

International Affairs: Vol.67: №5, 2021: Summary.

The Biden Administration's Russia Policy

Sergei Ryabkov, *Russian Deputy Foreign Minister*

I believe that those who are saying that the summit simply had to take place are right. It evolved as an event shaping the international agenda in many ways. In our relations with the US, problems have not just been accumulating – they have been piling up on top of each other, compounded by events that were inconceivable some time ago. Perhaps the US president and his entourage felt that they should try to turn the page.

The meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden was remarkable for, among other things, its in-depth and substantive exchange of opinions. At the same time, I would like to stress that the US side was very sober-minded. Realistic approaches and assessments were characteristic of the entire US team. So I do not think that the understanding that was reached at the top level will be revised too much. From all indications, the US administration will work to achieve results and implement the agreements that were reached at the top level.

We are already in the process of implementing the agreements that have been reached. We presented the Americans with our proposals regarding the organization and agenda of the strategic stability dialogue. We immediately got down to discussing ICT security issues, or cyber security issues – to use the American term.

I must reiterate that the entire US team is playing on Kiev's side of the field. That is a fact. We are seeing no intention [on the part of the US] to consider our approach and assessments. Needless to say, under these circumstances, it is difficult to imagine any constructive contribution by the US to efforts, say, in the Normandy format.

[The self-proclaimed] Donetsk and Lugansk [people's republics] have made relevant proposals. The US does not seem to be interested.

The Americans must not give orders to others, especially when they are out of touch with what is happening and ignore both the reality on the ground and the agreements that have already been reached, including at the top level.

More than 95 sanctions packages are in force against Russia in one form or another. As a matter of fact, sanctions have become a mainstay of US policy in international relations. This policy is also being applied to many other countries.

We are currently at a stage where, strictly speaking, there is no question of talks in the classic sense. We do not yet have an appropriately structured negotiating format.

Generally, any dialogue, any negotiations with us are primarily a chance for the Americans to squeeze concessions from us and get us to make deals that would strengthen Washington's position.

We have acquired new means to guarantee Russia's security. It would be irresponsible and inexcusable to surrender them to Uncle Sam, so to speak. I do not know whether it is possible to take these systems into account in the future security equation. In our definition, a security equation is a combination of interdependent factors.

I did not say we "will attack" but that we "could attack." And I confirm those words. This is a very serious matter. The decision to use force against a trespasser is a political one.

The problem is that Washington and London, well aware of the scale of consequences and volatility of such actions, and also anticipating the nature of Russia's reaction, nevertheless decided to test our resolve to respond with force if necessary and tried to expose the Russian system of coastal defense and control over the area.

Once upon a time, the classics of Marxism talked about those who were the midwives of history. Today, we are seeing the economy at the service of some people's subjective ideas and perceptions about who is a friend and who is a foe, about who is indebted to whom for that [friendship], and even about how much money is owed. Frankly, I did not expect such degradation in the political thinking and economic principles of those who have studied in Chicago and have always advocated the free market and the inviolability of private property. These days, maxims about the free market are considered a joke.

Generally, I do not think it is possible in this context to talk in terms of receiving permission to take a turn for the better or for the worse, because regrettably, there are still too many people in today's Europe who are seeking a turn for the worse in relations with Russia.

We can live with restrictions just as well, and we will not yield to the West on our fundamental principles, such as protecting international law and the foundations of the world order, as it has evolved since World War II. We will not allow all of that to be deviously replaced by some vague, obscure formula regarding a so-called "rules-based world order."

Furthermore, we need to expand the agenda to include ways of preventing malicious attacks from the Internet – for example, on elements of the military command and control system. This and many other related issues require discussion with the Americans.

I would like to reiterate the main message contained in the Foreign Ministry's warning that you mentioned: If Russian citizens have reason to believe that for some reason or other they may be targeted by US lawenforcement agencies, I would strongly advise them not to travel abroad, because they may find themselves in a situation in which more than 60 Russians have already found themselves – in serious trouble, arrested on US warrants, and in some cases forcibly arrested on orders from US intelligence agencies or with the participation of such agencies.

The "Strategic Triangle" and Europe

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THE US-China-Russia strategic triangle became a geopolitical reality during the Cold War, when the world was divided into military-political blocs led by the two "superpowers" – the US and the USSR. Washington sought to shape that triangle to give the US the most advantageous position, maintaining optimal relations with each of the communist giants compared to relations between them.

US-Chinese détente helped the Americans gain the upper hand over the socialist camp during the Cold War, forcing the USSR to act on two fronts and enabling the Chinese to restore normal political and economic relations with the US, which laid the groundwork for the rapid growth of US-Chinese trade and economic cooperation. After the end of the Cold War, however, the configuration of the strategic triangle acquired new parameters.

From this perspective, relations between such great powers as China, Russia, and the US, on the one hand, and a united Europe, as represented by the European Union, on the other, will also be very important for strengthening their positions within the strategic triangle.

EUROPE has always been a foreign policy priority of Russia. Not only security issues and economic interests but also emotionally charged cultural and humanitarian ties have determined the relevance of our relations from the earliest times to the present day.

It seems that the time has come to reevaluate Russia's European policy. Vladislav Surkov, a former Russian presidential aide, believes that right now we are seeing the end of "Russia's epic journey to the West, the abandonment of repeated and futile attempts to become part of Western civilization and join the 'good family' of European nations."

Russian-EU dialogue has been effectively frozen. Nothing is being done to give a practical dimension to the 2005 agreement that envisioned establishing a strategic partnership through the creation of four common spaces (road maps) – economic; [freedom,] security, and justice; external security; and research and education.

In his article published in the German newspaper Die Zeit, Russian President Vladimir Putin had to state that "the European security system as a whole has greatly deteriorated. Tensions are rising, and the risks of a new arms race are becoming real," stressing that the situation can be improved only by restoring comprehensive partnership between Russia and Europe. Regrettably, right now, there is no hope of restoring this partnership.

AT LEAST since the beginning of this century, China has considered its relations with Europe a major foreign policy priority. ... China and the EU share extensive common interests in upholding world peace and stability, promoting global prosperity and sustainable development and advancing human civilization, making the two sides indispensable partners to each other's reform and development. The EU has been China's largest trading partner for 14 years in a row, and China is the EU's second largest trading partner. Developing a sound relationship with the EU has long been a foreign policy priority for China.

China sees partnership with the EU as an opportunity to implement its plans – in particular, the Belt and Road Initiative.

From Beijing's perspective, "the EU should ease its high-tech export control on China, strictly fulfill its WTO obligations, ensure that its trade remedy legislation and practices are in line with WTO rules, apply trade remedy measures reasonably, and prevent discrimination, de jure or de facto, against some WTO members," as well as not hinder Chinese investment in the EU.

At the same time, the Chinese side indicates in no uncertain terms that it will not tolerate lectures on human rights or interference in its internal affairs.

There has been a visible transformation in the European perception of China in recent years – from a promising trade partner to a potential military threat. Incidentally, China does not consider Europe a military adversary.

The EU-China investment deal signed on December 30, 2020 shows that China's constructive approach toward its European partners is yielding results.

Granted, on May 20, the European Parliament froze the ratification of the investment deal because of the countersanctions that the Chinese side had earlier imposed against a number of prominent European politicians, as well as because of the human rights situation in China.²⁴ Needless to say, that decision was made thanks in part to US pressure on Brussels. It remains unclear, however, how long Europe is prepared to exacerbate political relations with its largest trade partner.

EUROPE has always been a major foreign policy priority for official Washington. During the Cold War, the US deployed as many as 350,000 service personnel and nearly 7,000 tactical nuclear warheads in European NATO member countries – the largest force the US has ever deployed overseas.

However, the importance of Europe for the US was not limited to America's military and political position in the region. The world's two largest centers of economic power have close trade, financial, and technological ties. The volume of trade between the US and the EU reached an astronomical \$616 billion in 2019.

problems in US-EU trade and economic relations are attributed, with good reason, to the policy of the 45th US president. It was Donald Trump who initiated a tariff war with the EU in 2018, slapping a 25% tariff on steel imports and a 10% tariff on aluminum imports from the EU to the US. The EU retaliated by discussing an increase in tariffs on US goods.

It would be wrong to expect that with Joe Biden now in power in the US, harmony will return to US-EU relations. After all, even without Trump, US-EU trade and economic relations are beset by serious problems.

Military-political problems in relations between the transatlantic partners seem to be just as serious. Since the end of the Cold War, Europe has lost its former significance for US foreign policy strategy. American ruling circles believed that the main threats to US national security were concentrated not in Europe, but in other parts of the world. As a result, the numerical strength of US forces permanently deployed in Europe has been steadily declining.

Americans are accusing their European allies of being security consumers, not providers. For example, speaking at a joint press conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Donald Trump slammed Germany for spending just 1% of its GDP on defense, compared to the US's 4.2%.

The NATO Brussels Summit, which took place on June 14, 2021, was an unquestionable success for the European policy of the 46th US president. The Brussels Summit Communiqué says that China's stated "ambitions and assertive behavior present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to Alliance security."³⁵ Granted, the Biden administration had to pay a price for getting its European allies involved in a standoff with China, in particular by lifting sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline.

The Russia-US summit, which took place two days after the Brussels summit, showed that Washington is not in a position to stand up to both Russia and China at the same time in a situation where its European allies are willing to fight against the Celestial Kingdom mostly in words.

RIGHT NOW, relations between China and Europe are improving. Russian-EU relations are declining, and there is currently no reason to expect that this trend will change. Relations among the Euro-Atlantic partners have also encountered serious difficulties, and it would be wrong to attribute these problems exclusively to the controversial personality of the 45th US president.

Under these conditions, Chinese-EU ties are developing successfully, since, unlike Russian-EU or US-EU relations, they are unencumbered by political or ideological differences. The Europeans are willing to forgive the Chinese much of what they will never forgive the Russians in the human rights sphere.

Iran: New Conflict Confluences

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SIGNALS from Washington on the readiness of the Joe Biden administration to consider the possibility of concluding a new international nuclear deal with Tehran raised certain hopes for unblocking the situation around Iran. Positive forecasts were also expressed in Iran.

This coincided with Russia's initiative to resume contacts with the aim of forming a regional security system in the Persian Gulf. Moscow believes that the current extremely tense situation in this region that is critical to maintaining normal world trade and economic ties must be overcome.

Speaking on July 28, 2021, at a prestigious international symposium on the future of the Middle East, Turki al-Faisal, an influential Saudi politician, former longtime head of the General Intelligence Directorate, and ex-Saudi Ambassador to the US and Great Britain, harshly accused Tehran of intending to use the political vacuum arising from the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan to expand its influence. He explained that he was referring to the larger scale presence in these countries of paramilitary structures like al-Hashd al-Shaabi and others that Tehran was planning.

Politicians in Saudi Arabia and other member countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) associate Tehran's growing "expansionism" with the election of Sayyid Ebrahim Raisi as president of Iran. They characterize him as a representative of the conservative camp that is disposed to broadly using Shiite groups and paramilitary formations not only in Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, but also in other countries.

Thus, relations between Iran and its Arab neighbors are predicted to worsen.

It is important to objectively understand the root cause of this situation: Is Iran really "going on the offensive" on its own initiative, seeking dominance in the region, or is it fighting for survival while in sanctions isolation, using its rather limited capabilities? It seems that both are playing a role, but in general, the second option seems to prevail – Iran is defending itself.

The situation changed radically after Saudi Arabia began direct largescale military involvement in the events. The Houthis, who were being hit by airstrikes, began to implore Tehran for various forms of assistance and support to "repel the armed aggression of Saudi Arabia."

As for Tehran's intentions, it is interested in other things today: the lifting of sanctions; the improvement of the economic and social situation; and the return to normal relations with its neighbors in the region, with Western countries, and especially with its traditional trading partners – the EU states. It is not in Tehran's interests to erect additional obstacles to the normalization of its international relations for the sake of regional "hegemony."

The topic of Iran's missile technologies is not new in principle, but apparently it can now be advanced as a new core area of "pressuring" Iran.

The US is also increasingly joining this topic. Apparently, the Israeli press is preparing a special missile dossier to present as "proof" of the aggressive nature of the Iranian regime.

If the West and Iran's regional opponents start hyping the missile topic, it may be possible, as an alternative to a new, missile rift in the region, to advance proposals for developing a kind of "code of conduct" regarding missile technologies, an essential component of which could be the creation of comprehensive restrictions on the development and production of medium and longer-range missiles and the creation of an international system of missile inspections similar to the one that exists in the International Atomic Energy Agency with respect to nuclear infrastructure facilities.

It seems that today it would be important to monitor developments in the Persian Gulf as closely as possible, to proactively prevent the emergence of new destabilizing factors and provocative ideas.

In practical terms, in contacts with regional countries and nonregional powers, it is necessary to emphasize the need to refrain from destabilizing actions or from accusations in the public space that could complicate the situation in the Persian Gulf and in the Middle East in general.

The Climate Ahead of Us: How Energy Preferences Will Change

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DEPENDING on its opportunities, Russia can vary the intensity and scope of its relations with the US, Europe, the Middle East, and other participants of international relations. But we are entering a unique, new period in world history: an energy transition based on entirely new principles. Russia, as a leader of the world hydrocarbon market, cannot and should not be left out of this process.

In April 2021, 40 world leaders participated in a virtual Leaders Summit on Climate where the main topic was limiting global warming to 1.5°C. The year 2021 is likely to be a key year for launching the implementation of international decisions among the main players in the energy market. In addition to the Summit, the United Nations Climate Change Conference will be held in 2021, a forum on climate that brings together the world's major economies, 17 countries that account for 80% of global GDP and global greenhouse gas emissions. The meeting of energy ministers held at the CEM12/MI-6 forum in Chile in May-June 2021 was also very significant.

Even though 85% of emissions come from outside the United States, the Biden administration does not hide its leadership ambitions to manage the entire "climate project." The main task is to mobilize countries' efforts to reduce indicators to within the established limit for the global average rise in temperature. Therefore, the desire to form a coalition is quite natural. And this is what is happening.

The US International Climate Finance Plan presented at the summit greatly expands the possibilities of financing regional climate programs.

The second block is the transformation of energy systems. Over the past few years, the potential of solar energy, wind energy, and electric energy storage technologies has increased significantly. However, this is not enough. To accelerate the development of this potential, the energy ministries of Canada, the US, Norway, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, collectively representing 40% of global oil and gas production, are coming together to form the Net-Zero producers forum.

Reforms and new assessments are hard to introduce in the oil and gas industry, just as, for example, in the construction industry. These industries are simply too powerful.

It must be said that other hypotheses about the nature of global climate change exist. For example, in a joint article published in the American Meteorological Society's Journal of Climate, Jean Dickey and Steven Marcus of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California, and Olivier de Viron of the Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris in France, established a correlation between movements in the liquid core and the angular velocity of the Earth, which, in turn, leads to fluctuations of the length of an Earth day and global surface temperature. In addition to the length of an Earth day that affects the amount of solar energy that reaches the Earth's surface, the activity of the core also has an impact on volcanic activity and the Earth's magnetosphere that shields our planet from harmful solar radiation.

Over the past century, changes in solar energy, volcanic emissions, and natural variability have only slightly affected observed climate changes. No natural phenomena have been found in the observation records that could explain the heating up of the atmosphere and the ocean since the beginning of the industrial era. Human activity affects the Earth's climate by changing the factors that control the amount of solar energy that enters and leaves the atmosphere.

THE MAIN thing that needs to be understood in all honesty is that global consensus has in fact been reached on the need to reduce emissions. The Paris Climate Agreement, signed in 2015 and adopted by

nearly 200 countries around the world, institutionalized this consensus and set a goal to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

It may seem that this is still far away and there is still time. But the fact is that Russia has practically no time left. The trend to reduce emissions will grow with every passing year, drawing various elements of the energy sector into the funnel of new restrictions.

The first step in the inevitable energy transition must be a high-quality strategy adopted at the legislative level that takes into account not only risks but also new opportunities for switching to 21st century technologies and away from the aging technological base. After all, as the largest country in the world, Russia also has the greatest natural conditions for creating a new industry. Moreover, Russia has also been developing its own technologies that require further promotion.

Ahead of the recent Leaders Summit on Climate, 100 Nobel laureates made an important statement that should not be underestimated: "Fossil fuels must be kept in the ground." However, the use of the resource base is an important element of future energy policy.

Uzbekistan's Strategy for Building Greater Trans-Regional Connectivity

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WITH the election of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has embarked on an open, proactive, pragmatic, and constructive foreign policy aimed at creating a space of mutually beneficial cooperation, stability, and sustainable development in Central Asia (CA). The new approaches of official Tashkent have found comprehensive support in all capitals of Central Asia, which has become the basis for positive changes in the region.

In recent years, there has been a qualitative shift toward strengthening regional cooperation in Central Asia. A systematic political dialogue based on the principles of good-neighborliness, mutual respect, and equality has been established between the leaders of the states of the region. This is evidenced by the introduction of the practice of holding regular Consultative Meetings of the Heads of State of Central Asia since 2018.

Another important achievement was the adoption of a Joint Statement by the leaders of the Central Asian states at the second Consultative Meeting in November 2019 that can be regarded as a kind of development program for the region. It contains consolidated approaches and a common vision of the heads of state regarding the prospects for strengthening regional cooperation.

The achieved high level of regional consolidation and the willingness of the Central Asian countries to take responsibility for solving common regional problems are also evidenced by the adoption of a special UN resolution titled "Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation to Ensure Peace, Stability and Sustainable Development in the Central Asian Region" in June 2018.

Thanks to all these positive trends, a number of systemic problems that previously hindered the full realization of the enormous potential of regional cooperation are now finding their long-term solution based on the principles of searching for reasonable compromises and mutual consideration of interests. Most importantly, the Central Asian states have begun to play a primary and key role in decision-making on the most pressing and urgent issues of development in the entire region.

BUILDING trans-regional connectivity, of which the Trans-Afghan Corridor is a strategic component, places Afghanistan at the core of the system of inter-regional relations and recaptures its lost historical role as a key link in promoting integration between the two regions.

The realization of these goals is especially necessary against the background of the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

Interregional economic integration with the involvement of Afghanistan is precisely what could be a recipe for peace and have a stabilizing effect on the situation in the country.

the prospect of Afghanistan becoming an important transit and energy hub will create additional interest for all intra-Afghan forces in achieving political consensus and will serve as a solid socioeconomic basis for the peace process.

During summit meetings, the leaders of the Central Asian states have repeatedly expressed their intention to advocate the strengthening of coordination and deepening of regional cooperation in the joint implementation of major economic projects, especially those aimed at expanding transport and transit opportunities, ensuring stable access to seaports and world markets, and establishing modern international logistics centers.

THE FORMAT of the conference “Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities,” held in Tashkent in July 2021, provided a unique opportunity for senior officials, experts, and policymakers from the two regions to gather for the first time in one place to lay the foundation stone for a new trans-regional security architecture with the vision of building a space of equal opportunity that takes into account the interests of all parties involved.

Special attention should be paid to the joint fight against drug trafficking. The relevance of this is argued by Afghanistan’s continuing reputation as the main drug hub in the world.

WITH the creation of a new architecture of mutually beneficial cooperation between the regions, the most favorable conditions will be formed for a significant increase in the level of trans-regional trade and economic exchanges. The implementation of the connectivity initiative will make it possible to connect the isolated Central Asian market, rich in hydrocarbons and agro-industrial resources, with the growing consumer market of South Asia and further with the world market.

IN GENERAL, the practical implementation of Uzbekistan’s plans for connectivity can create a new economic reality in two regions at once, providing the most favorable environment and all the necessary conditions for the inclusive economic development of Central and South Asian states, as well as for the progressive improvement of the well-being and prosperity of peoples living in these regions.

The Ideologization of America’s Foreign Policy Strategy

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US PRESIDENT Abraham Lincoln [purportedly] said: “America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.”¹ It seems that the Americans have been faltering in recent years, wittingly or unwittingly making fateful mistakes that are having an ever-growing impact on the geopolitical situation of the US and the rest of the world.

INSIDE the country, these challenges are the product of the errors, miscalculations, and failures associated with the catastrophic repercussions of the 2020-2021 COVID19 pandemic and the deep political, social, economic, and moral crisis exemplified by the allegations of fraud in the 2020 presidential election that supposedly secured victory for the Democratic Party led by Joe Biden. Particularly noteworthy is the crisis that on account of its nature, purpose, and significance can be called a revolt against history, an attempt by certain forces at delayed revenge and even the destruction of history itself and historical tradition. This led to, among other things, the Black Lives Matter protests of Black Americans and certain groups of their white sympathizers who toppled historical monuments to political and state figures of the US in general and the Confederate South in particular.

The campaign that began as a protest against the symbols of slavery gradually spread to historical figures without whom America's history, nature, spirit, and national identity cannot be imagined.

In this context, it is very important to bear in mind that the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections were more than just a competition between Democrats and Republicans, between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in 2016 and between Trump and Biden in 2020. By and large, they symbolized two opposing sociopolitical forces fighting not just for the White House but for the opportunity to determine the social and historical outlook of the US.

According to Dominic Tierney, professor of political science at Swarthmore College, "in recent decades, the glue binding America has come undone, as political polarization has reached record levels and trust in national institutions has crumbled."

The Democrats won the 2020 presidential election, yet the split remains: The factors that created the phenomena of Trump and Trumpism did not disappear. American analyst Tom McTague was absolutely right: "Almost everyone I spoke with agreed that the Trump presidency has been a watershed not just for the US but for the world itself: It is something that cannot be undone." Moreover, the split itself has become existential in nature in the sense that it is about the means and prospects of the country's social and historical development.

US was and remains one of the most ideologized powers of the contemporary world.

Of course, Russia and China are the main targets of the ideological/informational-cultural warfare. This is quite natural, considering that those two powers are the main threat to the hegemony that is losing its vitality and relies on the liberal/unipolar world order as its instrument.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is convinced that the American and, more broadly, the Western foreign policy strategy should demonstrate its effectiveness as an alternative to the Chinese model of sociopolitical development.

China and Singapore convincingly demonstrated that authoritarian regimes can cope with cardinal challenges, primarily in the economic and technological spheres, as successfully or even better than democracies. This seems to bear out to a certain extent the opinion of those analysts who wrote that the US did not pass the test of the COVID19 pandemic – or, as Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations, puts it: "The United States has failed the leadership test."

In all fairness, it should be said that Biden did say that "we cannot and must not return to the reflective [reflexive] opposition and rigid blocs of the Cold War. Competition must not lock out cooperation on issues that affect us all." He returned his country to the Paris Climate Agreement, the World Health Organization, extended the New START treaty with Russia, and is taking steps toward resuming negotiations on the Iranian nuclear deal. A Russian-American summit was finally organized.

Due to a wide set of factors, it is too early to talk about the unity of the Euro-Atlantic world in the current situation. With all possible reservations, the US and the EU are having to search for answers to identical existential challenges.

the idea of “strategic autonomy” is gradually taking shape in the leading EU countries. In an interview with *The Economist*, French President Emmanuel Macron said: “Europe needs ... to start thinking of itself strategically as a geopolitical power; otherwise we will no longer be in control of our destiny.” It remains to be seen whether Europe can attain that status.

We Are Open to Dialogue

Alexander Udaltsov, *Executive Director, Fund for the Support and Protection of Compatriots Living Abroad*

I’ve worked nearly 30 years abroad, including as an ambassador to three nations. In this period I had occasion to intimately interact with my compatriots and to take on their problems. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that this is currently a priority for all our missions abroad.

I think that most Russian Embassies have their own noteworthy accomplishments and the know-how to interact with our compatriots. It’s important to put them in proper perspective.

While I was working in Latvia and Lithuania, for example, I got some solid experience looking after veterans of the Great Patriotic War, as well as [other] fellow citizens who were being persecuted by the authorities of these states.

Until 2013, our nations’ Ministries of Foreign Affairs had been preparing a draft intergovernmental agreement on military burial sites in Lithuania and burial sites for victims of political repression in Russia. This document clearly laid out a mechanism for coordinating and carrying out repair and restoration in both countries. However, the Lithuanian side unexpectedly stopped negotiations on the agreement and later, as I said, suspended its implementation in Lithuania.

Under these circumstances and at the suggestion of the embassy, a decision was made: Based on the principle of reciprocity, in response to the actions of the Lithuanian authorities, any restoration and repair work on the territory of Russia by the aforementioned “Mission Siberia” would be suspended. The same applied to other visiting groups, of which there turned out to be quite a few. And, I must note, they often carried out their events without any official approval.

I am dwelling on this theme because preserving the memory of Soviet soldiers who died while fighting to free Europe is the common duty of Russians and our compatriots.

The way I see it, neither the gravesites of exiled Lithuanians of that time nor those of people from other nations should be neglected.

We should not take a defensive position but get ahead of the curve, especially since the anti-Russian moves of our antagonists are quite predictable. We will take on any issue from our shared past.

It seems there is a need to create an appropriate permanent body in our country that would bring together, coordinate, and direct work to preserve and advance the history of Russian statehood, including the historical, political, economic, military, and other components of this process. I’m certain that we will reach such a point, but it’s important, I think, not to waste a lot of time on it.

While working in Latvia and Lithuania, I traveled widely throughout both nations, communicating often with people in various circumstances, and discussing relations between our states, the prospects thereof, etc. I would like to emphasize: During these years, I never, in the course of such contacts, encountered manifestations of ill will, let alone hostility, from the Latvians or Lithuanians I talked with. Rather, on the contrary, I felt from them a mutual interest in communicating, maintaining, and developing ties across various fields, and interest in simple human connection with Russians. When I say this, people will object that public opinion polls in these countries indicate a rise in negative sentiments toward Russia. Unfortunately, this is the case. Moreover, in our country, people's attitudes toward the Baltic states are, to put it mildly, not improving either, for obvious reasons. There are many reasons for this sad trend, and they certainly have not been created by us.

Naturally, the increasing amount of judicial protection abroad for Russian citizens and compatriots, which is often sorely needed from both a political and legal standpoint, requires an increase in the amount of funding for this kind of activity on our part.

By the way, I would like to add that last year the amount of money allocated to the Fund for its primary activities tripled. This happened thanks to the personal participation of Federation Council Chairwoman Valentina Matviyenko and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov.

The main problem is the atmosphere of Russophobia and demonization of Russia whipped up by the collective West. This most negatively affects the legal status of our citizens, most often in countries with a difficult human rights situation, such as Great Britain, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the US, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, and Estonia.

But there are also positive examples. In Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, and a number of other countries, Russians who live there and work with the Fund are maintaining contacts with relevant local institutions and getting support from them, including with respect to human rights.

Friendliness of Country Communication Regimes: Interpretation and Assessment

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ASSESSING the friendliness of communication regimes is imperative given the increasing role of communications and information in international affairs; the fragmentation of the global communication order (which has failed to develop despite the efforts of global institutions and UN agencies); and the desire to create a multipolar world and establish good neighborly relations if not across the world, then at least in some of its regions and between countries in bilateral and multilateral formats.

AN ANALYSIS of speeches by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Federation Council, and the Russian Security Council shows that the criteria for evaluating the unfriendliness of countries are associated primarily with threats to Russia's national interests and security and the emerging multipolar system of international relations.

The following are indicators of countries' unfriendliness:

- systematic unfriendly statements about Russia, participation in illegal sanctions, interference in the domestic affairs of the Russian Federation from the territory of a foreign country, destructive anti-Russian activities, and consistent “anti-Russian outbursts”
- the attitude of foreign states toward Russian memorials and historical memory and deliberate state policy to distort historical facts (for example, Poland’s decommunization concept)
- the systematic introduction of sanctions and the expulsion of Russian diplomats.

We can define friendliness as:

- the absence of threats to the security of a country and the multipolarity of the world (in this case, the concept of securitization forms the methodological basis for research)
- the absence of obstacles from another state hindering the realization of the national interests of cooperating parties (in this case, the concept of classical realism forms the methodological basis for research)
- amicable relations between countries built on mutual respect and the values of peaceful coexistence (in this case, political constructivism forms the methodological basis for research).

We have developed a methodology to comprehensively assess the friendliness of country communication regimes. The analysis of a country communication regime involves analyzing normative legal documents; traditions and customs; the structure and behavior of actors regulating foreign policy communications; business communications; communication in the field of science, education, and culture; media communications; civil society communications (including NGOs); the language of communication, friendliness of the atmosphere toward representatives from another country, etc.

THE FRIENDLINESS of a country communication regime is derived from its domestic characteristics and accentuations of its sociopolitical communications. Therefore, it is first necessary to study the domestic communication regime of a given country – namely, to identify the sociopolitical communication mechanism, laws and informal rules observed in sociopolitical communication; the regime’s controllability (by domestic and/or foreign actors); the degree to which decisions depend on outside actors; the goals and objectives of state information policy; and the severity of punishments for those who violate the rules and norms of sociopolitical communications.

Friendliness is a dynamic category; it changes depending on changes in the domestic and foreign policy environment. Ideas about the friendliness or hostility of other countries are formed under the influence of political events within a country, international events, national and religious factors, the media, and the Internet. In this regard, current domestic and foreign policy contexts need to be considered when assessing friendliness.

THE WEAKENING of US dominance along with the growth of new centers of influence creates prerequisites for the localization and regionalization of the world communication order and the formation of country communication regimes. These regimes establish the rules of communication in accordance with their ideas about the value, objectives, and means of international communication, and affect the order and quality of external state relations. Communication regimes have a number of qualitative characteristics, one of which is friendliness.

A scientific, comprehensive assessment of the degree of friendliness of a country communication regime must also take account of direct civil communications and historically established traditions, customs, and patterns that function as informal regulators of communications within a country and between countries. Evaluating the entire set of rules and regulations governing country communication regimes as well as current practices of the main participants in country-to-country communications will yield the most objective assessment of the friendliness of country communication regimes.

Methods of Countering Fake News

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This study was supported by Preservation of Global Cultural and Historical Heritage, one of the Interdisciplinary Research and Education Schools of Moscow University, and funded with Russian Science Foundation Grant No. 21-18-00068.

FAKE news is information intended to be provocative and have a viral effect. This information may be either patently false, or true and verified but taken out of context.

The sole purpose of fake news is to create buzz over a contrived news story with provocative content. Fake news aims to dominate the news agenda for a while and seize control of people's minds and wills. The mechanism for spreading fake news is viral dissemination technologies that circulate emotionally colored information, thereby producing an "emotional infection".

THERE are several methods of countering fake news. They are:

1. A "preemptive strike." If there is an indication that an information attack is being planned, the best tactic is to try to forestall it by trying to divert public attention from the subject matter of the planned fake news attack. If public attention gets drawn to a different sensational event or incident, the planned attack may be called off.
 2. Intercepting the information agenda once an attack has been launched. This begins with the immediate publication in the media and on social networks of the official position of a relevant government authority that would bring absolute clarity to the situation and leave no room for insinuation. This is followed by the regular publication of verifiable facts and figures.
 3. Asserting one's own information agenda if the initiative has been seized. This means introducing one's own agenda, and consequently one's own rules of the game, into mass consciousness.
- All three methods are used in combination in information conflicts.

THE political communication track focused on teaching forum participants the latest methods to detect, expose, and counter fake news, including by launching a counterinformation wave.

Objective of the course: To train five or six teams of Digoria participants to professionally repel fake news, including completely unexpected disinformation, in real time.

FIVE teams of five or six persons were formed. Each team member had a strict area of specialization.

The five teams trained step by step, learning one operation at a time and achieving the necessary coordination. They used actual fake stories from news feeds.

Toward the end of the course, the teams weren't allowed any pauses and were put in situations where they had to react immediately to fake news, with "no time to get their act together," to quote a phrase repeatedly used by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

It didn't matter if the comments were clumsily worded or even incoherent on account of being made in haste or in an awkward situation. What did matter was how quickly they could be obtained and published: People who are worked up by a fake story need more information about the event or

incident at the center of the story as fast as possible. Prompt expert comments can help fill this gap and supply fresh information.

In real life, it would take between 20 and 30 minutes to obtain expert comments, so, instead, the team working on the story simply selected random statements on the Internet that seemed to fit the topic and presented them as expert comments.

THE methodology for countering fake news developed by Andrey Manoylo and Vladislav Telichko and first tested at the Digoria forum not only proved effective but also highlighted further opportunities for training specialists in countering fake news.

This methodology may be supplemented with solutions to make it possible to train not only specialists in countering fake news but also specialists in intercepting the initiative from fake news (intercepting operational control) to oust their agendas and replace them with agendas that advance Russian interests. Such specialists might form teams that would follow the assembly line principle, with each member performing a single operation in a succession of operations.

Vbrosam.net may be used as the basic information resource for this work. It could also be used as a testbed for new solutions for countering fake news.

The EU's Migration Policy: A New Start?

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THE development of a common EU migration policy and the approval of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, proposed by the European Commission (EC) on September 23, 2020, is one of the most important tasks before the EC in 2021. But even if adopted, the pact would hardly be a breakthrough in efforts to solve the migration problems besetting the EU. To prove this point, we will examine the reasons for the European Commission's continued close attention to migration issues, the nature of the new proposals, and how they are perceived by politicians and the public in EU member states

Inflows of migrants into EU countries peaked in 2015 but later diminished. While 1.28 million asylum applications were filed in EU countries in 2015, only 698,000 were filed in 2019. Lawful immigration dropped by nearly half and illegal immigration plummeted by 90% during those four years. This downward trend has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2015 migration crisis became a difficult political, economic, social, and cultural test for EU countries. The massive influx of migrants sparked anti-EU sentiments in EU countries and the rise of nationalist parties. It played a role in the Brexit vote in Britain in 2016 and highlighted imbalances in European integration.

The numerous EU institutions and agencies that have been set up to coordinate and implement migration policy are not quite up to the task.

The Dublin Regulation, which took effect in 1990, remains the main problem despite revisions made to it in 2003 and 2013. The regulation places full responsibility for processing asylum requests on the first

state in which an applicant arrives upon entering the EU. As a result, large numbers of asylum seekers accumulate in these so-called countries of first entry – mainly Greece, Italy, Spain, and Malta – when awaiting decisions on their applications.

Moreover, asylum and residency laws differ from country to country in the EU, being much stricter in some countries than in others. As a result, after entering the EU, migrants travel around the Union chaotically and practically freely in search of a country that takes less time to process applications, is more likely to approve them, offers better living conditions, etc. Hence the need for uniform asylum rules.

The EU's updated migration program includes five key points.

One of them is the principle of "mandatory but flexible solidarity". It would replace the failed migrant distribution quota mechanism with a system that would rule out conflicts between EU countries.

Another key point of the pact is a planned reform of the Dublin system. This reform would not constitute a fundamental overhaul of the system but basically make additions to it.

A third point is the security aspect. The inclusion of security provisions in the pact is not surprising given the ongoing destabilization in two neighboring regions – the Middle East and North Africa.

The fourth point is a plan to sign readmission agreements with the countries that migrants may come from or pass through on their way to the EU.

The fifth point is a plan to attract non-EU skilled labor and scientific and technological talent to the EU, which appears somewhat less problematic, though many potential hidden dangers lie here, too.

THE PACT was initially expected to be approved at an EU summit in December 2020, after debate in the European Parliament. But the matter was put off until 2021, indicating disagreements within the EU on the issue.

Germany is a strong supporter of the pact, but it failed to get the document passed during its presidency of the EU (July-December 2020). Hungary heads the opposite camp by protesting mandatory solidarity and advocating a complete ban on migration into the EU.

IN SUMMARY, the Pact on Migration and Asylum would not revolutionize the EU's migration and asylum policy. It would be a set of essentially cosmetic measures designed to solve individual deadlocked problems with minimal losses and to achieve consensus among the EU countries on at least some points.

The new Pact on Migration and Asylum fails to address the key sources of disagreement that have generated the EU's existing migration problems.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Countering Islamophobia and Promoting Interfaith Dialogue

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THE Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second-largest international organization after the United Nations and was created to ensure the unity of the ummah, defend it, and advance its interests. The OIC seeks to promote moderate Islam, interreligious dialogue, and sociocultural harmony both in

Muslim countries and in non-Muslim countries where there are Muslim minorities. The OIC strives to combat Islamophobia, which for a long time has been a systematic policy in parts of the world, primarily in leading Western countries (the US, Canada and European Union nations), where there are old and growing trends to oust Islam from society, discriminate against it, and fan anti-Islamic sentiments.

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The OIC's priorities include championing respect for the world's diverse cultures and faiths, promoting the mutual understanding of cultural and religious communities, and combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination in line with the fundamental documents of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, and UNESCO.

In the West, Muslims are traditionally portrayed as extremists who threaten the security and wellbeing of other religious and social communities. British professor Gordon Conway sums up the essence of political Islamophobia as the idea that Islam is not a partner but an enemy.

At an emergency meeting on March 22, 2019, to discuss the terrorist attacks on the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in New Zealand, the OIC Executive Committee qualified Islamophobia as a form of racism. The OIC also condemned an attack on innocent Christians in Sri Lanka. The OIC denounces all forms of xenophobia, including Christianophobia.

In the West, Islamophobia has historically enjoyed state support. In other words, it has effectively been an official policy.

The reluctance of the West to expand the concept of Islamophobia beyond individual terms compels Muslim countries to seek alternative forms of security for Muslims and ways to protect Islam from vilification. This may endanger the consensus that the Muslim world has reached with the West.

Governments in the West and other parts of the world increasingly overlook manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiments that offend the religious feelings of Muslims, who sometimes react by rioting. One recalls outrageous cartoon contests featuring depictions of sacred Islamic figures; these are sometimes deliberate plots by ultraright parties to strengthen their positions, especially during elections.

According to the 13th report of the Islamophobia Observatory, in Europe, fears of "Islamization" are fanned artificially in response to growing migration and increasing proportions of Muslims in the population of European countries. In Britain, Islamophobic crimes are steadily increasing.

The French Council of the Muslim Faith urged calm and warned that terrorism purportedly committed in the name of Islam is in fact an enemy of the Muslim faith.

While the OIC consistently combats Islamophobia worldwide, its OIC Islamophobia Observatory also provides evidence of positive and notable anti-Islamophobia activities by governments, civil society, and media outlets. The Observatory comments that there has been a decline in anti-Islamic content on the Internet, singles out the constructive position of the New Zealand government after the tragedies in Christchurch, and mentions an expert meeting at the European Parliament in July 2018 on an anti-Islamophobia project in which governments would be vested with a special role and responsibility.

The OIC has detected no chronic Islamophobia in Russia, unlike in Europe and North America. On the other hand, Russia does not receive any special mention in the sections of the 13th report about

improvements in attitudes toward Muslim communities, even though the OIC secretary general and other General Secretariat officials commend the positive experience of interreligious relations in Russia each time they discuss any Islamophobia-related issue with Russian representatives. This means we need to do more to promote Russia's experience of establishing equal dialogue among representatives of world religions and their comfortable coexistence in a common country.

A combination of international and national efforts emphasizing education must form the basis of any strategy for combating Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia. Education, cultural activities, and the cultural integration of migrants into the societies of the countries they have settled in play a significant role in combating religious extremism.

Russian-Czech Relations Are Currently in Deep Crisis

Alexander Zmeyerovsky, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Czech Republic*

June 22, 1941, is one of the most tragic pages in the history of our country. In Russia, the day of the start of the Great Patriotic War, which lasted 1,418 long days and claimed more than 27 million Soviet lives, was declared the Day of Remembrance and Sorrow. However, this day also symbolizes the most powerful surge of patriotism that rallied everyone, young and old, people of different nationalities and religions, in an effort to protect every inch of their homeland from the treacherous aggressor, who, it must be noted, was waging a war of annihilation.

I am convinced that the events in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, whether in person or online, in Russia or abroad, will have special significance.

Russian foreign missions around the world organize events dedicated to the Day of Remembrance and Sorrow every year, and the Czech Republic is no exception. As part of the celebration of Victory Day and in the context of preparations for the 80th anniversary of the start of the war, embassy staff organized voluntary Saturday work days to tend to Red Army soldiers' graves in the Central Bohemian Region and visited war veterans living in the Czech Republic.

On June 18, 2021, a commemorative event was held at the embassy, where Czech artist Stanislav Sedlaček presented his paintings "The Virgin of Auschwitz" and "The Victory Parade" as a gift to the Russian Federation. They will soon join the collection of the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow. The badge of honor of the Russian Foreign Ministry was awarded to Czech citizens who participated in the preparation of the Czech edition of the book *Myunkhen. Proročestvo prezidenta Benesha* [Munich: The Prophecy of President Beneš] by Russian writer Svyatoslav Rybas.

Attempts to distort the history of World War II, rewrite its results, and cast doubt on the conclusions of the Nuremberg Tribunal for the sake of short-term political gains undermine the efforts of the victorious powers and their allies (including Czechoslovakia) to create universal international institutions designed, as the UN Charter states, "to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Russia also draws attention to the fact that sometimes the backstory of the Soviet-German treaty is completely forgotten – for example, the fact that it was preceded by the Munich Agreement, when London and Paris in September 1938 handed Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland over to Hitler for destruction. Then, in mid-March 1939, Nazi Germany seized all of the Czechoslovak Republic and created a puppet state in Slovakia, again with the tacit acquiescence of the Western powers.

Unfortunately, the signing of the Soviet-German treaty in 1939, taken out of its specific historical context, is used by our detractors for propaganda purposes.

Russian-Czech relations are currently experiencing a deep crisis. Their current deplorable state is the result of successive unfriendly actions taken by the Czech side over a number of years. Suffice it to recall the illegal extradition of Russian citizen Yevgeny Nikulin to the US and the unjustified expulsion of employees of Russian foreign missions in the fabricated “Skripal Case” in 2018 and the 2020 “ricin case,” which even Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš deemed contrived. Such unfriendly actions also include the dismantling of the Old Town Hall memorial plaque dedicated to the liberation of Prague by Red Army troops, the dismantling of the monument to Marshal Konev in Prague 6, and the glorification of the Vlasov Army. The anti-Russian course culminated in an absurd accusation against Russia of involvement in the Vrbětice ammunition warehouses explosions seven years ago, after which 18 employees of our diplomatic mission were declared personae non gratae. The retaliatory measures by the Russian side were a necessary response, and the inclusion of the Czech Republic on the list of states committing unfriendly actions toward Russia, unfortunately, only reflects reality.

Regrettably, the fact is that the foundations of bilateral cooperation, painstakingly built over decades through joint efforts, have been seriously undermined.

History cannot be “nullified.” This also applies to the history of Russian-Czech relations, which is rooted in the distant past. It is what it is – with glorious and very difficult pages that cannot be pulled out arbitrarily at will. At the same time, there have been more and more attempts recently to distort or rewrite our joint history, to erase from it all that has united us, and, on the contrary, to bring difficult moments to the fore, deliberately opening past wounds.

We consider the situation concerning the school particularly sensitive. After all, as a result of the actions of the Czech side, the rights of children to receive education have been infringed, and the interests of our compatriots living here have been affected.

The withdrawal of the appropriate accreditation for our teachers by the Czech side forced them to leave the Czech Republic before June 1, 2021. Thus, the students’ state examinations were disrupted, and the work of the school was paralyzed.

Despite all the difficulties, the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Prague continues to function. We are convinced that momentary changes in the political situation must not affect the cultural and humanitarian sphere of cooperation between our countries. Culture, traditions, spiritual closeness – these are the foundations we must preserve. So we will continue to work in this direction. We will try to fill the Center’s program with new events and projects that, we hope, will interest and attract the attention of a wide audience in the Czech Republic. After all, only by communicating and getting to know each other better can we counter the stereotypes and prejudices that interfere with building healthy, constructive relationships – and that’s exactly what we need.

Global Cyber Agenda: A Diplomatic Victor

Andrey Krutskikh, *Director, International Information Security Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*

TODAY, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have the same decisive impact on national and global development and determine the status of states in the international arena and the degree of their sovereignty as did nuclear technologies in the 1940s and rocket and space technologies in the 1950s and 1970s

The current and to an even greater extent the future face of the world is determined by the level of development and degree of implementation of the latest information technologies: virtual finance, artificial intelligence, big data, etc.

Being at the origins of the negotiation process on international information security (IIS) and for more than 20 years forming the major conceptual approaches and leading ideas, Russia, like a tuning fork, has picked up the new vibrations in the cybersphere. We initiated the creation of a new algorithm for negotiations on IIS issues.

Russia's main foreign policy priority in the area of international information security remains the formation of a global IIS system based on the principles of conflict prevention in the information space and encouraging the use of ICTs for peaceful purposes. In this regard, we are actively working to ensure that the negotiation process under UN auspices is continuous and successive.

To this end, in 2018, on Russia's initiative, a fundamentally new format – an Open-Ended Working Group – was launched where, unlike in previous topical platforms, all 193 UN member states participate.

All participants in the process confirmed that the OEWG was an extremely relevant and promising mechanism for discussions on the issues of ensuring IIS within the UN framework.

The adoption of the GGE report proves that, with political will, countries can forget about existing contradictions and conduct a pragmatic dialogue instead of a politicized one in order to achieve common success.

We are seeing significant positive changes when it comes to countering cybercrime. Over the past two or three years, this topic has become an integral part of the agenda of many negotiating platforms, primarily the UN. Rampant cybercrime, which has manifested itself most clearly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has affected all countries and segments of society, presenting itself as a global problem that requires an appropriate response.

UN member states used to spend 10 years discussing whether to raise a topic and then take 10 years to prepare the initial drafts of documents. We did not have the luxury of spending so much time deliberating. In the current difficult political situation, Russian diplomats managed to create and launch a full-fledged negotiation platform in just over a year. Now, the leading role will be played not by diplomats but by law-enforcement agencies and lawyers, the best in their field, who are fighting cybercrime in real life.

It is important to understand that the future convention will not solve all problems related to cybercrime; it is only part of our comprehensive efforts. But it will allow us to take an important step toward consolidating the international community and exchanging best practices in order to develop a high-quality cooperation mechanism. We are also convinced that, in the process of creating such a complex international instrument, a balance needs to be maintained between the scope of the convention and protecting human rights, to take into account the interests of businesses and possible legal conflicts.

Our Chinese partners also recognize the importance of these approaches and are beginning to promote their concepts of digital economy for protecting business and involving it using important regional structures such as the SCO and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) on security.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, which made face-to-face meetings impossible, we continue large-scale work on regional platforms, including work on the practical implementation of confidence-building measures in the field of ICT security.

IT companies are, in fact, monopolists that grossly violate national laws concerning principles related to the collection and processing of personal data. At the same time, transnational IT corporations under US

jurisdiction circumvent the legal norms of the states where they operate and violate their laws with impunity.

Many countries understand the need to conclude an international agreement to regulate the activities of Internet companies. However, developing such a document takes both time and political will.

The empowerment of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which has the necessary competence and is currently widely involved in the development of various standards and protocols for the Internet, is becoming an important consideration.

International Community a Step Closer to “Cybercrime Vaccine”

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THE COVID-19 pandemic has forced the world to plunge into the virtual space and to digitalize economic and everyday life. Crime, having rapidly adapted to the new conditions, has rushed to take advantage of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Phishing, ransomware, DDoS attacks, and cyberattacks are constantly in the news and have become part of our everyday lives. In an era of unrestrained digitalization, computer attacks could have devastating consequences and lead to disasters related to national security. Meanwhile, the activities of cyber criminals are still mostly aimed at seeking financial gain. The pandemic has given them a new impetus and exposed long-standing issues.

With that understanding, Russia was the first to raise at the UN, the main global negotiation platform, the issue of coming up with a comprehensive practical mechanism under its aegis focused on cybercrime and aimed at combating it. The key message is to consolidate global efforts to fight cybercrime and to severely hamper the activities of offenders and leave them no loopholes to evade justice, even if the chain of events involves the jurisdiction of several states from different regions of the world with different legal systems. Many developing states have been suffering tremendously from this phenomenon but are unable to combat cybercrime alone.

Meanwhile, apologists of the Budapest Convention for a long time blocked any discussion at the UN on the development of common standards in this area, claiming there was no alternative to their brainchild. Therefore, although real cooperation between states was moving forward, it was not moving at the right speed, and from a policy perspective, it was even stalling. This led to local legislative initiatives and mechanisms being proposed in various countries, the fragmentation of international cooperation, and as a result, a surge of unlawful actions in the information area.

Law-enforcement experts and diplomats of UN member states have in effect two years to elaborate a global convention with the participation of all interested parties and submit it to the UNGA for consideration and approval as early as in 2023-2024 during its 78th Session. To this end, the Ad Hoc Committee will hold seven substantive sessions – four in New York and three in Vienna. The first meeting is scheduled for January 17-28, 2022.

The complex and broad negotiations with a significant increase in the number of meetings demanded the active involvement of young diplomats of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Department of International Information Security: Second Secretary L. Chernyshova, and Third Secretaries A. Kusayev and A. Khamidullin. It has become common practice for them to hold regional and bilateral informal

meetings and to present Russia's initiatives, preparing the necessary documents, which will then receive the status of a UN document.

The Russian Permanent Mission to the UN in New York headed by Vasily Nebenzya and the Russian Mission to the International Organizations in Vienna headed by Mikhail Ulyanov contributed significantly to the implementation of Russian diplomacy in this area.

To this end, on July 27, 2021, a Russian interagency delegation in Vienna headed by Deputy Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation Pyotr Gorodov submitted a Russian draft of the first ever universal treaty on countering cybercrime to the Ad Hoc Committee as a contribution to its work.

For developing states, which have proven to be the most vulnerable in the digital environment and thus in need of significant support, the draft creates a solid international legal basis for providing them with extensive technical assistance, including staff training and material support in combating crimes involving the use of ICTs. Given the digital divide, this issue, being for them the most burning and the most often raised within the UN, is also key to their stable and progressive economic development.

Considering the specific nature of the topic and the differences in approaches, Russia is prepared to accept comments and suggestions on this document from all interested parties, so that we can work together to create a truly effective instrument to counter cybercrime that reflects the current realities. This is a historic chance for all of us to join efforts and take a huge step forward in the fight against a common enemy. We trust that the proposed draft convention will help unite and direct the efforts of the world community toward the development of practical solutions in this area.

The Applicability of International Law in the Information Space

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THE ISSUE of the applicability of international law in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) security is being actively discussed at relevant UN platforms on international information security (IIS): the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Advancing responsible State behavior in cyberspace in the context of international security. This issue has become a kind of "watershed" in key nations' positions in this area. Despite lengthy, years-long deliberations, the international community is still far from not only a consensus but even a common understanding of the basic categories of the applicability of international law to ICT. In order to clarify the issue, it is important to understand the substantive content of this phenomenon, its procedural aspects, and stages of implementation.

WE proceed from the fact that a separate branch of international security law is currently emerging: international information security law.

In the doctrine of international law, as well as in practice, the term "implementation" (Lat. impletum) is often used. This term is widely used in official UN documents.

The theory of international law distinguishes among the following forms of implementation: compliance, execution, and usage. Compliance implies enforcing prohibitive norms, where subjects of international law refrain from committing prohibited actions. Execution implies a high level of activity by subjects of international law (states/international organizations) to put norms into practice. This form of

implementation is inherent in international legal norms that call for specific obligations or certain actions.

AT THIS stage, it is important to understand that, due to the specifics of information and communication as an object of regulation, the existing norms of international law cannot apply to it by simple extrapolation. It seems necessary to adapt existing international legal norms and develop new, specific norms and mechanisms for international legal regulation of the use of ICT.

It is on this basis that the Russian Federation and its closest allies participate at international platforms, primarily the UN. This refers to the need to develop a global, universal, legally binding document in the field of ICT use similar to agreements in the field of arms limitation, the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, etc.

The international community, however, has not reached a consensus on the need to jointly develop such a document for regulating the actions of states in the information space. The most acceptable option for most countries is the norms of “soft law,” which is the first practical step toward the willingness of states to assume certain obligations in the ICT field.

Thus, more work needs to be done to develop norms and coordinate the will of states in the field of ICT, including the signing of multilateral agreements and bilateral treaties, and the emergence of mechanisms for creating an information world and preventing conflicts in the ICT field.

Russia’s Approaches to Ensuring Digital Sovereignty in the Context of International Organizations

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IN TODAY’S world, preserving digital sovereignty is not only an immutable basis but also a guarantee of the existence of a state itself – a means of avoiding potential conflicts in the information environment.

As de facto monopolists, international corporations can often grossly violate or circumvent certain legal norms of states concerning the protection, collection, and processing of personal data. In fact, we can talk about attempts to expand the jurisdiction of a single state across the global information space. In turn, many states do not have enough resources to pressure such violators.

According to international experts, the number of such potential “digital” conflicts and legal clashes will soon grow rapidly.

Cooperation in the field of IIS is carried out in the key international arenas outlined below.

- 1. The UN.** The creation of the new OEWG guarantees the preservation in the UN system of an inclusive, transparent, and truly democratic negotiating mechanism on issues related to ensuring IIS with the participation of all member states without exception in order to form a global information security system.

The search for a universal solution to counter global cybercrime in the present conditions is possible only through negotiations in the UN format. That is why Russia, along with like-minded partners, advocates the development of universal norms that would be shared by all interested parties and that would lay the foundations for effective and transparent international

cooperation to combat this threat. A convention on cooperation in combating information crime, prepared under UN auspices, that would take into account the interests of all countries without exception and would be based on the principles of sovereign equality of the parties and noninterference in the domestic affairs of states, could become such an instrument.

This year, the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Group, established at the initiative of Russia in 2011 in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 65/230 to conduct a comprehensive study of the problem of cybercrime and the response to it by member states, celebrated its 10th anniversary by completing its work.

- 2. Regional agreements.** In 2021, we are marking the 20th anniversary of the first significant regional international treaties on countering cybercrime.

The CIS Agreement, the first relevant regional instrument in history, is aimed at ensuring effective prevention, detection, suppression, disclosure, and investigation of ICT crimes. Upon its entry into force, it will replace the current CIS Agreement on cooperation in combating computer information crimes of June 1, 2001.

The Budapest Convention is also being updated. The draft of the Second Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention on strengthening international cooperation and disclosure of electronic evidence is being finalized.

- 3. The OSCE.** Yet another important cooperation format is approaching its 10th anniversary. In 2012, the OSCE established an Informal Working Group to develop confidence-building measures in the OSCE space to reduce the risks of conflicts stemming from the use of ICT. The time has come to describe some interim results of the activities of this regional mechanism for negotiations on ensuring IIS.

Over the past year, the group's IIS-related activity has increased markedly as a result of the launch of the OEWG – the relevant mechanism within the UN framework. Today, 18 countries have expressed their desire to operationalize eight confidence-building measures.

No state or group of states should be able to obtain military, political, economic or other advantages. Confidence-building measures should not be used as a tool for interference in the domestic affairs of states or for biased political assessments of the actions and intentions of states in the information sphere with the subsequent adoption of various kinds of punishments in the form of sanctions and other response measures. This is a very difficult task, and only through joint efforts and dialogue can we move in the right direction.

- 4. ASEAN ARF.** Another important negotiating track is the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which established the Open-Ended Study Group on Confidence-Building Measures to Reduce the Risk of Conflict Stemming from the Use of ICTs as well as the Inter-Sessional Meetings on ICTs Security and has operated them since 2018. The Study Group is tasked with discussing specific proposals for building confidence in the information environment and exchanging the information necessary to reconcile positions on IIS and counter key threats. At the suggestion of Russia, both platforms have become the principal mechanisms for discussing the entire range of IIS issues in the ARF.

As part of the organization's work, Russia, together with Vietnam and China, held an international online seminar on countering the use of ICT for criminal purposes on April 23 and 26, 2021. It was attended by representatives of about 20 states and international organizations.

The intention is to hold such conferences on an ongoing basis in order to discuss all problems related to combating cybercrime in ASEAN.

- 5. International Telecommunication Union.** Russia has consistently advocated for the internationalization of Internet governance and a greater role for states in this process. The unilateral model of Internet governance that neutralizes the role of states (which guarantee the rights and freedoms of their citizens and play a major role in the economy, security, and stability of the critical information infrastructure of the Internet) has long shown its ineffectiveness.

To achieve these objectives, Russia insists on the adoption of a number of coordinated measures within the UN framework, including such steps as ensuring the stable and secure functioning of the Internet based on international law; preserving the sovereign right of states to regulate the national segment of the Internet; enhanced coordination of international, regional, and national internet governance efforts; and development of a global Internet governance policy at the interstate level.

In conclusion, I would like to note that the paradigm of interstate conflicts has changed qualitatively in recent years. The boundaries between confrontation and rivalry are blurring. The information environment, along with land, air, sea and outer space, is turning into a full-fledged theater of military-political confrontation. Some OSCE member states – NATO members – have officially declared as much. Russia wants to avoid the militarization of both European and global cyberspace. It is not yet too late.

International Telecommunication Union: Technical Regulator or Arena for New Confrontation?

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RAPIDLY developing, increasingly sophisticated information and communication technologies (ICTs) have not only transformed human space, making it limitless, but also changed the system of international relations.

The ICT sphere has become the main arena of geopolitical confrontation. Digital resources are gradually becoming as significant as geopolitical factors and military capabilities. Even a comparatively small state can become a major player in the global digital space if it possesses cutting-edge cyber technologies. ICTs are an important national economic growth factor. Today, a state's level of ICT development determines its international status.

There are major differences between Russia, China and the United States in terms of their national power and influence, but these three nations are the main global political and military players. Russia and China oppose global domination by the US, including in cyberspace.

ICTs are becoming a strategic aspect of the current US-Chinese confrontation.

The EU, despite being a key ally and partner of the US, obviously has no desire to get too deeply involved in the US-Chinese confrontation for fear of losing the Chinese market and mutually beneficial European-Chinese ties.

US-Chinese antagonism is becoming a fundamental feature of American-Chinese relations and will most likely escalate and play a key role in 21st-century international politics.

It is their technological rivalry that explains clashes between the US and China within the framework of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), one of the oldest international organizations and a specialized UN agency in the ICT field.

Today, key ITU activities are extremely politicized. Heated battles usually take place on the sidelines of Plenipotentiary Conferences, sectoral conferences, Council sessions, and meetings of Council working groups. There may even be arguments over such trivial matters as whether some resolution should or should not mention artificial intelligence or the Internet of Things. The bottom line is that the West is going out of its way to curb the powers and influence of the ITU.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a marked impact on the ITU's activities, upsetting its routines. Practically all events held by the Union since February 2020 have been virtual. Council sessions scheduled for 2020 and 2021 were canceled and replaced by virtual meetings of advisers, a format that has proven extremely ineffective.

The political dimension of the ITU's activities should not be underestimated, even though one would assume the Union to be an international organization dealing with purely technical matters.

Russia and China, as part of their strategic partnership, consistently advocate the internationalization of Internet governance. They insist on a more prominent role for states in governing the Internet and on the sovereign right of states to regulate their national segments of the Internet.

The Americans are seeking undivided control of the ITU. US national Doreen Bogdan-Martin, director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, has been nominated to run for ITU secretary-general in an election to be held at the next Plenipotentiary Conference in fall 2022. Her victory would mean that the US would hold all levers of influence in the ICT sphere. This may become a new threat to international information security and upset the already fragile balance that is maintaining it.

Rashid Ismailov, the Russian nominee for secretary-general, holds a radically different stance on Internet governance. ... Ismailov believes that humans must be at the center of all technology.

Ismailov believes that it should be the mission of the ITU to work to rebuild public confidence in ICTs by minimizing the causes of crises stemming from their use. Everyone needs to realize that technological development is not an end in itself but a means of improving people's quality of life and strengthening their security, the Russian candidate emphasizes.

The ITU's commitment to connecting everyone in the world and supporting the right of every individual to communication in a secure digital environment should prevent the organization from being used as a platform for political battles or a tool for pursuing anyone's ambitions for technological domination.

Diplomatic Efforts of Hieromartyr John (Pommers) to Preserve the Status of the Latvian Orthodox Church in the Interwar Period

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ON JULY 19, 1921, Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus Tikhon (Belavin) signed the Tomos of Autonomy of the Latvian Orthodox Church.

Today, amid the rapidly changing geopolitical situation caused, among other things, by the claims of the Phanar in Ukraine, it has become abundantly clear that we must prevent similar developments in the Baltic.

The key to predicting modern church relations lies in the past. In 1921- 1934, the Latvian Orthodox Church (LOC) through its head, Archbishop John (Pommers), became a model for building relations within an independent state as well as the most successful example of cooperation with the Moscow Patriarchate.

Hieromartyr John (Pommers) (1876-1934), the only Latvian saint who during his lifetime was deputy of the Saeima (parliament) of Latvia, is a national and spiritual symbol of Latvia, a guarantee of strengthening cultural ties between Russia and the Republic of Latvia. His sermon on tolerance and harmony in relations between Russians and Latvians on the basis of Orthodoxy has become more relevant than ever today.

The process that began in 1917 was inevitable and irreversible: The local faithful wanted local Estonian and Latvian vicariates headed by bishops of corresponding ethnicities. At a meeting of the Riga Diocese convened to discuss preparations for the All-Russia Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, Archbishop John (Smirnov) signed an official request to the Local Council (already approved by the Synod) to ordain Archpriest Pavel Kulbush suffragan of the Estonian parishes.

The preliminary agreement among the delegates of the Latvian Orthodox Church reached at the Local Council in 1917 laid a firm foundation for the future of the Latvian Orthodox Church and protected it against autocephalous aspirations inevitable during the early stages of independence. In 1917, the Latvian Orthodox Church was entrusted to Bishop John (Pommers), an ethnic Latvian highly respected by the Latvian clergy.

The February meeting had agreed to invite John (Pommers), Bishop of Penza and Saransk, to the post of head of the Latvian Orthodox Church.

The Synod of the LOC tried through the Latvian government delegation at talks with the RSFSR to establish contacts with Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus Tikhon but failed. The second letter of the Synod reached Tikhon through Estonia and was sent on to Archbishop John. He arrived in Riga on July 24, 1921, to shoulder the difficult task of preserving the canonical status of the LOC in the independent state and the unity of the Russian and Latvian flocks, protecting them at the state level. Archbishop John coped with these tasks brilliantly.

Holy Patriarch Tikhon, as head of an autocephalous Church, granted the widest possible autonomy to the Churches of Estonia (1920), Finland (1921), and Latvia (1921).

But even though these churches had practically identical starting legal positions, during the interwar years of independence of the Baltic republics, only the Latvian Orthodox Church managed to preserve its canonical status of broad autonomy due to the far-sighted and independent position of Archbishop John (Pommers). He retained administration of all Orthodox parishes of Latvia until his tragic unsolved murder in October 1934.

Only Hieromartyr John managed to avoid confrontation between the Russian and Latvian believers. He preserved theological ties with the Moscow Patriarchate thanks to the broad autonomy achieved by brilliant diplomatic efforts and the Tomos that Holy Patriarch Tikhon granted on July 19, 1921.

The Latvian Orthodox Church was the only church in the Baltic countries to firmly establish itself in the state: A law on the LOC was adopted, the status of church property was confirmed, and the decisions of the All-Russia Local Council on the parish were implemented. The foundation was effectively laid for the future stable position of the LOC: The position of the LOC is currently the strongest in the Baltic countries

Mr. Hopkins Goes to Moscow

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JUNE 30, 2021, marks 80 years to the day since Harry Hopkins, US President Franklin Roosevelt's personal representative, made his first visit to the Soviet Union. This is an excellent opportunity to recall some of the most significant moments in the political biography of this amazing person. Hopkins is one of those rare individuals to whom fate has given an opportunity to make history with his own hands. A larger-than-life personality – bright, talented, driven, strong-willed, and resolute – he was always in the public eye, although he remained modestly in the shadow of his great patron.

After resigning from his post as secretary of commerce in 1940, Harry Hopkins was officially listed as a special representative and adviser to the president of the United States. However, in reality, the range of issues he oversaw encompassed much more than the position entailed on paper. What's more, the tasks he undertook were delicate, and the trust placed in him by the White House chief was of the highest level. Hopkins's position within the Roosevelt administration was and still is unique in American political practice. As Time magazine described in 1945, he had many faces: the president's private secretary, administrator, orderly, errand boy, good listener, right-hand man, brain-stormer, companion, and alter ego. His activities were not regulated by law and did not require Congressional approval. He was accountable to no one but his boss, and could do his job as he saw fit.

As a whole, Hopkin's biography is the fulfillment of the American dream in its pure form. A simple guy with humble origins – the fourth of five children in the family of a traveling salesman and a schoolteacher from Iowa – made his way to the heights of world politics thanks to his incredible intellectual talent and energy.

Hopkins first met Roosevelt during the 1928 election campaign, when Alfred Smith was running for president and Roosevelt for governor of New York, the most politically significant state. For Roosevelt, this may have been just another handshake, but the meeting left a strong impression on Hopkins. During his time working in the charity sector, the energetic and devoted Hopkins attracted more and more attention from Roosevelt's friends and from his wife, who actively participated in many humanitarian endeavors.

Ivan Maysky, the Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain, wrote in his memoirs that, on July 19, 1941, he was with Harry Hopkins among the prime minister's guests at Chequers.

The brief conversation by the fireplace between Churchill, Maysky, and Hopkins was about the opening of a Second Front. Churchill turned to Hopkins, shrugged his shoulders, and said that it was now impossible. As the ambassador noted, Hopkins regarded the subject of helping the USSR with

much more sympathy than the prime minister. But that day was not the appropriate occasion for a more in-depth conversation, and Maysky expressed a desire to meet with Hopkins again.

Hopkins himself, in his December 1945 article "The Inside Story of My Meeting with Stalin," in *American Magazine*, wrote that he had received instructions from Roosevelt while he was at Chequers: "The first message was short enough: 'Go to Moscow. See Stalin.' "

Harry Hopkins's visit to Moscow became a turning point in relations between the US, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. After this visit, all further Anglo-American calculations were no longer based on the idea that the USSR would suffer imminent defeat. Hopkins, of course, never made it to the front. His belief in the USSR's capability to mount serious resistance to the enemy was based on the kind of requests that Stalin had made.

Hopkins's visit to Moscow not only turned the page in Russia-American relations, but also helped to bring about the anti-Hitler coalition. Specifically, it paved the way for what became known as the Moscow Conference between the heads of the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the US at the end of September 1941. The purpose was to resolve the question of how best to assist the Soviet Union in its "magnificent resistance" to the fascist assault – and it culminated in a secret protocol on supplies to be provided to the Soviet Union by the US and Great Britain.

In due course, Harry Hopkins was a participant in the conferences with the Big Three in Tehran and Yalta. Then, following the German capitulation, and at the request of President Truman, he revisited Moscow in late May 1945. Hopkins departed Washington on May 23, after having resigned almost immediately after Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945.

The German Embassy in Moscow: March-June 1941

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ON DECEMBER 18, 1940, Hitler signed his directive on preparations for attacking the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa). The High Command of the German Armed Forces (OKW) subsequently began planning disinformation measures to conceal Germany's military preparations at the Soviet border. The plan was approved on February 15, 1941, but was subsequently revised and elaborated. That disinformation operation has already been described in detail.

The Germans relied mainly on false information and rumors about the reasons for the deployment of OKW units at the Soviet Union's western border. The deployment was initially attributed to the need to conceal a planned landing on the British Isles and subsequently to preparations for an attack on the Balkans and British positions in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The disinformation operation was entrusted to military agencies, the Foreign Ministry, the Propaganda Ministry, and German special services that were operating in strict secrecy. What role was ascribed to the German Embassy to the USSR, the target of the planned German attack? Almost nothing is known about this. In his memoirs, which can hardly be considered reliable when it comes to the situation inside the embassy and its activities in the final prewar months of 1941, Gustav Hilger, former counsellor of the German Embassy, said nothing about the embassy's involvement.

Of course, we can assume that the heads of the German Embassy in Moscow were receiving no official written information from Berlin about an armed attack on the Soviet Union: The risk of such information being intercepted by Soviet intelligence was too great. But everybody in the embassy undoubtedly knew about the impending war, either from high-placed relatives in German military

circles, from oral instructions brought by diplomats travelling between Moscow and Berlin, or from information brought by German citizens who came to the Soviet Union and the rumors that were rife in Moscow, Berlin, and the capitals of many other states.

The German diplomats stationed in Moscow were instructed to strongly oppose the rumors about an impending war and to spread the disinformation formulated by top circles about German military-political plans. In fact, that was enough for the heads of the German Embassy, all experienced intelligence officers, to correctly surmise what lay in store.

IN MID-MARCH 1941, Colonel Hans Krebs was temporarily appointed head of staff of the military attaché of Germany in Moscow while the military attaché himself, General of the Cavalry Ernst August Köstring, was caring for his health in Germany. Colonel Krebs, being fluent in Russian and having previous experience working in the Soviet Union, was entrusted with a special task.

Krebs was expected to promote the version that Germany's priority was expansion into the Balkans and the Middle East, and the movement of German troops to the East, which would have inevitably raised questions in Moscow, was to be attributed to the planned war against Great Britain and the Reich's obvious intention to protect its borders in case of an unexpected Soviet attack.

On April 24, 1941, naval attaché Captain First Rank Norbert von Baumbach reported to Berlin:

1. There are rumors here about a coming war between Germany and the Soviet Union brought by people from Germany who are traveling through Russia.
2. According to the counsellor of the Italian Embassy, the British ambassador¹⁰ had warned that the war would begin on June 22.
3. May 20 is also mentioned.
4. I am doing my best to oppose the rumors as absurd.

But neither ... the efforts of the ambassador nor other measures taken by the German Embassy suppressed the rumors of war.

THE impeccable conduct of all employees of the German Embassy in Moscow was to play an important role in concealing Germany's preparations for attacking the Soviet Union. They were expected to avoid arousing any suspicions that war was imminent and to work as usual, remaining absolutely calm. But that was easier said than done, which caused a lot of indignation in Berlin and among military-diplomatic representatives in the Soviet capital.

On the whole, however, the information coming from the Soviet Embassy in Berlin, the "legal" resident agents of the NKGB USSR, and the Soviet military attachés in Berlin (all of them especially targeted by German disinformation), suggested that Germany's build-up of forces at the Soviet border and other measures were designed either to provoke a Soviet attack to subsequently portray its own military actions as a response to Soviet aggression or to put political pressure on Moscow to obtain farreaching concessions.

In the 1950s, Hilger wrote several books, including a memoir, *The Incompatible Allies*, parts of which are quoted above. Written during the Cold War by a still active professional agent and thus politically biased, it contains at best warped and at worst totally distorted facts.

Hans Krebs (1898-1945) fought as a volunteer in the Kaiser's army at the Western Front of World War I and was awarded the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Class. In 1919, he joined the Reichswehr. In 1930, he was transferred to the War Ministry where he studied Russian and moved to the Foreign Armies department (military intelligence). In this capacity he was sent to the Soviet Union and Far Eastern countries to "get to know them better." In 1933-1934, as an aide to the German military attaché in Moscow, he developed a lot of contacts among top Soviet military officials, including Georgy Zhukov. In fall 1937, he was appointed department head at the OKH General Staff and in December

1939, was made head of staff of the 7th Army Corps. In 1940, he fought against France and, as I have already written, was temporarily appointed military attaché at the German Embassy in Moscow.

After the German attack on the USSR, he headed the headquarters of the 9th Army of the Wehrmacht at the Soviet-German front and was later made Chief of Staff of Army Group Center. At the end of the war, Krebs, a general of the infantry who “remained absolutely devoted to the ideas of national-socialism and the Führer,” to quote official attestation, became the last Chief of the Army General Staff. As one of Hitler’s last confidants, he verified with his signature the Führer’s political testament. After Hitler’s suicide and the failure of attempts to enter into peace talks with the Red Army commanders, Krebs, together with Hitler’s adjutant, committed suicide in the bunker of the Reich Chancellery.

Diplomatic Methods and Practices of Modern Russia: How It Works

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FOREIGN policy issues always attract increased attention from state figures, politicians, experts, and analysts. At the same time, the development and implementation of foreign policy decisions have traditionally been the purview of a limited circle of individuals who are often not inclined to reveal the nuances and inner workings of this process.

Scholarly works on international relations written by authors from other fields have long been based on their view of international relations as a chain of interconnected political events. The result of this approach is a focus on policy results, whereas the process of diplomatic work is practically overlooked by scholars. The situation has begun to change only in recent years, as researchers have increasingly turned their attention to the functioning of diplomacy as a special field of activity.

Among the most voluminous and in-depth analytical works in this field, the monograph *Diplomatic Methods and Practices of Modern Russia** deserves mention. The author of the monograph, Doctor of Science (History) Prof. Olga Lebedeva, represents the Department of Diplomacy of the Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and knows firsthand the daily life of the diplomatic path in its many aspects – classical, social, economic, cultural, etc.

Diplomacy is the primary means of building relations between a state and a society and other actors of international affairs; it is constantly searching for common areas of interest. Diplomacy should be considered the key tool for ensuring national security and stability in peacetime, creating conditions for the comprehensive development of nations and peoples.

Lebedeva’s book presents a well-structured overview of the proposed methods and practices of diplomacy, arranging them in seven chapters, each of which provides a comprehensive overview of its topic. Drawing on fundamental documents, primarily the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (current edition dated November 30, 2016), all sections of the book provide a thorough review of the forms, mechanisms, and current major trends of diplomacy, which can truly be called an art. The author provides a detailed analysis of several types of diplomacy, including public, network, economic, digital, etc.

Readers have the opportunity to learn about the existing approaches to defining diplomacy and about the process of developing ways to implement it at the state level. The presented impressive

historical material on the problems of diplomatic relations, including how diplomacy has evolved, allows readers to form a personal opinion on the foreign policy decisionmaking process, the achievement of consensus by participants, and the linking of diplomacy with national culture and identity.

In her research, Lebedeva highlights the insufficient development of “green diplomacy” in our country. With the growing popularity of environmental and climate issues in the world, it is necessary to develop our own concept of climate and environmental diplomacy as an element of foreign policy work. This idea is already being widely discussed in the Russian expert community. Armed with a relevant concept, our country will be able to participate more adequately and fully in the globalization of climate and environmental protection issues. However, some objective difficulties remain – for example, the West’s politicization of the Green topic, the financial interests of economic actors, the lack of funding in this area, etc.

Since Lebedeva’s monograph raises a number of very relevant issues related to various aspects of diplomacy, it is likely to attract the interest of various audiences, including international studies students in bachelor’s and master’s degree programs.

Botswana Through the Prism of Times and Events

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COOPERATION with African countries is gathering momentum. Russia is gradually returning to the continent, offering its African partners a new format of bilateral relations that is drawing interest from state and business elites.

Africa-related topics are increasingly being discussed in academic and educational institutions. Issues related to the development of a new agenda for the upcoming Russia-Africa summit in 2022 are being raised during international academic and research conferences. One example is the Russia-Africa: Building the Future Together conference that took place on May 18, 2021, at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia to exchange views on possible ways to develop cooperation between Russia and African states, as well as to prepare proposals for the further development of relations. And yet, the distant and mysterious African continent remains terra incognita for many. It is no wonder that political analysts and experts have recently been turning their attention to it.

The experience in Africa of Viktor Ivanovich Sibilyov, a high-ranking Russian diplomat, is extremely useful to those seeking to know more about Africa, learn about its cultural heritage, get acquainted with the peculiarities of modern political processes there, and learn about the background and personalities of state leaders. His informative book *Botswana in Political Portraits of Its Presidents: Notes of a Russian Ambassador*, published in the summer of 2021, draws back the curtain on the wonderful world of Africa, with its complex mosaic of ethnic groups, traditions, and customs. The mentality, lifestyle, and way of life here is completely different. This is what the author sheds light on in his work.

The book is especially valuable because it was written by someone who has traveled extensively in Africa, or rather in its southern regions – primarily Botswana, where Viktor Sibilyov served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of

Botswana from 2014 to 2020, and also as Russia's special representative to the Southern African Development Community (SADC). As part of his duties, he also visited neighboring countries such as South Africa (including cities such as Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban), Namibia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland (now Eswatini), and Mauritius. His book is based on historical facts; on the author's personal conversations, including with top officials of the Republic of Botswana; on rich archival material; and on analytical articles by domestic and foreign authors. The book brings hitherto unknown documents to light.

It is important not only to see the unknown and admire the unfamiliar world, but also to capture it on paper, and the author succeeded brilliantly in this regard.

After reading a few pages, one gets the clear impression that the book was written by a high-class professional with a good command of the material and inside knowledge of Africa and its contradictions that do not always lend themselves to analysis and logic. We see an entire constellation of Botswana politicians – Seretse Khama, Quett Masire, Festus Mogae, Seretse Khama Ian Khama, Mokgweetsi Eric Keabetswe Masisi – who ruled the country from 1966 to the present. They are all uniquely interesting politicians who have contributed to the democratization and development of their country.

Summarizing an analysis of the political process in Botswana, the author concludes that this African country and Russia maintain a stable political dialogue at the high and highest levels. As an example, he cites an excerpt from Masisi's June 12, 2019, message to Russian President Vladimir Putin in commemoration of the Day of Russia in which he confirmed interest in continuing close interaction in order to build further successful cooperation (p. 80).

In conclusion, I would like to note Viktor Sibilyov's undeniable contribution to the field of Africa studies in Russia. His book is the first work of its kind on Botswana to include research of such high quality. The diplomat's notes are of interest to a wide range of readers, primarily specialists in Russia's Africa policy.