommendations as an expert on Venezuela, even though he has spent half his life in the US. In 2014, Sosa Azpúrua released a book titled *La muerte tiene muchos rostros* [Death Has Many Faces], which glorified those who were going to incite riots or uprisings in Venezuela and portrayed the Hugo Chávez government as totalitarian oppressors. In the interview with the *PanAm Post* that we were

advised to read, he proposed a strategy that he named *Operación Jaque mate a Maduro* (Operation Checkmate Maduro).

Sosa Azpúrua said that Checkmate Maduro was a strategy for a police operation to arrest bosses of the Cartel of the Suns (Cartel de los Soles), a drug cartel that he claimed was headed by senior Chavistas, including Maduro himself.

Sosa Azpúrua said that Checkmate Maduro involved a police operation that would be the responsibility of the “legitimate government” of Venezuela but would be based on an agreement with the US to reauthorize the US Drug Enforcement Administration to operate in Venezuela.

“...it is Venezuelan officials who would have to carry out the operation, but in collaboration with the DEA, making use of intelligence from the DEA. All necessary DEA information, documentation, and logistics would be used in this operation, along with technical support from the US Defense Department. Basically, they would provide this equipment, acting as assistants. This would mean support not for a military operation but for a police operation.... These Venezuelan operatives, commanded by the president of Venezuela [Sosa Azpúrua means Guaidó – Authors’ note], in collaboration with the DEA, would then carry out a surgical operation to extract leaders of the Cartel of the Suns in order to put them under secure guard.”

“Specifically, the idea is to carry out a surgical operation lasting about two days to extract the leaders of the Cartel of the Suns, starting with Nicolás Maduro,” Sosa Azpúrua said. “That would solve an essential, major problem associated with the fact that the US cannot unilaterally interfere in Venezuelan affairs.”

Sosa Azpúrua said that the Checkmate Maduro strategy would put an end to Venezuela playing the victim card, asking for handouts. “Because we aren’t asking the US for a favor. We are asking it to fulfill its commitments in keeping with its national interests, with the principles of the DEA and international principles of combating drug trafficking and international terrorism.... Checkmate Maduro, if it goes ahead, can’t be called into question. Nobody would criticize a police [apparently DEA] action to remove a drug cartel that, among other things, is financing international terrorism.”

According to Sosa Azpúrua, “Nothing is going to be achieved before there is a Plan Venezuela that has the same basis as Plan Colombia. Bases should be set up in Venezuela to provide constant training for our Armed Forces to combat drug trafficking in collaboration with the DEA.”

LET’S reconstruct the chronology of events that preceded Operation Gideon and take a detailed look at the Chavista leadership’s action to thwart this operation.

A while after the abortive putsch of April 30, 2019, Venezuelan deserters who had been involved in it and Venezuelan opposition activists met in Bogota. Jordan Goudreau, the retired US green beret who founded Silvercorp USA in 2018, was present at the meeting.

Goudreau and his associates were subsequently able to train deserters and recruit drug barons on Colombian territory, naturally with permission from and under the oversight of Colombian civilian and military authorities and security services.

On March 26, 2020, US Attorney General William Barr announced that the US Department of Justice had charged Maduro, Diosdado Cabello, president of Venezuela’s National Constituent Assembly, Hugo Carvajal, former director of Venezuela’s military intelligence agency, and Alcalá with narco-terrorism; Maikel José Moreno, current president of Venezuela’s Supreme Tribunal of Justice, with money laundering and with conspiracy to commit money laundering; and Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino with drug trafficking. Maduro and other Chavistas were charged with ties to FARC, which effectively means a charge of terrorism, because this ultraleft group is officially considered a

terrorist organization in the US. Charges were brought against a total of 15 individuals, including Maduro.

Naturally, there was no evidence supporting the charges against Maduro or any of the others, but now there was a legal basis for their liquidation or arrest, which cannot be interpreted as anything other than official approval for a coup disguised as an antidrug trafficking/counterterrorism police operation. So the charges against the 15 Venezuelans gave the US complete freedom of action.

IN FACT, Checkmate Maduro/Operation Gideon is a kind of cascading effect of the so-called Venezuelan precedent: a coup d'état technique that is similar to "color revolutions" but essentially different from them in that it does not involve the organization of a protest movement, a typical feature of a "color revolution."

OPERATION GIDEON, as an application of the coup technique we described above, provided a cloak of legitimacy for an open act of terrorism by portraying it as a police operation.

It has been possible to partly use the Venezuelan coup technique in Belarus but with the difference that the local version of Guaidó, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, hasn't been recognized as president by any country except Lithuania. However, during visits, she is treated as a democratically elected president. Consequently, the method is applicable to countries other than Venezuela, countries with different sociocultural and political environments in any part of the world. It can be adapted and used over and over again. This is dangerous because it can be applied against Russia, too, which means that Russia must understand this technique and be prepared to neutralize it.

Rosneft Unveils Green Development Concept

RUSSIAN oil company Rosneft, while playing a major role in satisfying the growing energy needs of the world economy, pays priority attention to environmental protection. Rosneft's goal of continuing to be an effective driver of socioeconomic progress in the energy transition era is reflected in its large-scale environmental strategy. The core of that strategy is the Carbon Management Plan for the period until 2035, which covers issues of sustainable development, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, competent waste management, energy efficiency, low-carbon projects, land reclamation, and biodiversity preservation.

Rosneft has already made about 120 billion rubles in green investments over the past three years and plans to investment another 300 billion rubles in its environmental program over the next five years. About 30% of this investment is being used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Today, green investments account for about 5% of the total budget of the firm's investment program, and the proportion is expected to grow.

Rosneft's Energy Saving Program is an effective mechanism for reducing the carbon footprint of the company's production facilities.

Renewable energy solutions are another way that Rosneft cuts emissions. The company uses solar energy to generate electricity for communications infrastructure in the field. Rosneft has been experimenting with supplying solar panels to trading facilities in southern Russia, and it produces electricity from renewable sources at the Nayara Energy oil refinery in India.

Developing eco-friendlier fuels is yet another aspect of Rosneft's environmental strategy. The company has been steadily increasing its production of Euro 6 gasoline.

A key factor in achieving emissions reduction targets is comprehensive collaboration with various specialized organizations and leading market participants. Recently, Rosneft signed a strategic cooperation agreement with BP. The deal expands the years-long partnership between the two companies into the realm of sustainable development.

Vostok Oil, a major Rosneft project, is an excellent example of the company's low-carbon policy. It has a projected carbon footprint of one-quarter the average world level of large oil fields.

The oil in the field to be developed under the Vostok Oil project has a minimal sulfur content of less than 0.05%, which is 24 times lower than the world average. The project's maximum intensity of methane emission has been set at 0.2%, which corresponds with international best practices.

Vostok Oil will meet top environmental and social accountability standards. It will use cutting-edge solutions that meet the strictest environmental requirements in both the development and production phases. Rosneft will invite leading world consultants to make independent environmental and social assessments.

According to Casimiro, high ESG ratings are not an end in themselves for Rosneft; they are a reflection of its current activities and an indication of the stability of its business model. The company will remain increasingly attractive to investors.

Rosneft's capitalization on the London Stock Exchange has reached \$82 billion, with its global depository receipts priced at \$7.78 apiece. And on the Moscow Exchange, Rosneft shares recently hit a new high.

A Closer Look at the Russian Foreign Ministry's Crisis Management Center

Oleg Syromolotov, *Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia* Mr. Syromolotov was interviewed by *International Affairs*

The country's leadership really does pay very close attention to creating and developing new areas of international activity for the Russian Foreign Ministry. ... All of us, in one way or another, bear witness to the recurrent emergencies abroad, social crises of varying origins, and fortuitous events of aggression in other countries, which are all fraught with a latent or obvious threat.

As you understand, our ability to ensure that the interests of the Russian Federation and its citizens abroad are upheld depends not only on our conviction that this must be done without fail, but also on the quality of training, diplomatic skills, and professionalism of the specialists in various fields charged with this task. The focus here must be on established contacts with relevant foreign departments, emergency crews, and the doctors who can provide information about Russians in trouble. In short, the various emergency alert systems for addressing crises and disruptions need to be integrated into an international system on an ongoing basis without discrimination, as opposed to there being a free-for-all.

Achieving that particular goal, in many respects, was what prompted the Russian president's decision to create a new department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CMC, whose functions at first glance seem unusual for this traditional diplomatic service. Our colleagues from most of the world's diplomatic agencies are going this route, taking the most pressing international issues and tasks with respect to ensuring the safety of their citizens and making this a separate area of interaction with other states. That is what we are doing, too.

That unit, largely due to its name, does have special functions under the umbrella of the Russian Foreign Ministry. And the range of tasks that CMC colleagues have to address every day and around the clock, believe me, is so wide, that legally empowering its activities and its reach to ensure the wholesale security of Russian citizens and Russian assets abroad is ongoing.

CMC is still more focused on solving strategic problems like, for example, Russia's full participation in the "112" global emergency call system – which is impossible without reliable electronic coordination with various international rescue services.

For example, this means that any Russian tourist experiencing trouble abroad can dial "112" and get in touch with first responders, paramedics, or the police. And at the same time, not only does the CMC receive the same "SOS" signal, but the Russian consular officers in that country are immediately informed of any incident involving this Russian citizen and receive the geolocation of the call. And whatever the nature of the incident might be (road accident, robbery, etc.), it is automatically recorded in a special information system, to monitor measures taken on site until the situation is resolved.

I think that the full launch of the "112 button" will most likely be announced in late 2021 or early 2022, but definitely not so far out as 2030. Everything will depend on how quickly funding can be procured.

The issue of repatriating Russians – or, to put it more precisely, "bringing them home" – during the pandemic is not over yet, and everyone participating in coronavirus mitigation measures are still engaged in these efforts in some way or other. First, we must focus on the substance of this process – which, I must say, is unprecedented in scale – and understand the sequence of events in the spring and summer of 2020.

We created a Repatriation Coordination Headquarters, as you called it, and I was tasked with leading this unit. Our main concern is not so much the interagency coordination of export policies, the basic practices and experience of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as much as it is providing logistics on the ground, securing permits for the overflight and landing of special aircraft in foreign states, and most importantly, the prompt collection of data for all Russian citizens stranded abroad.

We repatriated all those who formally expressed a desire, those who filled out an electronic form on the EPGU portal, and those whose applications for repatriation met the criteria established by the Russian government and the CMC Headquarters to prevent a new coronavirus strain from entering our country. Each department involved strictly followed the established guidelines, without exception.

Passenger lists were continuously updated and supplemented, flight routes were given at the last moment. No specific models for dealing with such situations had ever been worked out before, and the bureaucracy in all countries is the same: The pandemic turned even formerly loyal foreign partners into "steadfast tin soldiers." Almost all issues that at first seemed quite unresolvable always managed to be resolved, thanks to the personal charm and friendly contacts of our ambassadors in the host countries.

Constructive criticism is always fair. Mistakes, of course, were made. These mainly had to do with interdepartmental interaction, between the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Digital Industry, and the Ministry of Transport. It's no secret that they never managed to establish electronic data exchange. The existing mechanisms for transmitting information are outdated, cumbersome, and labor-intensive. We still don't have universal digitalization. As experience has shown, during critical situations, a lot of things don't follow the typical cycle of interdepartmental information exchange, and those things need to be improved. We learned some lessons, of course, but by no means does everything depend on the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The key to successfully confronting such large-scale phenomena as the COVID-19 pandemic is collective work of the relevant ministries, resulting in a common set of coordinated and pretested methods and procedures to prevent and deal with emergencies.

In short, at the CMC and in the field, employees of the Russian Diplomatic Service gained invaluable experience and training for anything that life might throw at them. No one was caught off guard, and everyone was in their place. This was a landmark event for our department, but it has already become history. And now it is important to correct mistakes, strengthen interdepartmental procedures, and be in a state of constant readiness for any challenges that might arise on the territory of foreign states – of which, I am sure, there will be many more. That is how I would formulate the strategic and tactical goals of the Crisis Management Center, which every day handles little-known but often unusual and laborintensive tasks, keeping Russian foreign policy on a proper course in this area of work.

Escape From the Taliban’s Clutches: Counterterrorism Cooperation With Saudi Arabia

Andrey Baklanov, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2000-2005, Deputy Chairman, Association of Russian Diplomats, Professor, National Research University-Higher School of Economics, Aide to Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation; springfield13@yandex.ru*

THE YEAR 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the restoration of relations between Russia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The oil market is a market of expectations, and if two oil giants, Russia and Saudi Arabia, are expected to be friends and cooperate, this acts as a factor boosting the oil price, and a rather significant one: Tens of millions of dollars flow to our countries on a daily basis.

However, relations between Moscow and Riyadh after 1991 were, quite frankly, difficult and turbulent.

Saudi Arabia, home to two of Islam’s holy sites, the Great Mosque of Mecca and the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina, always shows interest in international and regional problems containing an “Islamic element.”

In the second half of the 1990s and at the turn of the first decade of the 21st century, the conflicting positions of the two countries regarding the situation in the North Caucasus, in Chechnya, as well as events surrounding the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, served as a major point of tension.

In February 2001, in continuation of this work, we organized extensive Russian-Saudi consultations between the foreign ministries of Russia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh on extremism and international terrorism, with an emphasis on analyzing the extremely disturbing situation that was developing in Afghanistan at that time.

Later, after September 11, 2001, Saudi leaders repeatedly recalled those consultations. They acknowledged that they should have fully implemented the recommendations of the Russian representative. Doing so would have played a role in the events that followed, helping to reduce somewhat the criticism against Riyadh after the crimes committed by bin Laden and his group.

On March 15, 2001, a Vnukovo Airlines Tupolev Tu-154 plane was operating a charter flight from Istanbul to Moscow. It was carrying 12 crew members and more than 160 passengers, most of whom were citizens of the Russian Federation.

Shortly after takeoff, three terrorists, threatening to blow up the plane, demanded that the plane change course, refuel in Medina, Saudi Arabia, and then proceed to Afghanistan. That effectively meant that nearly 200 people would be captured by the Taliban, with all ensuing consequences.

Moscow gave its embassy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia a difficult task: to negotiate with the Saudi authorities the blocking of the terrorists' plan, to prevent the refueling and flying on to Afghanistan and the Taliban.

The political underpinning of all this was certainly very complex for the Saudis; they had to make a difficult choice.

Saud bin Faisal, a man of great experience, after weighing everything once more, finally gave, as he put it, preliminary consent to the arrangement we proposed.

Of great importance in those circumstances was the telephone conversation between Saud bin Faisal and Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Igor Ivanov, who, referring to the president's instructions, urged his counterpart to ensure the safety of the hostages aboard the hijacked plane and to take all measures to that end.

The operation was carried out very quickly. The leader of the gang, who tried to use a weapon, was killed, and two of his associates were arrested. Unfortunately, there were victims: One flight attendant and one passenger died. But the main goal was achieved: The plane did not fly on to Afghanistan, and nearly 200 people were saved from the clutches of the Taliban. At the airport, all the victims were provided with medical and other assistance. Then special flights arrived from Moscow and evacuated the passengers.

Later, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Saud bin Faisal paid a visit to Moscow. During talks, an agreement was reached on the visit, the first in the history of the bilateral relations between our two countries.

That was followed by an exceptionally successful visit to Saudi Arabia of the first President of Chechnya Akhmat Kadyrov. After that visit, the "North Caucasus issue," an irritant in our relations, was closed.

It seems appropriate to recall significant events like this when Russian diplomacy was able to solve important issues directly related to ensuring the safety and security of our citizens. It is also important to remember the positive steps taken by our partners – in this case, the Saudi authorities. It should be noted that the normalization of relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the most important country in the region, served later on as a starting point for Russia's joining of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and the development of Russia's ties with the Islamic world.

Today, we are optimistic about the future of our relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as we are jointly developing our relations in accordance with agreements reached during the meetings of the top leaders of our countries, which have repeatedly taken place in recent years.

Russia and Togo: Drawing Closer Together

Igor Yevdokimov, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Benin and the Togolese Republic (concurrently); ambrusben@mail.ru*

ON FEBRUARY 15-17, 2021, Robert Dussey, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Togolese Republic, paid a working visit to Russia. As part of the visit, full-format bilateral talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov took place in St. Petersburg on February 16.

The talks were held in a constructive and congenial atmosphere, and disclosed identical or similar positions of our countries on many global, regional, and bilateral issues.

Togo is a small state in West Africa with a population of 8.3 million people that looks like a narrow strip on the world map between Benin and Ghana. Meanwhile, its territory (56,000 square kilometers) covers an area almost twice the size modern Belgium (30,500 sq.km.).

Togo's past is inextricably linked with the darkest pages of world history. From the 15th to the 19th century, its coast became a key center of the slave trade, earning the picturesque region the nickname "the Slave Coast."

On April 27, 1960, the Republic of Togo gained independence, and in 1963, it received its modern name: the Togolese Republic.

The Soviet Union was among the first to recognize the independence of this young West African state. Already on May 1, 1960, diplomatic relations were established, and Jabar Rasulov became the first ambassador of the USSR in Togo.

After the collapse of the USSR, the embassy and trade mission in Lome were closed down in 1992, and bilateral ties significantly weakened. However, in recent years, Russian-Togolese relations have acquired new life. Contacts between the two countries at high and the highest levels are significantly intensifying.

The current visit of Minister Dussey to Russia became a new important stage in the development of Russian-Togolese relations and confirmed the republic's intent to diversify its partners in the international arena. The trend toward such multivector foreign policy has been observed in several African states. This is no coincidence. The countries of the continent, which had spent a long time under the yoke of colonialism, are tired of the patronizing tone of the Western powers.

In this regard, African countries are increasingly paying attention to the alternative approaches proposed by Russia.

During the talks between the ministers of the two countries, the parties noted the need to consolidate efforts in combatting terrorism and piracy, which pose a real threat to Togo and other coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea. In addition to "synchronizing their watches" with respect to the international and regional agenda, the ministers spoke in favor of expanding and strengthening the entire range of trade, economic, and investment connections between Russia and Togo, and agreed to identify specific opportunities for joint projects in spheres such as energy, infrastructure development, exploration and mining, transportation, agricultural processing, digital technologies, and military-technical cooperation. The interest in such cooperation is easy to explain – even with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the trade volume between Togo and Russia in 2020 reached \$283 million (according to the Federal Customs Service of Russia) and has the potential for further growth. The Togolese Republic is an importer of Russian oil products, fuels and lubricants, rolled metal products, products of the chemical, pulp and paper industries, and mineral fertilizers.

Despite the attempts of the West to cast suspicion on Moscow's policy in Africa, Togo, along with other African countries, sees Russia as a reliable, proven partner ready to build bilateral relations based on equality and respect for each other's interests.

Contemporary Integration Processes in the Post-Soviet Space

*The 11th International Conference in Yalta, Republic of Crimea, October 1-2, 2020, was organized by **the journal International Affairs** with support from **the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation**.*

Armen Oganessian, *Editor-in-Chief, International Affairs*

WE OPEN this 11th Yalta international conference of the journal International Affairs. It is taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. But since the situation has begun to normalize, we are able to gather here in Yalta, on the Black Sea, as usual, to discuss issues of integration in the post-Soviet space. Unfortunately, well-known circumstances both here and abroad relating to the pandemic have prevented participants from other countries from being here in person. But I hope that we will be able to communicate with them online, despite technical issues.

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

IT IS my pleasure to greet the organizers and attendees of this 11th conference of the journal International Affairs with support from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The annual meetings in Yalta bring together influential participants – government officials, scholars, experts, public figures, businesspeople, journalists – to discuss key points of cooperation and interaction aimed at integration in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Russia will continue to contribute to the work of ensuring peace and sustainable development in Eurasia, including by promoting the initiative of Russian President Vladimir Putin to establish a Greater Eurasian Partnership with the participation of member countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the CIS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Work on implementing this initiative is already under way through efforts to integrate the potentials of the EAEU and China's Belt and Road Initiative.

I am convinced that the conference will be held in a friendly and creative atmosphere. I wish you fruitful discussions and all the very best.

Sergey Aksyonov, *Head of the Republic of Crimea*

DEAR FRIENDS, I extend my cordial greetings to the participants and guests of your representative forum that takes place regularly in hospitable Crimea.

It is significant that this conference is focused on bilateral relations between former republics of the Soviet Union, on their common history, and on the 75th anniversary of our great Victory over fascism.

The list of participants in this forum is very indicative. The arrival in the Russian Republic of Crimea or online participation in the event of foreign politicians, public figures, scholars, journalists, businesspeople, historians, and members of cultural professions is a vivid testament to the unquestionable prestige of the conference, its international political and public resonance, and its ability to bring together Russians and like-minded foreign nationals to enable them to make optimum use of their creative and business potential to attain the main objective in these difficult days – political stability in the post-Soviet space and peace on our planet.

I wish you a successful and fruitful conference, and I wish good health, professional success and all the very best to the conference participants and organizers.

The Role of the East Slavic Civilization in the Modern World

Nestor (Donenko), *Bishop of Yalta*

BROTHERS and Sisters, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to speak about the vital role that the will for unity plays in our times. We live in the Eastern Christian civilizational space, in the Russian World, where Christ has been and remains the center. All the best people in our history have come from Christ and have returned to Him. This was a real union of the heavenly and the earthly; the eternal has interwoven with the temporal to produce a unique fabric of history.

By having Russia baptized, the great prince opened the door to eternity for our people, making our people part of not only earthly but also heavenly history, a full-fledged participant in world history, which is vital. The providential choice of Prince Vladimir has been confirmed by the lives and deaths of the new martyrs in the 20th century and is extremely important today. For centuries, it has been a culture-forming choice and created statehood, and this is perhaps the main reason why our enemies seek to slander, erode and ultimately destroy this choice.

For 1,000 years, the choice of the great prince has been reaffirmed by all generations, by the best people in each generation – warriors, saints, scholars, poets, thinkers – very diverse people who fought for territorial integrity and for the greatest value, the soul of the nation, with their entire being, through creative and spiritual efforts, and quite often with arms in hand. Any war that Russia has fought in its centurieslong history was a war for the heavenly values of our earthly land. And this gave birth to the greatness that is so very much needed today.

Through baptism, the great Prince Vladimir opened a window to Byzantium, to its civilization and culture, and to the Greco-Roman world with its unfading history and spiritual experience. Life-giving spiritual energy began to penetrate Kievan Rus, filling it with the values of a great culture.

Another great saint, Prince Alexander Nevsky, fought the Europeans who had conquered Constantinople a short while before. He opened a window to the Great Steppe and borrowed from the imperial experience of Golden Horde khans.

There was a third window that was opened not so much by Peter the Great himself as by Europe with Peter's consent. Through that window, our world was being filled with toxic energies and dubious ideas and sentiments that gave rise to strife, diseases, and revolutions.

For Russia to be revived as a great country, there needs to be a specific image of Russia in the minds of the French, Germans, Poles, etc., but most importantly, there needs to be such an image in the minds of the Russian people.

New Europe is just as much an enemy to its own Christian past as it is to us. Its values are irreconcilable with its great Christian culture, which we know and love, and which Dostoyevsky called "sacred stones," already bewept.

Natural Underground Seawater Desalinators as New Renewable Sources of Fresh Groundwater in Crimea

Nikolai Kovalyov, *head of the Chemonuclear Technologies Laboratory, Sevastopol State University, Candidate of Science (Technology)*

WHEN Crimea experiences protracted droughts, local rivers do not have enough water to fill reservoirs, and fresh groundwater at depths down to 350 meters runs out quickly. In such periods, many people in villages and towns in central, northern, and eastern Crimea face water shortages.

In 2015-2019, scientists from the Crimean Agricultural Research Institute, together with researchers from the Crimean Academy of Sciences and Sevastopol State University, explored two underground hightemperature spots in the mountainous region of Crimea. They discovered that seawater flows

through tectonic faults into those hot spots, located about 2,500 m the surface. There, the water boils, continuously producing steam that rises through vertical faults into porous rock (karst) in the mountains, where it condenses at depths of 500 m to 1,000 m.

The resulting pressurized fresh groundwater flows through tectonic faults across the entire Crimean Peninsula and flows into the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov at various depths as submarine discharge.

There are several advantages to using deep groundwater. Wells produce large amounts of water. This water can travel considerable distances through natural underground channels (i.e., through networks of tectonic faults), which means there is no need to build pipelines. Natural underground desalinators produce water all year round, regardless of climatic conditions.

Fresh groundwater is less susceptible to anthropogenic pollution and can be considered a strategic reserve of high-quality fresh water.

However, the main obstacle to the wide-scale use of this water is that wells need to be drilled as deep as 1,000 m, which discourages businesspeople and farmers from developing access to this water.

Session 1

Relations Among the Former Soviet Republics

Historical Russia: Variable or Inviolable?

Georgy Muradov, *Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Republic of Crimea, RD Permanent Representative to the President of the Russian Federation*

FIRST, let me note that I will be speaking here not as a regional official, but as vice-president of the Russian Association for International Cooperation, so that I might express my own viewpoint.

Today, the basic principles and goals related to spaces outside of Russia – especially those in which Russians, the indigenous people, are in the majority – remain unspecified. Hence the hardly acceptable situation in which countries with Russian and Russian-speaking populations have not bothered to develop and assume obligations to fully observe the internationally recognized rights of national minorities with respect to the status of the Russian language; guaranteed representation in bodies of local and central government; education; culture; traditions (including religious traditions); the media; and social-economic rights in Latvia, Estonia, etc. This has led to creeping assimilation, oppression, and threats of force, including even threats of ethnic purges, in certain regions of the post-Soviet space.

The question of whether our compatriots can rely on the right of peoples to self-determination if their basic rights are being violated remains unanswered.

The Crimean Spring of 2014 is the most vivid example of the realization of the right to self-determination. Russia's immediate recognition of Crimea's declared independence was the biggest factor preventing bloodshed. In view of our national interests, international organizations should legitimize that example as quickly as possible.

At the same time, those parts of our historical space that are not merely friends of Russia but fragments of the Russian World – and in many cases parts of the Russian people – forcibly separated from our country have not been recognized for many years. This makes them potential hotspots on the perimeter of the Russian Federation.

What will come of this? First, the Russian authorities are discredited in the eyes of 25 million of our compatriots who were separated from their country against their will. This irritates those who want

reunification with their historical homeland and who are one of the pillars on which our country relies in the post-Soviet space. Second, our enemies do not hesitate to use the unrecognized territories as a destabilizing factor in their struggle against Russia – the core of our multinational civilization called the Russian World. Third, as the recent Karabakh conflict demonstrated, the current situation is being exploited by certain external players who believe that Russia's passivity allows them to meddle with impunity in what is going on in Russia's historical territory. In fact, we practically invite this meddling by inviting foreigners to various formats (5+2 in Transnistria, 3+2 in Karabakh) or by consenting to UN peacekeepers in the Donbass.

Throughout the post-Soviet decades, we have not adequately responded to the obvious degradation of the status of our compatriots; we have not shown the resolve needed to bring stability and certainty to their position in accordance with the aforementioned principles. Russia cannot and should not feel ashamed of the Crimean model of realizing the right to self-determination.

Analyzing the causes of our passivity in formulating goals and making new decisions that adequately respond to the new conditions, many in the expert community have concluded that a considerable part of the Russian elite orientated on big transnational business is more interested in their own economic interests than in Russia's national interests.

With their money safely stashed away, they would have no reason to be bothered by the fate of their country. Because no matter what private property owners are doing, their property is and will remain a "sacred cow." It is no wonder that the deterioration of relations between Russia and the West looks like a landslide.

I think that a decisive battle is drawing near, and with it comes growing threats of military confrontation. The time has come to talk about what kind of war we are ready for and what kind of war our enemies will try to force on us. They obviously do not want to turn Russia, a strong military opponent, into a real military threat. They prefer to suffocate us and bring the country to the point of collapse along the lines of what happened to the Soviet Union by drawing us into an economically unacceptable arms race and fueling numerous local conflicts along our borders. I am convinced that to prevent a big war, we must adapt our military doctrine to these numerous threats to avoid a situation where "the very existence of the state is under threat," to quote from the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation.

The Political Situation in Belarus

Alexey Gromyko, *Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Europe, Chair of the A.A. Gromyko Association for Foreign Policy Studies, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences*

Recent events suggest several highly relevant ontological questions about the future of the Union State and Belarus itself. In my view, unlike Ukraine, Belarus is not divided along civilizational lines. This, however, does not contradict the fact that, in the past, the Belarusian nation came under heavy Lithuanian and Polish influence.

Recently, the Belarusian opposition has become more vocal in its criticism of the social and economic situation in the country, probably because of a poor understanding of the situation in the world. In fact, in the last few years, Belarus has been demonstrating much better socioeconomic, human development, and social prosperity indices than many other countries and the highest indices in the entire post-Soviet space.

The August 9, 2020, presidential election in the Republic of Belarus created a new political situation inside and outside the country. The Belarusian authorities failed for a sixth time to facilitate a relatively

smooth transition to a new electoral cycle. The people in power did not calculate the risks of a domestic political crisis; they refused to use the August 9 election for a smooth transfer of power. It became abundantly clear that, contrary to expectations, neither the EU nor the US was ready to play the “multivector” game. The real motives behind the behavior of Belarus’s neighbors and the West were far from existing calculations.

The crisis revealed that the lack of an effective party system made the political structure very vulnerable: Absent other political subjects, protests of all kind targeted the president. There is another, no less important fact: From the very outset, anti-Russian sentiments were virtually absent. The protests grew larger and radicalized when the authorities resorted to the disproportionate use of force the day after the election.

The authorities, caught off guard by the scale of the unauthorized rallies, did not have a well-thought-out information policy. Later, however, the authorities demonstrated impressive results.

In September, the situation stabilized to a certain extent: Neither side had turned the tide in its favor. It became clear that the confrontation would drag on for a long time.

A Venezuelan scenario in Belarus seemed possible for a while, on account of Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, but was avoided, in my opinion, because of Moscow’s mediation and clear signals to the West, EU leaders’ fears of becoming burdened with “another Ukraine” at its borders, and Washington’s indifference – the US has plenty of its own problems and, consequently, limited itself to issuing a handful of declarations.

According to experts, the political situation in Belarus may become fossilized, which would be strategically disadvantageous for Minsk and for Russia as a member of the Union State and Belarus’s closest partner.

Creating favorable conditions for deeper economic integration between Russia and Belarus is now more important than ever.

20 Years of the Union State: Achievements and Lessons

Alexander Stoppe, *head of the analytical sector of the Organizational and Analytical Department of the Standing Committee of the Union State, member of the Inter-Academic Council for the Development of the Union State, Professor, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations MGIMO*

IN DECEMBER 2019, we marked the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Union State treaty.

Twenty years is not very long in the scheme history. As might be expected, the Union State periodically encounters certain problems, some of which require detailed discussions, since both members are sovereign states with their own interests.

Development of the Union State requires the two sides to search for compromise and establish an integration basis that our peoples understand and find appealing. We cannot expect that because we lived in a common state once before, the memory of that alone will guarantee that our children and grandchildren will want to continue living in the Union State. The life and sentiments of politicians and people are changing, and so are the people themselves: New generations are coming of age. Recent events in Belarus have confirmed that beyond a doubt.

It seems that we have achieved the main goal: Russians in Belarus and Belarusians in Russia feel at home – very much like many centuries ago in the Russian Empire and, later, in the Soviet Union.

Those who know about this take it for granted without pausing to think that this is not “manna from heaven.”

Today, it has become a mantra of sorts to say that we are living in a rapidly changing world. ... Our future depends on how well we in Belarus and Russia, in the Union State, will respond to these processes and not get “left behind,” finding ourselves among the countries that are “catching up.”

The role of the programs of the Union State can hardly be overestimated. They were developed and implemented by scores of advanced scientific and production groups in both countries, universities, medical organizations, enterprises of the military-industrial complex, and members of all generations – including young people.

We cannot and must not lose what has already been achieved by the Union State. Today, our integration needs a positive and clear agenda. Experience has shown, however, that certain problems exist. Given the nature of our conference, I will be very frank in my remarks and stress that my opinions might not coincide with the official viewpoint.

I regret to say that on certain issues, ministries and other official organizations are focusing more on the process than on the results: The process is unfolding, and decisions are being implemented, but results always remain somewhere “on the horizon.” To my mind, this is largely because the Standing Committee of the Union State, which is in fact the sole organization responsible for establishing the union in real time, lacks legal standing.

Limited knowledge about the Union State among ordinary people, especially in the Russian Federation, is another major problem. In fact, even at MGIMO, most students know absolutely nothing about it; few of them, one in 10, knows something about its potential.

Young people are our strategic social development resource. They are much more important than raw-material, fuel, and financial resources. Consolidation of the younger generations in both countries could produce a synergetic effect thanks to similar mentalities, moral standards, professional preferences, traditions, and values.

That is why working with young people has become one of the highest priorities of the Union State: This generation will soon shoulder the responsibility for the future of Belarus, Russia, and the Union State.

It seems that one of the factors precipitating events in Belarus was lack of engagement with the younger generation at the country level – or, to be more precise, the lack of a common language between the authorities and young people.

The situation in the republic was complicated by the pro-Western orientation of a certain segment of the population that was partly influenced by the emerging trend of revising the history of Belarus, as well as Poland’s policy of offering education and a Karta Polaka [Polish Card].

Meanwhile, a simple comparison of the advantages offered by the Union State and the Karta Polaka shows that the Union State is far more beneficial.

It seems that the pandemic complicated the postelection situation in Belarus: Young people found themselves locked down in the republic, and the West used the energy that young people would otherwise have burned off at Ibiza, European night clubs, and Mediterranean beaches to incite protest sentiments.

Today, a new system of international relations is gradually taking shape; economic ties are changing, and new challenges and threats have become obvious. This means that citizens of the Union State must consolidate their integration, ensure their security, and develop economic relations.

Common History as a Tool for Political Mobilization and Socialization in Belarus

Denis Maltsev, *leading research associate, Center for Social-Economic Studies, Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI)*

THE COMMON history of the three modern-day East Slavic peoples lasted over 11 centuries, beginning in 882 and ending in 1991. For that reason, the memories of it and archetypes formed by it are a powerful tool capable of mobilizing the people living in these countries around the norms and values rooted in their common past. But Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine are now countries with a divided history. In the 21st century, Ukraine and even Belarus are actively engaged in historical myth-making. Both countries took similar paths in implementing their historical policies, even though Ukraine is an unfriendly state while Belarus is a member of the Union State together with Russia.

The Information Security Concept of the Republic of Belarus, adopted in 2019, enshrined the term “historical policy.” The document speaks of the need to consolidate the Belarusian national concept of the country’s historical past and the Belarusian model of memory as dominate both in the state and abroad. This is a step toward building a nation-state – a step that Ukraine has already taken.

The main approaches to the development of Belarusian historical policy were outlined in a collective article “On the Issue of Historical Policy” [K voprosu ob istoricheskoy politike] that appeared in the journal of the Belarusian Presidential Administration. The authors – members of the National Academy of Sciences and the Security Council of Belarus – identified the main methods used to “distort the historical past of the Belarusian people.” They assert that “any rejection of the important role of the ancestors of modern-day Belarusians in creating such forms of statehood as the Polotsk and Turov Principalities, Kievan Rus, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth” should be treated as a distortion. This is puzzling. Any attempts to ascertain whether it was the ancestors of the Belarusians, the Russians, or the Ukrainians who contributed the most to these state formations of the distant past are patently unhistorical.

Those who lived at that time are the ancestors of all three East Slavic peoples, and they had no national-ethnic self-awareness. This attempt to artificially extend the history of the Belarusian ethnicity is typical of contemporary Belarusian historiography.

There is an opinion that the Belarusian and Russian historiographies are rather similar, but in fact, this is true only with respect to the history of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. The Belarusian and Russian historiographies of other periods are very different.

In fact, in the 21st century, a social stratum has been cultivated in Belarus that regards Poles and Lithuanians as “its own” and either despises Belarusian identity or believes it to be practically nonexistent outside these states. This was the result of efforts of Polish and Lithuanian organizations that disbursed European grants to channel Belarusian academics’ conceptions of history in the “required” direction. Belarus, in turn, encourages these processes, which explains how the current political processes appeared and developed.

Concert Tours of the Song and Dance Ensemble of the Russian Aerospace Forces as a “Soft Power” Instrument

Inga Semindey, *soloist with the Song and Dance Ensemble of the Russian Aerospace Forces*

THE ART of military music has been known in Russia since the time of Peter I. During the grim years of the Great Patriotic War, military songs inspired Soviet soldiers of all nationalities to fight Nazism. In the 21st century, military music remains an important aspect of the presentation of contemporary states on

the international stage. Music is a “soft power” of sorts in the context of international military cooperation and rivalry.

The Song and Dance Ensemble of the Aerospace Forces is one of the leading performance groups of the Russian Armed Forces. It participates in international music festivals and has won many competitions in Russia. It was formed on June 17, 1942, when its artists made their contribution to the air defense of Moscow.

Today, Prof. Col. Vladimir Ivanov, Honored Artist of the Russian Federation, is the artistic director of our ensemble based in Moscow. The group (which has about 100 members) consists of a mixed choir, ballet, and orchestra. Members have dedicated their lives to music and service in the Russian Army. Our concert programs are a wonderful mix of styles and genres: music of Russian and foreign composers; sacred music (some of it performed a cappella); folk and military songs; dances of peoples of the world; musical miniatures; old and contemporary romances and songs; popular songs; rock; hip-hop; opera arias; musical comedies; instrumental music; musical eccentrics; and theatrical performances.

It is very popular in the CIS countries, in Western Europe, in the Middle East, and in Asian countries and their very diverse audiences. Every year, we take part in high-level state events attended by the president of Russia and the heads of other states, in diplomatic receptions, international forums and summits, the biggest air shows and informal meetings. It has represented Russia in many countries: Austria, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Israel, Spain, Italy, China, Malta, Portugal, Syria, the US, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Finland, France, and Switzerland. It marked the anniversary of the Normandie-Niemen fighter aviation regiment with an extended concert tour in France and gathered crowds in the best concert halls.

One of the most memorable tours for me was our trip to Harbin at the invitation of the Communist Party of China. Harbin holds a special place in the history of Russia as the de facto “heart” of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). We were pleasantly surprised to learn that, despite a complicated history, the Chinese are very interested in Russian culture. Our tour was part of the Russian-Chinese Festival of Culture and Art.

Every year, the Song and Dance Ensemble of the Russian Airspace Forces participates in the International Army Games. Last year, our members went to Uzbekistan to inspire our team.

Despite the pandemic restrictions, we traveled to Armenia on a military aircraft to perform for participants in military games from Armenia, Belarus, Greece, and Russia who managed to compete despite the complicated times. Russia won!

Our ensemble is frequently invited to Belarus.

We regularly perform at military airfields for our pilots who routinely fly to the far corners of our planet; we inspire our aviation units at their bases and frequently visit the Syrian Arab Republic to give concerts for our troops there. The artistic achievements of many of our artists have been recognized with awards from the Russian Defense Ministry and government.

Music inspires not only military victories but rumination about the futility and hopelessness of war.

The European Forum of Young Diplomats as a “Soft Power” Instrument of Russian Diplomacy

Konstantin Kolpakov, Chairman, Council of Young Diplomats, Foreign Ministry of Russia

IN 2014, the Council of Young Diplomats (CYD) established a mechanism on the basis of the Russian Foreign Ministry designed to encourage mutually advantageous long-term cooperation among experts in international affairs. This unique discussion platform for young officials of foreign policy agencies and

political and economic elites of the Eurasian space was formed at the suggestion of the Russian foreign minister. Created as a forum of young diplomats of the CIS countries, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, it later developed into the Eurasia Forum of Young Diplomats.

This is a qualitatively new format: For the first time, young officials of the foreign ministry tried to conceptualize and stage an international event with the participation of the Russian foreign minister and, later, of the foreign ministers of other countries and heads of Russian regions.

By fall 2020, we had sponsored 27 flagship events involving over 1,000 officials of foreign policy agencies from all corners of the world (including BRICS, SCO, ASEAN, OIC, the US, Great Britain, Germany, France, etc.). We drafted 15 final documents, including several declarations that summed up the initiative of establishing an International Association of Young Diplomats with headquarters in Moscow.

With support from Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and his Belarusian counterpart Vladimir Makey, a Club of Young Diplomats of the Belarusian Foreign Ministry was established in Minsk. Similar organizations appeared in Abkhazia, the UAE, and Mongolia, and are being set up at the foreign ministries of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, China, and South Africa. Young specialists of certain international organizations, the Eurasian Economic Commission in particular, have joined the CYD initiative.

While in 2014 we were talking about having taken a first resolute step toward consolidating and broadening diplomatic contacts among young diplomats in the Eurasian space, today, seven years later, we can say that our initiative has reached the global level to become a new trend of “soft power” – or “smart power,” to use the latest definition preferred by experts, including Joseph Nye. We are calling this “horizontal diplomacy.”

In the case of the Eurasia Forum, the horizontal diplomacy concept can be defined as the establishment and development of long-term personal contacts between young diplomats, experts in international affairs, and members of the Eurasian elite based on equal and informal mutually advantageous and creative communication.

The theoretical foundation selected by the CYD has already proven its practical value and effectiveness. Indeed, a motivated and interested individual open to cooperation can benefit more from informal and free communication by borrowing practical knowledge. For the sake of their professional development, young specialists must have opportunities to share their experiences, and analyze common elements and specific aspects of diplomatic service. This fully comports with the aim of training modern diplomats. They should be encyclopedically educated, and be able to creatively solve a wide range of problems and quickly adapt to specific situations.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the Eurasia Young Diplomats Forum is so far the only platform in the post-Soviet space where young diplomats can fully cooperate. It is geared at consolidating the positions of the Russian Federation in the post-Soviet space and efficiently promoting the interests of our state in the Eurasian macroregion.

In this respect, the methods of network diplomacy will make it possible not only to resolve problems of politics, foreign policy, and economics, but also to deal with social and humanitarian issues. Multilateral and bilateral contacts established on the basis of the forum that involve the political elites of the region’s countries will help encourage youth exchanges among interested states, organize all sorts of athletic and cultural events, and involve the younger generation in Russia’s cultural space.

Session 2

COVID-19 and Adaptation Problems

Combating COVID-19 in the Commonwealth of Independent States

Alexander Pankin, *Russian Deputy Foreign Minister*

FROM THE moment the COVID-19 pandemic spread to the postSoviet space, Russia has shown solidarity, empathy, and support. We immediately began to supply coronavirus testing systems to countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and to the Lugansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine.

The CIS has a substantial legal base of agreements and mechanisms, including with respect to sanitation safety and monitoring, that has been used to ensure the effectiveness of our assistance. We live in a common space, and, besides agreements, we are connected by migration flows, labor emigration, and cultural and social interaction. At the end of the day, this is our common security belt. So interaction with states in the post-Soviet space is a priority for us. By and large, the CIS was prepared to deal with a pandemic of this kind and to combat the coronavirus.

In the media, the coronavirus pandemic is often compared to World War II. There are no major reasons to expect radical changes in the world economy and international relations after this pandemic is over, as some people are saying.

COVID-19 has ruined any chance of a normal harvest and sufficient food production for many countries; gaps have formed in the world market. This is prompting our partners to revise their views on integration. We are hearing more and more proposals for cooperation, since we have well-established ties and resources for agricultural and food exports. The production of medicines has become more important – demand for drugs has grown and will remain stable because there is no stimulus more powerful than the fear of a pandemic. Attitudes are shifting. This is a positive development.

I would also like to mention the issue of evacuating our citizens. This is an extremely complicated process. The Foreign Ministry had no experience with such large-scale evacuations or transit through our territory under epidemiological restrictions. Nevertheless, we have managed to do it.

Will the postpandemic world be absolutely digital, secure, and friendly? It is hard to say. There is increasingly intense competition in the current changing environment. From an economic standpoint, life will be more difficult. As green, carbon-free and other economies gain momentum, traditional energy markets are declining. All of them provide opportunities for new investment serving someone's pragmatic interests.

As regards the CIS, our partners now have a good chance to decide who they are going to be with and to understand what we mean to them. COVID-19 has somewhat opened a window of opportunity, but that may close if we don't pool our efforts.

The World After the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Outlook for Integration Processes in Eurasia

Oleg Stepanov, *Director of the Foreign Policy Planning Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*

The COVID-19 pandemic that has engulfed the world has catalyzed transformation processes in international relations, especially because of the compression of space and time, as Konstantin Kolpakov said. It has affected everybody. It has been an ordeal for individuals and families, and a test for states, international economic associations, and mechanisms of global governance. By triggering crises in health services, economies, and trade systems, the epidemic has further destabilized international

relations and sown mistrust and hostility. Unfortunately, the world has been unable to pull together to deal with the problems. Instead, it has become more insular and plunged into a multidimensional crisis.

One manifestation of this crisis is the even more blatant disregard by some developed Western states for the vital interests of large powers such as Russia and China. Attempts to hinder our socioeconomic development and thwart our international activities has, in effect, become a systematic policy, even though it counters the principles of international relations and the peaceful resolution of disputes enshrined in the UN Charter.

We are convinced that this policy is doomed to fail, as are attempts to replace the traditional concept of international relations with a concept of international relations based on a “rules-based order.”

Participation in various integration formats is a priority for Russia. This is enshrined in fundamental state documents such as the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is the latest format, and it is already a mature and stable body. Many states and economic organizations are taking interest in it. Despite ongoing turbulence in the world economy, EAEU mechanisms are ensuring systematic integration processes, supranational regulation, and a stable common market.

CIS countries remain sources of investment, innovation, and labor for one another. This is a key factor in economic growth and provides global competitive advantages.

Biological security is a field where there’s a lot to do. During this pandemic, our country has been very effective at marshalling health care resources. We are willing to share our achievements, including the Russian COVID-19 vaccine, with our partners.

Russia is an advocate of the Greater Eurasian Partnership project, which is an open integration format. Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed an initiative to this effect in December 2015.

We are working to combine and coordinate our integration plans with China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

We will also seek more extensive cooperation with India, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, ASEAN member countries, and Iran. The Greater Eurasian Partnership initiative was supported by ASEAN at the Russia-ASEAN summit in Sochi in 2016. We hope that in the long term, our European Union partners will join us in this cooperation format.

I’d like to conclude by saying that I hope today’s discussion will make a substantial contribution to the analysis of international formats in Eurasia and make their prospects clearer.

The COVID-19 Pandemic: Psychological Effects and Adaptation Resources

Varvara Morosanova, *Professor, Doctor of Science (Psychology), Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, head of the Self-Regulation Psychology Laboratory, Psychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Education*

THE PANDEMIC that swept the world in 2020 is unprecedented in scale and has had unprecedented effects on all aspects of human life and society, including international relations. In this crisis, medicine is the main resource for saving lives. But psychological resources are also essential. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that mental problems provoked by COVID-19 are among the main causes of suffering in the world and are just as grave as grief from losing loved ones, shock from losing a job, or fears about the future.

A survey spanning 39 countries has shown that societies that have experienced more epidemics or other natural or manmade upheavals in their history show less proclivity for developing interpersonal

contacts, less desire for self-realization, and lower generalized trust. Most likely, contacts between people will continue to become less frequent and social ties will become less diverse during the pandemic and subsequent economic crises. There are forecasts that people will frequently avoid participating in social events even after the pandemic.

The psychological effects of the pandemic are giving rise to mutually opposing processes in social groups. On the one hand, they may foster stronger cohesion in a group in the face of a common danger; on the other, they may cause the group to adopt ultraconservative or, conversely, risky behavior management strategies. Stress may result in less independent and less critical thinking under mounting group pressure. A group is easier to manipulate when it is under stress because there is growing pressure within the group; seemingly authoritative opinions are more easily accepted; and there are stronger tendencies to take simplistic views of situations and ignore alternative viewpoints. Studies of the impacts of disinformation on COVID-19 show that this leads to the rejection of vaccination and encourages belief in conspiracy theories.

All surveys carried out during the pandemic show a decline not only in economic wellbeing but sociopsychological wellbeing. One can see, on the one hand, a rise in social cynicism and a belief that the world is a dangerous place and, on the other, the growing popularity of leaders focused on caring for people, which represents a shift toward conservative values and support for authoritarian candidates in elections.

Alongside the pandemic is the coronavirus infodemic – a surge of fake news and panic in social media that some researchers say is spreading faster than the coronavirus itself.

Social support has proven an extremely important resource for adapting to lockdowns. Loneliness caused by isolation has led to social support measures, which may become a positive effect of the pandemic.

Optimism of various types is another resource. A survey of a large number of students focused on protective optimism, which means defensive denial (the so-called rose-colored glasses phenomenon) and on constructive optimism, which means a desire to try to cope with problems caused by the pandemic and adopt flexible views of the situation. Constructive optimism is predominantly a female trait, while men prefer protective optimism and destructive coping behavior – a refusal to follow recommendations. Constructive optimism was found to be a significant component of psychological wellbeing.

However, our studies show that the main resource for adapting to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic is conscious self-regulation.

In our view, to cope with negative emotional states, it is important to choose a strategy for regulating activity rather than the environment. We must develop a capacity for conscious self-regulation as a meta-resource for coping with everyday tasks. The best way to achieve this is to master new academic, professional, or athletic skills; take on complex or extraordinary challenges; or acquire diverse and unusual experiences.

Psychological resources not only help us cope with uncertainties brought on by the pandemic, but they raise our physical immunity to the extent that stress reduces it.

Session 3

“Color Revolutions” in the Post-Soviet Space: Who Benefits?

The Ukrainian Maidan as the Catalyst for the Creation of the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR)

Vladislav Deynego, *Foreign Minister of the LPR, plenipotentiary representative of the LPR in the Minsk Contact Group*

THE UKRAINIAN MAIDAN comprised several phases. Its foreign beneficiaries expected it to produce results even though some of its phases are proving unsuccessful.

The year 2004 saw an attempt to destabilize the situation in Ukraine and restructure its system of government. That attempt failed, but it nevertheless led to the destruction of the foundations of Ukrainian statehood. Changes were made to the Constitution, and the government became fractured and lost its continuity. The third round of elections, which was the final stage of the “orange revolution,” made it clear to Ukrainian society that, with enough desire, the government could be destroyed by anyone in any way at any time.

In 2013 and 2014, the Ukrainian government got carried away with the topic of European integration. A treaty on European integration was drafted, and only after a systematic analysis of that document did those who were in power realize that it offered absolutely crippling terms.

The Euromaidan gained momentum and consequently encountered resistance in southeastern Ukraine, where the Donbass industrial region is located. The Donbass was unprepared for such a rabid turn toward Europe. That region had traditionally sought to integrate with Russia.

In western Ukraine, administration, Security Service, and police buildings and military bases were being occupied. Weapons seized there were used on the Maidan, where the violent phase was beginning.

Then there was an attempt to settle the situation. Viktor Yanukovich signed an agreement on February 21, 2014, with the mediation of Germany, Poland, and France. The document never came into force. Yanukovich had to flee. The new leaders seized government bodies, the president's office and the Supreme Rada.

Southeastern Ukraine realized just how determined the political group that had seized power in the country was to force its standards and views on the Russian-speaking community.

At that point, Crimea received enough support from Russia for a referendum. Crimea reunified with Russia. For the Russian-speaking population of the southeast, this was a beacon of hope, a goal that had to be pursued. Unfortunately, that goal wasn't achieved.

The goal of joining Russia was set and a referendum was planned for May 11. Then the well-known events took place in Odessa on May 2 and in Mariupol on May 9. Those events played a dual role: On the one hand, they strengthened the determination of the Donbass to seek independence but, on the other, they somewhat reduced the level of activity of Odessa and other regions. All of southeastern Ukraine was ready to rise up against the revival of Ukrainian radical nationalism and the nationalistic remodeling of Ukraine. Unfortunately, not all the southeast was able to rise; part of it stayed away.

Our referendum on independence had an amazingly high, unprecedented turnout – over 70%. The proposition for the independence of the LPR received 89% of the vote. Developments in Kiev were the main motivation for the decision to create the LPR. Our society was unwilling to put up with what was happening in the center.

It was Crimea that mainly benefitted from this “color revolution.”

Resources for Countering “Color Revolutions” in the Post-Soviet Space

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

Revolutions have begun to be based on rules of the game that were forgotten long ago. In fact, today there are no rules at all. You can compare this to a soccer match in which one team kicks the ball into the other team's goal the normal way, while players from the other team pick up the ball with their hands and throw it into the goal of their opponents: The rules have been changed in the middle of the game. And now the situation is completely different: The other team is not even playing but simply announcing the score, claiming that a game has been played and that it won.

What political technologies are used in organizing "color revolutions"? First, the adversary is portrayed in a negative light. It turns out that fabricated damaging information works just as well as the real deal. So one need not look for the truth. Second, it is alleged that the political elite lives in another world, shops in other stores, listens to other music, etc.

Then there are PR tactics. What kind of action should be taken against these? The information space must be under tight control. This seems axiomatic, but if we watch our federal television channels, we'll see that this axiom isn't followed.

There are also economic methods of pressure. First, a super-liberal economic model is introduced in a country (large countries abandoned such models long ago), which corrupts government from the top to the bottom. After that, politicians have to choose between money and power. People for whom money takes priority come to the surface. The trap snaps shut. The government is urged to avoid violence against those who rise up against it. How? By threatening to seize bank accounts. The way I see it, that was the only reason why the "color revolution" in Belarus has failed.

Communications Regimes in Countries Experiencing "Catch-Up Revolutions": The People as the Beneficiary

Valentina Komleva, *head of analysis, National Research Institute of Communications Development, Doctor of Science (Sociology)*

ACCORDING to Jürgen Habermas, countries undergoing what he terms "catch-up revolutions" are post-socialist countries experiencing major changes.

A "catch-up revolution" is to an extent a "rewind" revolution – a revolution that clears the way for catching up with processes that have been missed. There are at least four periods of "catch-up revolutions": Revolutions that took place immediately after the collapse of the socialist bloc; revolutions of the early 2000s; and revolutions of the 2010s.

It is implied that those revolutions were catching up with democratization and liberalization processes.

The Belarusian revolution is taking place in a new social environment characterized by a breakthrough of the information society, the application of digital technology, and pervasive postmodernism. In such a society, people increasingly seek transparent relationships and horizontal communication with the government, and place increasing value on the accuracy of information. Moreover, due to restrictions on international travel caused by COVID-19, numerous young people who had planned to go abroad to study or work have been forced to stay in Belarus. This has caused frustration among young people in cities, especially in Minsk and Brest, which fueled the protests.

What is the Belarusian revolution trying to catch up with? ... The triggers of the protests have included the communication regime of Belarus, or, to be more precise, the defects of this regime.

Communication regime is a concept that we began to use comparatively recently. We take the phrase "communication regime" to mean a system of formal and informal norms, rules, traditions, resources, and instruments of communication between significant actors within and outside a country.

Belarus is characterized by strict control of communication, a limited degree of openness of channels and filters of political mobility, and limited opportunities for participation in political decision-making. From this standpoint, current developments in Belarus stem largely from the incompatibility between the communication regime and some Belarusians' conceptions of what the public and political communication model should look like. The inflexibility and shortcomings of a country's communication regime will have powerful negative impacts on the nation's sociopolitical system.

I wouldn't say that the Belarusian communication regime is archaic or authoritarian. It simply is no longer in touch with the changing reality and Belarusians' changing sociopolitical communication needs.

In this sense, events in Belarus are apparently opening up a new period of "catch-up revolutions": revolutions that protest obsolete norms and rules of intrasystem communication and try to catch up with a changing reality. Undoubtedly, the people are the beneficiary in revolutions of this type. No matter what the outcome of current developments in Belarus, its communication regime will shift toward greater openness, looser control, and greater consideration for feedback. Some decisions that have been made by the current leadership and the behavior of actors seeking power show that this regime has already begun to change.

Session 4

Common History: 75th Year of Victory Over Fascism

The CIS Has Declared 2020 the Year of the 75th Anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War

Alexander Pankin, *Russian Deputy Foreign Minister*

THE 75th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War is a remarkable, poignant, and inspiring date. Not only the people of Russia but also our friends and partners in the post-Soviet space see the Victory as something that unites us, and I hope that they will continue to see it as such. We may have different ways of celebrating, of presenting state awards, but in the CIS, both leaders and ordinary people remember Victory Day and celebrate it.

Without a doubt, this makes us completely unified. The young generation knows what that war was like from films and books that are available both in Russian and in the languages of CIS countries. This is true of all countries that are our CIS partners except one, which has adopted a different attitude toward the events of World War II, the notion of the Great Patriotic War, and to the Victory. Even Georgia, which has left the CIS, observes Victory Day and reveres the fallen.

Of course, the peoples of the CIS countries remember their heroes, study the history of the war, and know about its horrors and consequences. All this helps to combat falsifications of the history of the war and prewar developments, accusations of responsibility for unleashing the war, and the vandalizing of memorials and graves of fallen soldiers, all of which has become common recently. We can see what is happening in the Baltic states, in Central Europe, in other countries. This is a very dangerous trend. But what is more dangerous is the uprooting of the memory of the war and the cultivation of new perceptions of the war, what was fought for and who the winners were.

At the United Nations and in other international formats, our fellow diplomats from the CIS eagerly put forward or become co-authors of initiatives concerning the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II and the 75th anniversary of Victory. They also support our resolutions that are submitted to the General Assembly, such as the resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism.

Moreover, 2020 is an anniversary year for the United Nations, which was formed 75 years ago, in October 1945. The UN Charter and other postwar documents laid the foundations for modern international law, but today we are increasingly seeing attempts at the UN and elsewhere to replace international law with some new rules that are made out to be a kind of universal law.

Victory in World War II and in the Great Patriotic War will undoubtedly not only remain the cornerstone of the world order but also hold a firm place in public sentiment, because remembering World War II may help us avoid a new disaster. It is in everyone's interest to continue the joint line with our friends and allies in the post-Soviet space and to make it clear to them that there is no competition for who was more heroic and who contributed more to the Victory. It was joint efforts and the spirit of heroism of individuals and peoples that defeated that monstrous phenomenon of fascism.

Marking the 75th Anniversary of Victory: The Universal System of International Law and Attempts to Replace it with a "Rules-Based Order"

Aydar Aganin, Deputy Director, Foreign Policy Planning Department, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

WORLD WAR II and the Victory of the allied powers in it is not only a military but also a political and humanitarian landmark. That Victory brought new principles for relations between states.

As is well known, many of these principles began to be formulated during the war and represented a rejection of the policies of Nazi Germany and its allies. The Atlantic Charter, a joint declaration issued on August 14, 1941, by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, called, among other things, for "the abandonment of the use of force" and for the possibility for all nations to live "in safety within their own boundaries," and insisted that "countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other," that all peoples have the right "to choose the form of government under which they will live," and that "sovereign rights and self-government [be] restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them." At the Inter-Allied Meeting in London on September 24, 1941, the USSR in effect joined that declaration. Moreover, Moscow proposed that the anti-Nazi alliance plan a postwar world order to be based on cooperation and friendship.

During the war, other declarations were issued aimed at maintaining postwar peace and security with all states, large and small, enjoying sovereign equality. Those documents gave birth to the United Nations concept, which materialized as the global organization with this same name.

The principle of self-determination has become the legal basis for decolonization, a process that, in effect, is still unfinished, as some Western countries still possess colonies. On the basis of this principle, the Soviet Union made a substantial, if not the main, contribution to the liberation of Africa and other regions from the sticky web of colonial dependence.

In addition, the UN-centric system provides a basis for cooperation between states with different political and socioeconomic regimes. It provides guarantees – insurance, if you will – for peaceful interaction between countries that at times have opposing interests and are rivals.

Today, 75 years after the Victory in World War II, universal principles for interaction among states that are called international law are being eroded. It is clear why. The political arrogance of the Western camp, which has proclaimed itself the winner of the Cold War, and its efforts to establish a unipolar global model with a single decision-making center make the West see international law as an à la carte system: We comply with it when we need to and circumvent it or disregard it when we don't. There are plenty of examples – Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya.

But that's not all. A new concept – a "rules-based order" or "rulebased order" – has come into use. It isn't specified what rules are meant.

For example, the German Institute for International and Security Affairs claims that there exists a “gap between Europe and China ... in terms of questions of values, the political system and the rules-based international order.”⁷ Everything is clear with values and political systems, which vary from country to country, but what does the “gap” in international order mean? Apparently, it means that the “rules-based international order” is something that exists in the EU alone. In other words, it is a unilateral order, but with the implication that other states and regions must comply with it, too.

There are persistent efforts to put the UN label on this theoretical novelty thought up in the West. This represents attempts to intrude into the jurisdiction of the UN Security Council replacing universally approved international legal instruments and mechanisms. These rules are implemented in narrow formats, in clubs as it were, and naturally involve circumventing consensus methods of dealing with problems.

Why are we addressing this issue in the context of a World War II anniversary? Much has been said about revisions of the results of the war. Those revisions have led to the questioning of the principles and norms of international law enshrined in the UN Charter. Allowing these principles and norms to be diluted or revised at will may take us back to bloc confrontation.

Session 5

Borders and Borderlands in Russia’s Modern History: From Variability to Inviolability

New Instruments for Eurasia’s Educational, Scientific, and Scholarly Integration

Yevgeny Kozhokin, *Professor, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO), Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

SCIENTOMETRICS is a phenomenon that concerns every scientist, scholar, and lecturer. All researchers and lecturers must participate in competitions and contribute to publications that are cited in international databases, primarily Scopus, a database created by the Netherlands-based private company Elsevier.

Russian journals are being cited in Scopus more and more, which, of course, greatly benefits our scientists, scholars, and lecturers. But Scopus keeps a very close eye on all journals, especially Russian ones. If a journal deviates from some of Scopus’s principles – many of which are a mystery to us – it may be excluded from the database.

I can say in all modesty that MGIMO Review of International Relations is a very good journal. Two attempts have been made to get it included in Scopus, but on both occasions, the journal was denied under various, far-fetched pretexts. However, neither universities nor research institutes have enough resources to get large amounts of publications cited in Scopus.

In my view, Scopus, QS and other citation databases and ranking systems indirectly control Russian research.

What resources do we have? There is the Russian Science Citation Index (RINTs), which is also a private corporation, but a Russian one. I believe that both government and civil society should pay close attention to RINTs, because it is a Russian resource. We should think about what we need to do to make it a Eurasian index in the long term. As a Eurasian index, it would promote Eurasia-wide scientific, scholarly, and educational integration.

Lomonosov Moscow State University has developed what is called the Three University Missions Moscow International University Ranking (MosIUR). Its 2020 issue lists 1,500 universities representing 97 countries, including 101 Russian universities.

These new resources represent a large proportion of the dynamic Eurasian elite of scientists, scholars, and lecturers. These are the people who are building the future generation. I believe that our current resources need improvement and international promotion, including advancement in Eurasia.

Accession of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union in Light of Declassified Documents of the Soviet Foreign Intelligence Service

Aleksandr Dyukov, *Director, Historical Memory Foundation*

RHETORIC in the West with respect to Russian historical narratives has been evolving of late. In the past, our statements to the effect that it is unacceptable to rewrite history were disregarded by our opponents, who invariably said that there are different truths, that history cannot be regulated, and that researchers must do research. In recent decades, the situation has been changing. Today, our Western opponents are mirroring our position: A year ago, a European Parliament resolution stated that Russia's revision of history should be opposed. In August 2020, the US State Department's Global Engagement Center published a report in which it discussed Russia's historical revisionism. The same claims can be found in numerous declarations issued by the leaders of our closest neighbors – the Baltic states and Poland – in response to an article by the president of Russia.

What is prompting these changes? Basic conceptions related to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and to what is called the "Soviet occupation" of the Baltic states and similar narratives related to 1939-1941 were, on the whole, formulated in the 1980s-1990s, when access to archival documents was limited. The disintegration of the Soviet Union led to an archival revolution in Russia and the post-Soviet countries that opened access to a vast number of documents, yet the narrative connected with the Pact and "Soviet occupation" persisted.

Today, several publications related to Soviet-German relations, some of them based on certain documents of 1939, have already appeared. They reveal the truth and dispel myths. Other documents are currently being declassified.

The main problem is that despite our intensive publishing activities and discussions held thanks in part to the Russian Historical Society, it is practically impossible to convey this information to Western audiences, primarily in English. For example, in his book *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, Timothy Snyder focuses mostly on the conception of the union between Stalin and Hitler and comes dangerously close to shifting the blame for the Holocaust to the Soviet Union. The hints are clear enough. Under the patronage of American embassies in various countries, this book was promptly translated into dozens of foreign languages. These represent determined and consistent efforts to promote the Western position on the issue.

We are doing practically nothing in this respect. In Poland, Finland and other countries, fiction, scientific and historical publications, and books related to political science are translated into foreign languages by organizations established for that very purpose. This is an important tool of influence and for bringing desirable images to foreign audiences.

The problems I have outlined are very serious. So far, there is no solution in sight.

Leonty Lannik, *Senior Research Associate, Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Candidate of Science (History)*

MOST expert assessments of processes and crises in the post-Soviet space are given from a political science perspective. This explains the inevitable but not quite correct “modernization” of certain problems and the conviction that certain methods used by actors of international politics and the problems they encounter are unique.

The possibilities and potentials of new technologies and corresponding innovations in military, political, and diplomatic practices cannot be denied. On the other hand, the structure of the human psyche has remained the same for hundreds of thousands of years, so we should not expect cardinal changes in the general logic of decision-making and the impact of subjective factors and delusions.

In many cases, problems are analyzed and discussed based on careful consideration of local specifics. This happened in 2020, when professional communities discussed issues pertaining to Belarus’s “multivector” policy; ethnic and territorial problems in the Southern Caucasus and other areas that defy resolution; and the irreversible events that led to the formation of the Donetsk and Lugansk people’s republics. Despite its advantages, this approach practically always fails when it comes to long-term forecasts. Indeed, the specifics of any local issue are obvious and undeniable, but abstractions require a systemic (comprehensive) approach and parallels with the past.

Trends that are just as unfavorable for systems analysis emerged in contemporary historiography long ago and are even encouraged. Case studies have come to the fore in the West that, following the current fashion, fail to see the forest for the trees.

But even under such far from favorable circumstances, the imperial strategy in historical memory can still win. The position of the imperial actor is always less localized and generally less mythologized, and less dependent on a crudely and often laboriously compiled list of names and false facts.

So far, we can say that that need for large-scale and long-term strategic solutions has been resolutely confirmed, albeit without the political will to implement them and, more often than not, without a clear understanding of the scale and roots of the problem.

Subjective and psychological factors should be considered together with the impact of pseudo-axiomatic ideas, such as the importance of any borders, either within the Soviet Union or drawn by “Helsinki.” It is absolutely clear that the thoughtless application of these ideas to the processes of the past will produce negative effects.

For all independent East European states, myths about the establishment or attempted establishment of their statehood in 1914-1932 play a huge role.

Today, the ways and means Belarus is using to find its place in the world are determined not only by who is studying the history of the Belarusian People’s Republic and how, but also by its status in 1918-1921. Its ties with Lithuania and Poland, and the vague borders that were growing even vaguer (they were firmly delimited only in 1945) inside the Soviet zone of influence are rooted in a series of conflicts around the development of independent Lithuania and Poland, and in the period of the 1917-1922 Ukrainian war of independence. What is presented as “new” historical reminiscences in history textbooks and academic publications of organizations engaged in the study of historical memory were in fact borrowed from the centuries-old works of authors like Mitrofan Dovnar-Zapolsky and Mikhail Grushevsky.

In fact, all issues of borders and border areas emerged not when the Soviet Union was falling apart, but when it was being formed. The Union Treaty is an unrelated issue: Its complex system of reticence and compromise is rooted in attempts to suppress the conflicts that emerged in 1918-1921.

The Westphalian, Vienna, Versailles, and Yalta-Potsdam models of the European and world order that are frequently brought up in geopolitical discussions do not prove that analysis should be limited to purely longterm and relatively well-established systems: There are also local systems, systems that were relatively short-lived, and those established under unprecedentedly strong external pressure that subsequently became deformed and had a less apparent legacy.

Territorial and Border Transformations in the Baltic States in the 20th and 21st Centuries

Vladimir Simindey, *Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Russian and East European Historical Studies [Zhurnal rossiyskikh i vostochnoevropeyskikh istoricheskikh issledovaniy]*, member, RGASPI Scientific Council

WORLD WAR I, a fatal period in the history of tsarist and emerging republican Russia, radically changed the social and political processes unfolding in the Baltic governorates and in Lithuania, and predetermined the redivision of the eastern Baltic littoral that had been under Russian rule since the 18th century. The deeply tragic nature of the deformation of Russia's Baltic periphery was reflected in the course of the German occupation (1914-1919) and its repercussions – confrontations in these territories of armed forces and groups under various ideological flags (Bolsheviks, pro-German rightwing conservative nationalists, pro-Entente national-democrats and rightwing social-democrats). The "Baltic question" was internationalized not only by foreign intervention, but also by the arbiter role (in many, including territorial-border, issues) assumed by the Entente as the winner and the "moral authority" (US President Woodrow Wilson).

Without going into the details of the fairly fascinating pro-German Lithuanian history of the time, I can use as an example of the political vaudeville of 1918, when Lithuania declared itself a kingdom to avoid unification with Prussia and invited a member of the rival Württemberg dynasty, Count Wilhelm von Urach, to the throne of Lithuania.

Latvia and Estonia have a long history of territorial and border disagreements of their own. In June 1919, the Estonian Army, with fairly weak participation from Latvian troops, won one of the most important battles – the battle of Wenden (the Battle of Cēsis, or Vönnu lahing in Estonian), in which it defeated the puppet German Provisional Government of Latvia headed by Andrievs Niedra, who had command of the Baltische Landeswehr and the Freikorps Iron Division. Estonia was not quick to vacate the port of Ainaži; it successfully insisted on dividing the border town of Walk into Latvian Valka and the Estonian Valga.

The accession of the Baltics to the Soviet Union in 1940 brought no territorial changes, except that Soviet acts confirmed Vilna Territory as part of the Union republic of Lithuania, with Vilnius as its capital.

On February 2, 1920, the RSFSR and Estonia signed the Tartu (Yuryev) peace treaty, which generously transferred to Estonia age-old Russian land along the Narva River and in the area of Pechor, even while the Polish Army was counterattacking in the area of Dvinsk (Daugavpils).

Today, Tallinn treats this peace treaty as a cornerstone (even though it frayed in 1940), giving it a pretext to be considered differently from other "banal" post-Soviet republics.

Today, the border treaty initialed in 1997 has become a bargaining chip in bilateral relations that were deliberately stirred up in 1998-1999 by economic groups on both sides of the border. A package approach to developing a legal basis for relations with Latvia was exchanged for several "nonbinding" agreements. Despite a "nesting doll" series of anti-Russian moves, the border treaty was signed and ratified.

The situation with Estonia is different: All efforts since 1997 to sign a similar treaty have failed. Tallinn expects to benefit from this situation. But an attentive observer might think otherwise....

Nazi Germany's Disinformation Operation to Disguise Preparations for Attacking the USSR

Oleg Vishlyov, *Candidate of Science (History)*; ov54@yandex.ru

ON THE evening of June 21, 1941, just hours before the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Marshal Semyon Timoshenko, people's commissar for defense, and General of the Army Georgy Zhukov, chief of the Red Army General Staff, were at the Kremlin, urging Joseph Stalin in the wake of new reports of German military activity along the western border of the USSR to immediately issue a directive to activate the Soviet Union's previously approved plan of response to a potential German attack. But the Soviet leader was dragging his heels. He was waiting for news from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

At 9 p.m., People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov invited German Ambassador Friedrich-Werner Graf von der Schulenburg for a meeting. Molotov asked Schulenburg to explain what had raised Germany's apparent ire, what was behind the rumors about an impending war, and why Berlin hadn't reacted to the TASS report of June 13. The ambassador evaded the questions, claiming to have no information.

In Berlin, throughout the day on June 21, Soviet Ambassador Vladimir Dekanozov, under the pretext of trying to submit a note about continued violations of Soviet airspace by German warplanes, had been trying to no avail to meet with German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop.

Not having complete clarity about Germany's plans, Stalin chose not to force events. "It would be premature to issue the directive; maybe the matter will be settled peacefully," he told Timoshenko and Zhukov.

Stalin had never considered Adolf Hitler friendly – especially not after the Germans had deployed several million troops to the Soviet border, recalled their specialists from the USSR, and started to evacuate personnel from their embassy in Moscow and burn documents in the embassy itself. Measures taken in May and June 1941 to fortify the Soviet Union's western border, some of them secret and some designed to send a clear message, meant that Stalin was by no means shortsighted.

It can be said in all confidence that the Kremlin was trying not to give the Germans a reason to provoke the Soviet Union into taking careless steps that would give Germany a pretext to attack the USSR and portray this as a preemptive strike. Moscow was waiting for an ultimatum from the Germans.

Weizsäcker wrote in his diary: "The Russians, who are so cautious, have let us take them unawares politically and militarily.... Apparently, Moscow had expected a normal diplomatic procedure – complaint, response, ultimatum, war – and had completely forgotten about the groundbreaking action taken against Yugoslavia."

The Germans wanted to make sure that the Red Army did not have enough time to move combat-ready forces into position along the border. Berlin expected that a sudden, overwhelming, and crushing attack on the Red Army in border battles would determine the outcome of the entire war.

The scale of the disinformation campaign was to increase when Wehrmacht divisions comprising the core of the attacking forces set off for the Soviet border.

THE MILITARY and political situation between the spring and early summer of 1941 enabled German intelligence to generate several false theories. It leveraged the ongoing German-British war and the

commonly held notion that it was infeasible for Germany, given its World War I experience, to wage a war on two fronts. The overwhelming majority of politicians and experts assumed that the Germans were unlikely to take any action against the USSR before finishing their war against Britain.

German intelligence made those beliefs the basis of two false theories that claimed that Germany was planning to escalate its war against Britain and that this was the reason for German redeployments to the Soviet border. Later, one more theory was added.

AWARE of the holes in the theory of an invasion of Britain and realizing that Moscow knew that Hitler had canceled Operation Sea Lion, the Germans came up with another hoax – namely, that Germany had put off invading Britain but had not abandoned plans to eventually defeat it militarily.

The Middle East bluff had one indisputable advantage – there was no need to fabricate any evidence to back it. In planning post-Operation Barbarossa action in May and June 1941, the Wehrmacht command had selected to target British positions in the Middle East. German intelligence used this plan to prove that German “dynamism” at that time was focused purely on the Middle East, and that Germany’s only post-Barbarossa goal was to defeat the British colonial empire.

Many German diplomatic and military actions between April and June 1941 were used to support the Middle East theory: the activity of General Erwin Rommel’s African Corps; the dispatch of a Luftwaffe group, military advisers, and significant assets to Iraq, where in April a government had come to power that declared war on Britain; heavy diplomatic pressure on Turkey to let Germany transport armaments and later troops through its territory to Syria and Iraq; the organization of an anti-British insurrection in Palestine; negotiations with Indian nationalist leaders about a similar uprising in India; an agreement with the Vichy administration, which controlled Syria, on joint anti-British action in the Middle East; diplomatic efforts to create an anti-British Berlin-Baghdad-Kabul axis; and finally, the aforementioned German occupation of Crete. All this effectively created the impression that Germany was refocusing southeastward.

But the Middle East theory began to become problematic for the Germans at some point. By late May, Turkey made it clear that it would not allow German armaments to pass through its territory.

FOOD and raw material were in constant short supply in Germany – a fact that Soviet diplomacy leveraged. The USSR had agreements to supply Germany with raw material and food in exchange for machinery, which the Soviet Union needed for its defense and other sectors. But during the war, neither Soviet food and materials, nor oil and agricultural imports from Romania were sufficient for Germany. Many experts believed that seizing Syrian and Iraqi oil, as well as Egypt’s main breadbasket, the Nile valley, was one of the main reasons for Germany’s plans to move to the Middle East. But that movement came to a halt by summer 1941. Analysts thought that the only way for the Germans to get enough resources to continue the war was to increase imports from the Soviet Union or occupy Ukraine and oil fields in the North Caucasus and Baku.

The disinformation machine was working at full tilt right up until June 22. The day before Germany attacked the USSR, rumors were started that Hitler, Ribbentrop, and many senior officials had gone on vacation.

Stalin was afraid of making a mistake, so he did not dismiss either theory. He hoped that a chance still remained to avert or put off a war and was afraid that this chance would be ruined by some slipup or by a provocation by German military leaders opposed to Hitler and Ribbentrop, who, according to numerous reports from intelligence and diplomatic sources, both preferred to resolve German-Soviet disputes through talks.

One can, of course, as is often done, blame Stalin and the Soviet government for the exceptional hardships that the Red Army and the entire Soviet Union faced in the early period of the war. But it is

worth considering the interests and actions of other actors – both Soviet and foreign, civilian and military – and remembering that the situation in the days leading up to June 22 was extremely confusing.

The stream of contradictory rumors, speculation, and expert opinions that German intelligence services and Western analysts directed at the leaders of various countries in those days led to a situation where, as former Romanian foreign minister Grigore Gafencu, Romanian envoy to the Soviet Union in 1940-1941, put it in his memoirs, “no one in the world could give a clear answer to the question of what Hitler wanted from Russia.”⁶⁷ Ribbentrop’s “personal staff” proudly stated in a report that up until the early hours of June 22, “no one was bold enough to make a firm forecast” about the future of German-Soviet relations, and “the Führer’s true plans virtually remained a mystery ... up until the last day.”