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Summary

Escalation Around Taiwan: Facets of the Conflict

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A POTENTIAL military conflict between China and the US over Taiwan as a result of either its forced “unification” or its unilateral declaration of independence remains a focus of observers and analysts all over the globe.

In China and the US, we see the rivalry of two economies, two ideologies, two models of development, and two political systems. With regard to the last point – the difference between political systems and bureaucratic mechanisms – both parties in this confrontation have their own characteristics and motivations of interests, as well as their own algorithms of action and goal-setting in critical foreign policy situations.

US presidents have a lot of independence and leeway when it comes to foreign policy, especially during crisis situations. At the same time, compared to their Chinese counterparts, they have a much closer relationship with political institutions, primarily the US Congress, and they depend on the influence of and interaction with various segments of the political class, bureaucracy, business, lobbying groups, and public opinion. In this political system, the US president is generally (but not absolutely) far more compelled to consider and support the continuity of the foreign policy agreements of previous White House administrations on fundamental issues with key foreign policy counterparties.

AFTER becoming China’s top leader, Xi Jinping proposed a number of historical tasks and strategic policy guidelines: “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” with a focus on 2049, the realization of the “Chinese Dream,” the Belt and Escalation Around Taiwan: Facets of the Conflict 3 Road Initiative (BRI), the achievement of “common prosperity.” At the 19th Congress of the CPC in October 2017, Xi said that unification with Taiwan is an integral task of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and a tentative deadline of 2049 was set for unification.

In March 2018, the National People’s Congress voted to remove the term limits on Xi Jinping’s tenure as president of the People’s Republic of China. He will most likely remain General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee for at least another five years after the 20th Party Congress in 2022. In this regard, many observers note, with good reason, that the promotion of unification with Taiwan is a priority for Xi Jinping and high on his personal agenda.

The current tensions around Taiwan have been largely brought about by the actions of the Donald Trump administration. As anti-China sentiment intensified, Trump was almost ready to abandon the cornerstone of the Sino-American status quo of recent decades.

China’s elite clearly understands that even with the PLA’s manifold superiority over Taiwan’s Army, an invasion would be fraught with unpredictable consequences. A failure or major complications with broadly publicized losses would be extremely detrimental to the reputation and stability of the political regime of the PRC in general and the personal political fate of Xi Jinping in particular.

With respect to President Xi’s personal agenda, it is reasonable to assume that he is more concerned about China’s domestic development in the next 10 to 15 years – the horizon of his active career. He is more focused on making China technologically independent from the Americans, pursuing his beloved “Chinese Dream,” and making progress on the BRI – projects closely intertwined with his own political

fate. An operation to capture and hold Taiwan, which would almost certainly trigger bitter conflict with the Americans, could jeopardize Xi's political fate.

As for the Biden administration's stance on Taiwan, it can be described as a policy of dual deterrence and dual persuasion. The dual focus of the US's actions means that it is directed at both China and Taiwan.

In May 2021, describing the landscape of interests and the general increase in tension in the Taiwan Strait, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken sent a strong message, stressing that "it would be a serious mistake for anyone to try to change the existing status quo by force."¹⁰ That statement was clearly intended to "cool down" the CPC.

Answering a direct question about Russia's stance on the current situation with Taiwan, Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "The Russian Federation is operating on the premise that every country in that region should be given a chance to resolve all arising controversial issues without the intervention of nonregional powers in a calm manner relying on the fundamental norms of international law and by way of negotiations. I believe the potential is there, and it is far from being fully tapped."

Practical Results and New Horizons of Eurasian Integration

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NOVEMBER 2021 marks the 10-year anniversary of the decision to establish the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC).

The creation of the EEC marked the transition to a whole new institutional level of integration, in effect making it irreversible. The EEC has facilitated the transformation of the Customs Union and the Single Economic Space into the EAEU and is now working effectively to achieve its main goals, such as creating conditions for the EAEU's operation and development and drafting proposals for further economic integration within the EAEU.

A successful integration strategy requires an objective assessment of the international situation around the EAEU, including an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its successes and shortcomings, as well as a firm commitment to achieving ambitious goals. The EEC is ready to play the leading role in this process that has been entrusted to it under the EAEU's basic constituent documents.

THE YEAR 2021 significantly changed the logic of global development. The ongoing economic crisis has a complex genesis and stems from a change in technological and global economic paradigms. The COVID-19 pandemic has merely accelerated negative processes arising from longterm stagnation, the failure for many years to resolve complex problems, and the unfavorable situation on energy markets.

THE YEAR 2022 is the EAEU's seventh year and the EEC's 10th. The EAEU has become an integral element of the economic model of member states and part of the global economy.

The EAEU Treaty, which was signed in 2014, is comprehensive and inclusive. The member states managed all at once to agree on full-fledged integration on a wide range of issues. The treaty was a powerful economic development stimulus, and the proposed cooperation model has proved its worth.

In the first five years, the EAEU's aggregate GDP increased by 20.3% in current prices, reaching almost \$2 trillion in 2019. Over the same period, industrial production in the EAEU increased by 13.1%, including by almost 16% in manufacturing. Those indicators are higher than, for example, in the EU, where industrial production was up 7.5% and manufacturing – 8.5%. The EAEU's trade volume in 2019 was up 35.1% compared to 2015.

The EAEU has a viable goods market. Significant progress has been made in developing the services market. There is a unified customs code, and freedom of movement and social guarantees for workers are ensured.

The year 2021 is shaping up quite well. The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the EAEU economies is gradually weakening.

THE EAEU's key goal today is full-scale implementation of the Strategic Directions for Developing Eurasian Economic Integration Until 2025. The key points of Strategy 2025 are as follows:

1. The Strategy embodies the transition from the formation stage (2015-2019) to the project integration stage (2020-2025). The essence of the new stage is to provide conditions for specific joint economic projects both at the interstate level and at the level of particular business entities.
2. The Strategy expands the scope of the 2014 Treaty, envisions a more effective approach toward developing integration in key areas, and provides for improving the EAEU's institutional system and legislative framework. The document also outlines the contours of economic cooperation in new areas, such as education, health care, tourism, and sports.
3. The Strategy formalizes the political will of the EAEU heads of state to further enhance integration.

The EAEU economies can develop at a faster pace, improving the well-being of our countries' citizens. That requires moving decisively and unequivocally from the logic of developing as a trade association to fully integrating member states' industrial potentials and pursuing innovative development goals.

An interstate program titled the "EAEU integrated system for the provision of space and geo-information products and services based on national sources of earth remote sensing data" has been approved. The decision was made to draft a second interstate program: "Enhancing the efficiency and reliability of industrial and distributed energy facilities in EAEU member states."

The synergy of industrial potentials and the joint efforts of business communities in the EAEU countries can only be achieved by providing effective incentives. The Commission understands the importance of direct dialogue with the business community and is working along these lines.

We believe that updating the international architecture of mutually beneficial cooperation will be facilitated by an array of measures to ensure the practical implementation of the concept of a Greater Eurasian Partnership, the EAEU being one of its pillars. The proposed areas of activity can be grouped together.

First, it is necessary to effectively align the Eurasian integration project with China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Second, it is necessary to develop the EAEU's potential as an international organization for regional economic integration in keeping with Article 1 of the EAEU Treaty.

Third, every effort should be made to help companies from EAEU countries enter foreign markets and thus strengthen the EAEU's international role.

Fourth, it is equally important to expand the scope of the EAEU's international interaction and its close involvement in addressing priority issues on the multilateral agenda.

The importance of all the aforementioned areas of activity in building a Greater Eurasian Partnership was also underscored in President Putin's article "Being Open Despite the Past".

IN CONCLUSION, we would like to formulate several key principles of the Eurasian integration project as a kind of ideological foundation for Eurasian integration in the near future.

1. Trust.
2. Complementarity.
3. Self-sufficiency.

The Eurasian Economic Commission is creating the necessary conditions for that and knows exactly what needs to be done in the future.

Cooperation Between the Amazonian Countries Amid Current Global Challenges

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TOPICS related to the Amazon Basin, which covers half of South America, figure prominently in international discussions about climate change, the depletion of natural resources, and environmental degradation due to anthropogenic impact.

The Amazon Basin is recognized by the world community as a unique ecosystem, and the processes taking place there have an impact on global climate change. Given the strategic importance of this ecosystem for global development, it is important to understand the challenges facing the countries in the region and to analyze the mechanisms developed to address them.

First, these are problems associated with environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources.

The next problem is related to the economy and the growing involvement of this territory in the activities of multinational companies.

The scale of the cross-border challenges is colossal and encompasses all the countries of the Amazon Basin.

Water resources projects deserve special. They have led to the creation of a unified water management system, studies of the aquifer and underground streams of the Amazon, and the development of alternative water supply options.

Another initiative worth mentioning is the project to monitor various species of flora and fauna and to combat trade in endangered endemic species, undertaken jointly with the German Development Bank. This has made it possible to minimize the possibility of forging documents for electronic permits to trade in various animal species.

The interest of international organizations in cooperation with the ACTO stems from the importance of the processes taking place in the Amazon, which affect the ecosystem of the entire planet. In addition, the ACTO lacks sufficient resources to respond to emerging threats in the Amazon.

Currently, ACTO member countries are developing a new Strategic Cooperation Program until 2030 that is to include a special plan for coordination in case of emergencies in the region.

It is worth noting that the situation that developed in 2019 against the backdrop of extensive Amazon fires in effect demonstrated the politicization of environmental problems. Criticizing the actions of the Brazilian leadership and accusing Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro of an irresponsible environmental policy, French President Emmanuel Macron called the forest fires in Brazil an international crisis and proposed discussing the topic at the G7 summit. The French president also commented that he was blocking ratification of a trade agreement between the European Union and the countries of South America until Brazil did more to fight fires in the Amazon.

In response, Bolsonaro said that Macron criticized the fires raging in the Amazon forests purely for political gain, and accused the French leader of colonialism: “The French President’s suggestion that Amazonian issues be discussed at the G7 without the participation of the countries of the region evokes a misplaced colonialist mindset, which does not belong in the 21st century”.

In this case, France shows certain double standards in its approach to environmental policy issues in the Amazon.

In contrast to these expansionist aspirations, Russia is ready to establish mutually beneficial cooperation with the Amazonian countries. There is a similar natural area, Siberia, in our country. The Amazon is often compared to it in terms of the uniqueness and importance of its resources – and for good reason. In this context, cooperation on forest conservation and forest fire prevention could become another area of cooperation between Russia and all South American countries. Our country has tremendous experience monitoring water resources, providing social benefits to indigenous peoples, and combating illegal drug trafficking, which we could share with the countries of the region. In addition, Russia has developed good relations with all countries of the Amazon and has similar approaches to addressing global problems and combating new challenges and threats.

Politics of Memory in Russian-Japanese Relations: Resolving Differences of Opinion

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IN THE 21st century, the politics of memory is becoming even more relevant as a tool of international relations. This is amply confirmed by Japan, where the past traditionally serves as a tool for legitimizing the political and social order and largely shapes foreign policy principles. But this past contains many dark chapters that stir up conflicts with its neighbors. Many of them are rooted in the distant past, when Japan aggressively spread its influence in Asia. Japanese expansion caused thousands of deaths.

We need fresh approaches. Our historical memory policy needs to be corrected and revised, yet it is even more important to sort out and grasp the meanings of Japan’s motives. “Diplomacy is about relations between people, the ability to listen to each other, to hear one another, and to strike a balance between competing interests”.

THE MEIJI RESTORATION launched a set of reforms designed to modernize the country, overcome its technological backwardness, move closer to the West, and join the club of leading world powers. Japan's politics of memory was intended to consolidate the nation and set up a mighty empire to dominate Asia. ... Propaganda proclaimed the mission of liberating Asia from Western colonialists, but Japan nevertheless armed itself with Western instruments of colonial exploitation.

Tokyo was cruel and aggressive: Examples include the December 1937 Nanjing Massacre, Unit 731, the "comfort stations" in which women and girls from occupied countries were forced into sexual slavery.

Japan's defeat in World War II changed a lot in Japan's politics of memory. The traditional "conservative" narrative acquired a new and fairly popular "progressive" antipode facilitated in large part by measures taken by the American occupation powers.

The progressive narrative was based on the acknowledgement of guilt for war crimes and for pursuing an aggressive policy in Asia, and it even shifted the responsibility for the atomic bombings onto official Tokyo. This narrative embodied political pacifism as the basic world outlook in postwar Japan.

But after a while, the conservative narrative was revived to relieve Japan of a certain share of responsibility for the aggression in World War II. That narrative gained strength amid the confrontations of the Cold War period and the growth of Japan's influence as a loyal ally of the US. The Americans, in their turn, backed conservative and patriotically minded leaders who cultivated prewar ideas about their country's historical path.

Today, "oblivion" – i.e., the erasure from historical memory of all unpleasant and "inconvenient" episodes associated with the crimes of the Japanese military – is coming to the fore. At the same time, much is said about the sufferings and difficulties that have burdened the Japanese, while the sufferings of other peoples at the hands of Japanese conquerors are minimized.

Japan's politics of memory is strongly affected by the "trauma of defeat" in World War II, which Japanese society currently feels more strongly than the "trauma of guilt" for Japan's military aggression, colonial policy, and war crimes. Japan's scientific, technological, and economic achievements and the expansion of its political influence in the region and in the world further consolidate the conservative narrative.

THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR of 1904-1905 is the key event that established the image of Russia in Japan and consolidated the myth of Japanese exceptionalism.

Even though the Soviet Union fought on the side of the anti-Hitler coalition and therefore contributed to the victory over the militarist regime in Tokyo together with the US, the war against the Soviet Union is perceived in Japan differently than the war against the US. It is commonly believed that the US defeated Japan to liberate it from the "blood-thirsty and aggressive" militarists, to save it from Stalinist occupation, and to show it the road to pacifism and democracy. In the war with the USSR, Japan is perceived as a "victim" deprived of its "primordial" territories.

The territorial disagreements with Russia reveal the specifics of Japan's politics of memory – namely, Japan is a "victim," and Russia must apologize for instigating hostilities in 1945 in violation of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact and for "occupying" the Kuril Islands. To assert its right to the islands, Tokyo cites the fact that they belonged to it during the Tokugawa shogunate (early 17th century) and under the Treaty of Shimoda (1855), which left the Kuril Islands to Japan.

THE RESULTS of World War II ensured the triumphalism of Soviet and Russian policy: Victory served as a firm foundation for a common national identity, and the logic of triumphalism brought leniency to the Soviet politics of memory: It was believed that Japan had paid for everything in full, which meant that relations could be established with a clean slate. The 1956 Declaration meant that the Soviet Union had

“forgiven” Japan for routing Russia in the Russo-Japanese war and for interfering in the Far East and Siberia. But the offer of transferring two Kuril Islands after the signing of a peace treaty did not yield the expected results.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the Soviet position was firm: It refused to acknowledge that there was a territorial dispute with Japan, while the attitude toward Japan’s politics of memory and its conservative course in particular was vague.

The Russian Federation violated the continuity of its politics of memory and behaved like a young, newly formed state in its relations with Japan, treating the past as a burden that should be shaken off. The situation was paradoxical to say the least: Official apologies were made to the aggressor. The situation changed in the early 2000s, when Russia as a victorious power became the central historical narrative. The territorial issue was sidelined. Russian sovereignty over the Kuril Islands is no longer questioned. It was confirmed at the official level by the decisions of the Yalta Conference of 1945, the San Francisco peace treaty, and other arguments

TODAY, it is obvious that relations between Russia and Japan are stalemated largely due to discrepancies in their historical narratives, but this is precisely where we need to seek common ground and opportunities to create a more favorable atmosphere for cooperation.

On the whole, the time has come to formulate a comprehensive Russian historical memory strategy to establish closer and systemic contacts with Japanese scholars, academics, and historians. It would be advisable to raise the issue of establishing a Russian-Japanese commission of historians that would create a road map for bilateral scholarly cooperation. Such efforts could be a real boon to Russian diplomacy, stimulating bilateral relations.

The Indo-Pacific as a Geopolitical Construct: India’s Approach and Russia’s Interests

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GEOPOLITICAL constructs are a relatively new phenomenon in global political practice, and even today they are often created spontaneously. One of the most complex, contradictory, and ambiguous geopolitical constructs is the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR), or the Indo-Pacific, as it is known for short. It entered global political discourse in 2007, with the publication of an article by Gurpreet Khurana on sea lanes of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. According to some experts, the term “Indo-Pacific” has recently become a buzzword widely used by politicians and political analysts to show that they keep abreast of current trends, but it also helps perpetuate the Indo-Pacific idea.

In Russian political discourse, however, notions about the IPR are clouded in myth: It is often claimed that the Indo-Pacific is an American invention designed to isolate Russia and China, that it is an artificial and thus unviable construct directed against the Russian concept of Greater Eurasia, etc.

The purpose of this article is to dispel several myths that exist in Russian political discourse and to analyze India’s experience in developing the new geopolitical construct.

IN RUSSIAN works on international relations, the term konstrukt (construct) is used relatively rarely. This is apparently due both to the relatively low popularity in Russia of constructivism as an area of research in international relations.

A social construct “is something that exists not in objective reality, but as a result of human interaction. It exists because humans agree that it exists”. The notion of a social construct, developed and popularized by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966, is pivotal to current critical theory. Since then, methodological debates have been ongoing within this theory between radical and moderate constructionists and constructivists about the extent to which social construction is influenced by hard facts.

Whereas until the second half of the 20th century, geopolitical constructs were for the most part created randomly, the deconstruction of this process has made it possible to provide a solid theoretical basis for their development. Today, we can say that every geopolitical construct is artificial and created for certain purposes. Moreover, today we can create the constructs we need if we meet certain conditions. The Indo-Pacific is a case in point.

The Indo-Pacific owes its conceptualization to two Indian naval officers, Captain Gurpreet Khurana and Vice Admiral Premvir Das, who used the term almost simultaneously: the former in an academic journal and the latter at a conference on ocean security.

Among the countries that have included the Indo-Pacific in their political discourse, there are now two fundamentally different views on what it is: Whereas the US sees the Indo-Pacific as a geographic framework for its own security format based on its China containment strategy, India sees it as a civilizational framework that allows it to aspire to an important role in the western part of the Pacific.

The views of these countries on the role of individual actors differ accordingly. Whereas for the US, under its strategy, India appears to be a promising junior partner and a bastion against China, for India, the issue of a conflict with China in the Indo-Pacific region is not an existential one at all: It is easy to imagine a situation where China and India recognize each other’s special security interests in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, respectively, with the result that the confrontation between them will be suspended indefinitely if not for good. Whereas the US regards China as an adversary aspiring to the role of hegemon (a role currently played by the US itself), India views China as a neighbor with whom it is necessary to divide spheres of influence while ensuring its own interests as much as possible.

It is obvious that the US stands to gain from equating the Indo-Pacific with the Quad, making it possible to impose the American vision of the Indo-Pacific on countries that are interested in major regional integration projects and get them involved in anti-Chinese initiatives.

RUSSIA has regions that have historically been within its sphere of national interests and its security sphere. Moscow is sensitive to any problems in those regions, because they threaten its economic or military security in one way or another. This applies to the territory of the former CIS and the Arctic. The Indo-Pacific, as a concept initially oriented toward oceans and coastal polities, does not affect the former in any way but has a direct bearing on the latter.

The Arctic is geographically connected with the Indo-Pacific region by the Bering Strait. This means that protection of the security of the Arctic Ocean should begin in the Pacific Ocean, in its northern part, which is the area of responsibility of Russia’s Pacific Fleet, whose development and reinforcement should be given priority attention.

In the Indo-Pacific, unlike in the Arctic, Russia has no economic or political interests that, if threatened, would make its response predictable and allow others to take advantage of its weaknesses for their own purposes. This lack of interests means that Russia can maximize its activities in the Indo-Pacific, building

up its presence in regions of tactical and strategic importance and, if necessary, leaving these regions just as easily as it arrived.

As I see it, a Russian concept of the IPR could be based on the following assumptions:

1. The Indo-Pacific, along with the North Atlantic and Arctic Ocean, is an integral part of unified Greater Eurasia, constituting the waters off the southern and eastern coasts of Eurasia. The sea route through the Strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean has historically complemented the Eurasian overland route known as the Great Silk Road. At the same time, Eurasia is characterized not by a linear, but by a network structure of trade routes, which run in both latitudinal and longitudinal directions. Thus, the Indo-Pacific is part of the global cultural-economic system of the Old World, where all currently existing civilizations had their origins. The IPR and Greater Eurasia are not opposing but complementary concepts.
2. The Indo-Pacific as a space of cultural, trade, and religious interaction has been an inclusive phenomenon throughout its history that has allowed people, goods, and ideas to move freely across the entire area from East Asia to Europe.
3. It is unacceptable to establish military alliances in the Indo-Pacific and to turn it into a cold war battlefield. At the same time, it would make sense to create, under UN auspices, a flexible network of unofficial security organizations to address regional challenges and threats, primarily new and nontraditional ones, in cooperation with each other in order to create a common security system.
4. The idea of a “rules-based order” must be specified. If the term “rules” is taken to mean the established norms of international law, Russia can only welcome such an “order.”
5. Historically, the center of the Indo-Pacific as a region is the Southeast Asia subregion, whose countries are now members of ASEAN, which is why Russia supports the idea of ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific and advocates the need to change all concepts of the IPR accordingly.
6. Russia is an integral part of both the Indo-Pacific and the Arcto-Pacific regions. In the Russian Arctic, Russia plays the same role of a natural center of gravity as India does in the Indian Ocean.

THE PRINCIPLES proposed above are entirely consistent with Russia’s oft-stated position on the supremacy of international law, commitment to ASEAN centrality, and desire to prevent an escalation of the US-China rivalry into a cold and eventually a hot war. The adoption and proclamation of these principles would demonstrate that Russia is ready to propose, as an alternative to the US concept of the Asia-Pacific, its own concept based on the idea of universal development and a joint fight against unconventional maritime challenges and threats, as President Vladimir Putin stated in his speech at the UN Security Council.

Russia’s Latin American Policy: New Challenges and Threats

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IN RECENT YEARS, diplomatic efforts by Moscow have created a solid framework for relations between Russia and Latin America. It is especially significant that both sides share essentially the same values and cooperation principles and have political strategies based on the defense of national sovereignty; compliance with international law, including the principle of noninterference in internal affairs; adherence to multilateral diplomacy; a balance of interests in international relations; and the

determination to strengthen international security and stability [19]. Latin American states, despite the various priorities of their political regimes, follow the pragmatic tactics of supporting a polycentric world order and multilateral cooperation based on principles enshrined in the UN Charter and in other international documents.

Both Russia and Latin American pursue expanded cooperation; condemn discriminatory and other hostile trade, economic, financial, and political practices; and seek more solid agreements as guarantees of the stability and durability of their extensive partnership.

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation states that Russia will continue to boost its relations with Latin American and Caribbean states in every way in view of the growing role of that region in world affairs.

Russian-Latin American cooperation presents an interesting political and geographical picture. This cooperation exists in three formats – global, regional, and bilateral.

Russia cooperates closely with Latin American countries as part of international organizations such as BRICS, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, and the World Trade Organization. This cooperation aims to strengthen multilateral diplomacy; promote the principles of international law and the UN Charter; consolidate democracy and protect human rights; combat international terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, and other threats and challenges; strengthen energy and food security; and support environmental protection and sustainable economic development.

One of Latin America's distinctive features is its diversity of regional organizations. Russia has working contacts with all key organizations and holds observer status in some of them, but gives priority to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Russia shows interest in forming project, production, and technological alliances. It calls for the maximum use of the complementarity of our economies, and for cooperation in fields such as oil and gas, hydro and nuclear power generation, aircraft and helicopter manufacturing, and infrastructure, and recently it has also expressed a desire to cooperate in the area of biopharmaceuticals and information technology.

THE NEW BIPOLARITY that the US and China are seeking to establish worldwide is believed to be one of the biggest threats to the integrity of Latin America.

US policy in Latin America carries significant destabilizing potential. This policy supposedly aims to democratize Latin American countries and involves trying to impose neoliberal economic concepts on them, stimulate protectionist sentiments in them, and manipulate them politically.

China, for its part, has become a new global power center due to its rapid economic growth and is seeking to expand its sphere of influence in a bid to revive the "great Chinese nation," openly declaring this to be one of its foreign policy goals, and its increasing activity in Latin America is part of this policy.

In recent years, China has become one of the main economic partners of Latin American nations. China adheres to a strategy of "multifaceted pragmatism", which gives priority to economic considerations over political unity. It imports commodities from Latin America and in return offers manufactured goods, weapons, and technologies.

China is working on bilateral options for free trade, while Russia, for example, prefers to act through multinational organizations.

Both Russia and China are providing economic assistance to the increasingly isolated Venezuelan government of President Nicolás Maduro and continue to support Venezuela in the UN Security Council.

The independence and activity of Russian diplomacy and its ability to promptly react to political changes help Russia build effective relationships with Latin American countries.

The Western policy of anti-Russian sanctions with their secondary effects in the form of US financial regulators preventing Russia from carrying out dollar-based transactions has received no support from Latin American countries, and this enables Russia and Latin America to continue to build up trade and investment.

BESIDES facing external destabilizing pressure, Latin America is split from within, which at times carries the threat of conflict. Latin America has long been regarded as an arena for US struggles to form an ideologically homogeneous political landscape. The main targets of these struggles are Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, as the countries furthest from the US's proclaimed values.

THE CRISIS sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic has become another major trial for Latin America.

The pandemic has exacerbated many of Latin America's endemic social problems such as inequality and is causing further disintegration and dysfunction in Latin American countries already beset by problems such as government crises, public discontent, and economic decline.

The lessons of the pandemic should prompt Latin American countries to revise their current development models and develop new concepts for responding to challenges and threats.

The rapidly increasing scale of the disease and growing social tensions caused by extreme global and national uncertainties have coincided in Latin America with mounting public discontent with government policies. Public protests in the region have mainly been caused by a crisis of the neoliberal development model; economic decline; systemic corruption; unacceptably high social inequality; and numerous human rights violations.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that Russia ought to keep relations with Latin American countries on a pragmatic footing, considering not only objective social and geopolitical factors but also potential systemic crises from changes in Latin American societies due to new technologies and other factors. Russia must also constantly be on the lookout for economic, sociopolitical, and ideological shifts in Latin American countries that may arise from domestic or foreign challenges or threats. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov commented that Russia and Latin American countries discuss issues such as security, arms control, climate change, and new challenges and threats, including drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. He also said that Russia and Latin American nations are seeking synergies in multinational formats.

Political Poker in the Nuclear Age, or Bluff as Politics

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TRADITIONALLY, American elites have preferred poker to all other games of chance at the card table as a combination of cool calculation and bluff, psychological suppression of the opponent to the point that he folds his hand and leaves the table.

This can be accepted as true with certain reservations: In card games, bluff is acceptable and even profitable, while in politics, it is unacceptable and fraught with dangerous repercussions, especially in our era of new challenges, risks, and threats, when the knot of global contradictions has been tightened while the world has become more divided than ever.

There is an opinion in the expert community that the situation in the world today in many respects mirrors the events that led up to big international conflicts of the past: the same mushrooming and intertwining of contradictions of all types, including unexpected situations and contingencies (like the COVID pandemic that refuses to retreat), the steady increase in the number of “hot spots” in all corners of the world, and the growing trend of bloc confrontation amid placating rhetoric about approaching multipolarity. The world saw the same in the 1930s, when hopes for collective security did not halt preparations for another world war.

The “saddle point” concept in game theory refers to an unstable balance between the opposing sides. Disappointed, they have no option but to stick to it, since any action might give the opponent an advantage. Today, the world is in a state of “unstable balance”: Any rash use of force by one side or even a diplomatic error might send it into a tailspin.

The era of politicians formed during the Cold War is drawing to a close. It was followed by the short and unstable unipolar world period under the US aegis. So far, Western politicians cannot shake off their illusions about the “complete and final” victory of the liberal world order and soberly assess the new realities.

THE 21st century began as a far from simple period: The post-WWII world order had largely exhausted its potential and was replaced by a protracted crisis and the instability of the global system of international relations.

The US, despite obvious signs of fatigue and overstress, is not ready to relinquish its domination in the world and organize its diplomatic, military, and economic activities accordingly.

Today, China is now second after the US in terms of economic might and scientific and technological potential and is breathing down the US’s neck. It is especially successful in the high-tech sectors, the cornerstone of scientific and technological progress and the military. It took disoriented Washington some time to realize that, engrossed in the struggle against the Soviet Union and in pursuit of the advantages of globalization, it had missed a moment of strategic importance, giving China a chance to overcome its backwardness and assume the role of its main rival in world markets.

The US very skillfully and effectively acted as a balancing state in the interwar period. Having chosen the policy of “neutrality” and “noninterference,” it allowed events to follow their natural course and even aspired to the role of peacekeeper. But separated by two oceans from the main potential hotbeds of war, America was pushing the world in the desired direction using secret diplomacy methods.

World War II radically changed the balance of power in the world. Not only did the US (together with the USSR) take a leading position in the camp of the victor states, but it set the war machine in motion and created a mighty military-industrial complex that even President Eisenhower, hero of D-Day in Normandy, somewhat feared on account of its uncontrollability.

FOLLOWING the rise of China, an equally unpleasant surprise for Washington was Russia’s astoundingly swift revival after the collapse of the USSR and the restoration of its status as a great world power. Contrary to its expectations, Washington failed to add the weakened postSoviet Russia that had rejected the communist dogma to the orbit of East European countries totally dependent on the West.

For a long time, the West refused or, rather, did not want to believe, due to the previous drama in Sino-Soviet relations, that any rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing was possible. But the best minds, including Henry Kissinger, never ruled out the most improbable twists and turns of history. They acknowledged that the situation in the US-China-Russia triangle could change radically to the detriment of American interests, with Moscow-Beijing cooperation replacing the Washington-Beijing alliance.

Today, relations between Russia and China are developing on the basis of long-term strategic interests expected to extend far into a future in which the world order and international relations have been restructured to exclude the domination of individual powers or the military-political blocs that they set up and dominate.

Many experts in the West doubt a positive future for contacts between Russia and China, and some colleagues in Russia share their doubts. They warn Moscow against an active rapprochement policy due to alleged “unpredictability” or even “historically confirmed perfidy” of its potential partner. The purpose is clear: Washington has long regarded an “alliance between the bear and the dragon” a “nightmarish scenario” but has not yet determined what to do about it exactly, what political tactics should be chosen, and which objectives should be selected as absolute priorities.

So far, the situation inside the Beijing-Washington-Moscow triangle is fairly complicated. In the long term, it will hardly suit the White House. It seems that Washington overestimates the role of the ideological factor in relations among the three powers. Americans naïvely believe that post-Soviet Russia, having taken the road of capitalist restoration and deideologization of its foreign policy, has moved mentally closer to the US than to communist China and socialism.

IN SPIRIT if not in form, global affairs is gradually retreating to the times of ideological confrontation between two systems. At all times on the eve of their downfall, hegemony has demonstrated ideological stagnation; an inability to create new and appealing ideas, concepts, and symbols; and unwavering devotion to old and antiquated dogmas.

It seems that the American elite have not yet fully realized that the model of democracy as a “universal value” that the West imposes on the rest of the world has lost its initial shine and appeal. It has discredited itself in both domestic and foreign policy. As an institution of governance, it can no longer cope with new challenges in extreme conditions, just as the liberal democratic order proved unable to cope with the Nazi aggression against France and brought Great Britain to the brink of capitulation.

Today, in a far more complicated mosaic of political contradictions, intertwined rivalries, and tactical (“selective”) cooperation among the great powers inherited from the past, Washington’s political calculations are no longer secret and hardly fit contemporary realities. “History never repeats itself, but it does often rhyme,” as the astute Mark Twain once noted. What worked in the past does not necessarily work in different times, with different heroes and antiheroes, and under different historical circumstances.

In Europe, the stake on “independent Ukraine” as “anti-Russia” failed; it spawned a deep European crisis that intensified centrifugal trends in the EU and significantly undermined its economic ties with Moscow. The regime in Kiev turned out to be much more inventive than expected: It is not ready to put its head in a noose without first getting an absolution in the form of the desired NATO membership. Washington, however, intends to continue to support Ukraine, including militarily, creating problems for Russia in order to make it more pliant on other issues. After 2014, Washington’s military aid to Kiev has reached \$2.5 billion.

WHILE in Europe the military-political situation remains on the brink of “a bad peace,” which of course is better than “a good war,” in the Middle East, where terrorists in Syria were routed and the Assad regime remained in power, tension is gradually subsiding. Today, the region is living in a protracted political settlement while, judging by numerous indicators, the center of world contradictions is quickly moving to Asia. The region is teeming with “combustible material” and unresolved problems. This means that very soon, old conflicts will be revived, and new ones will be created. According to certain experts, the future of the world order and the statuses of the US and China as the main rivals will be settled in Asia. This brings to mind the already mentioned Thucydides Trap, in which both Sparta and Athens, driven by imaginary fears, found themselves.

The gradually consolidating quasi-state cooperation between Washington and Taipei that violates the “one China, two systems” principle that the US and Taiwan officially support (in the Three Communiqués) and the growing supplies of military equipment to Taiwan (to the tune of \$755 million under Biden) are expected to provoke China.

Today, the situation in the South China Sea, where the territorial interests of China clash with the interests of some of its neighbors, instigated by the US, is especially dangerous and fraught with armed conflict.

FOR RUSSIA, the outlined prospects in world politics open new possibilities but do not exclude great risks. In the turbulent, contradictory, and unpredictable world, Moscow is acting with caution and discretion, exhibiting moderation and self-control rather than ambition, conceit, and pretentious resolve.

It seems that the West does not fully take into account the fact that today, many years after the Great Patriotic War, the memory of it includes not only respect for the immortal feat of those who won the war, but also the lessons of Stalin’s miscalculations on its eve and the firm resolve to avoid such errors, even if we have to use extreme (retaliatory) means, including nuclear force, as a response to aggression and threats to the country’s continued existence.

Many countries still believe in America’s almightiness. They are ready to accept, very much as before, Washington’s “arrogance of power,” to borrow the term of Senator William Fulbright, an ardent critic of the Vietnam War. Not everyone can separate the political bluff of the weakening hegemon from new realities.

New Trends in the Formation of an International Information Security System in Asia

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THE HISTORY of international relations has seen many examples of nations that, on the verge of tectonic geopolitical shifts, followed a “bloc mentality” and sought to create alliances against third countries. Moscow, however, in accordance with its centuries-old traditions of diplomacy, has always acted contrary to such trends and preferred alliances aimed at development and ensuring peace and stability, refraining from interfering in the affairs of other sovereign countries or undermining their national foundations. In making that choice, Russia was guided not only and not so much by the nobility of its intentions, but primarily by the principles of realpolitik – namely, practical considerations of uniting as many countries as possible to effectively tackle common challenges and threats.

Today, those threats and challenges are increasingly measured neither by the size of the military of individual countries nor by the number of nuclear warheads they possess. Geopolitics is moving into the virtual space, and not even the most militarily powerful countries – to say nothing of small developing ones – can overcome the invisible enemy alone.

We are talking about the constantly increasing threats and challenges to international information security (IIS). The entire global community is aware of the seriousness of threats in the information space and is calling for this problem to be addressed at the global level.

At the same time, certain countries, despite their declarations of support for global IIS efforts, initiate discussions on this issue on closed platforms, making unfounded accusations against other states.

The policy of a number of Western countries in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years, which also bears a clear mark of confrontation, looks alien from the standpoint of global trends to unite to combat threats to the IIS.

The US and its allies do not limit themselves to theory. This year, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (also known as the Quad), based on the “Indo-Pacific strategies” of the aforementioned quartet and aimed primarily at containing Chinese influence in the region, received additional reinforcement.

The Quad Leaders’ Joint Statement outlines the main fields of cooperation between the four countries, including the promotion of universal values in cyberspace, countering cyber threats to critical information infrastructure, and training specialists. It is significant that the latter are promised support and sponsorship but are assigned the very specific task of ensuring information security in the Quad countries and their allied nations, which again emphasizes its exclusive format (in contrast to inclusive mechanisms like those centered on ASEAN).

The main goal of Russia’s IIS policy is to promote the establishment of an international legal regime that would create conditions for preventing international conflicts in the global information space. To achieve that goal, we must enhance cooperation at the global, regional, multilateral, and bilateral levels between our country and other nations on the formation of a global information security system.

With regard to combating criminal uses of ICT, a real breakthrough was the launch, on Russia’s initiative, of an absolutely new global negotiating track: a Special Committee tasked with elaborating, under UN auspices, a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes.

Russia’s IIS policy at the regional level, including the Asia-Pacific region, is a direct continuation of its inclusive approaches that involve all stakeholders at the global level. Let’s take a closer look at Russia’s work on IIS in the Asia-Pacific region, which is gradually becoming the center of not just economic but also political activity.

In addition, two areas of cooperation were established in 2020 on Russia’s initiative and with the support of the ASEAN countries: a discussion on ICT terminology and combating cybercrime. Thus, in April 2021, Russia, Vietnam, and China hosted a seminar on combating the criminal use of ICT, and in January 2021, Russia and Cambodia carried out a study of specialized terminology in the ARF member countries.

Russia is also initiating new IIS cooperation mechanisms with the 10 ASEAN members.

Moscow is also interested in developing bilateral IIS cooperation with foreign partners in the Asia-Pacific region. It is important to us that this dialogue is conducted in an open and constructive manner.

More and more nations are becoming aware of the need for closer cooperation on IIS issues and are expressing interest in creating a joint legal framework for such cooperation.

Russia by no means disputes the right of individual states to choose their allies or sign security agreements, but it supports and advocates the idea of all countries developing their policies in a way that avoids strengthening bloc mentality and escalating tensions in the information space of the Asia-Pacific region. As President Vladimir Putin said in an interview with CNBC regarding the AUKUS agreement: “It’s good to be friends, but it’s bad to be friends against someone”.

Reasons for the Growth of Salafism

Alexey Podtserob, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary*; podtserob@yandex.ru

RECENTLY, the Islamic world has seen the growth of fundamentalism – an extreme form of Islamism that rejects democracy as such and uproots it wherever it sprouts. Some Salafist organizations are limited and local, some rely on outside support, while others are broad in scope and span the entire Muslim world. Analysis of the activities of Islamist organizations is complicated by the fact that unrelated groups often operate within their framework. Salafis number about 50 million worldwide and are active in 80 countries. However, it should be noted that Salafi jihadists number no more than 10 million, which is just 1% of the world's Muslims.

At the same time, the economic hardship facing many Muslims in combination with the development of modern means of communication increases the number of religious extremists in general and Salafist extremists in particular. A significant role in this process is played by the growing number of religious preachers who are experts at using modern technological and psychological means of propaganda and who adeptly use their expertise and influence to spread extremist views among young people. Among them are both fanatics and “Father Gapon” types who gain political clout and considerable capital doing this. The Iranian Islamic Revolution demonstrated back in 1979 the capability of the Islamic faith to mobilize bigger crowds than any political movement could.

Of course, most Salafist extremists are poor people who don't care where they go as long as they get paid. They are essentially mercenaries who don't care which ideology they support. But there are still reasons why the middle class and the elite, the urban poor and the underprivileged choose fundamentalism.

The revivalists' activities are aimed at establishing control over trade unions, ministries of education and information, and television. Salafis seize mosques or open new ones to spread their propaganda of fundamentalist ideas.

In the meantime, public consciousness had difficulty responding to the challenges of modernization, ongoing class division, the breakdown of tribal structures, the dramatic growth of inequality, corruption in the upper echelons of power, and the introduction of elements of Western culture alien to local residents. Ethnic, political, and religious conflicts; acute social problems; poverty; and the collapse of the education system were superimposed on traditional views on life and morality.

Fundamentalists are guided by the following principles: strict monotheism; refusal to submit to spiritual or secular authorities that have not been recognized by Salafis; widespread use of takfir (accusations of unbelief); strict rationalism and literalism in the implementation of the provisions of the Koran and the Sunnah; dissemination of the faith through brutal violence; fascination with external manifestations of religiosity; opposition to innovation; and universal equality in the Ummah (Islamic religious community). They reject both taqlid (loyalty to traditions) and ijtihad (the possibility of [independent] theological interpretation of Islam). Fundamentalists emphasize the obligation of believers to follow the five pillars of Islam: worship of the one God, prayer five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramadan, zakat (obligatory tax required of Muslims), and pilgrimage to Mecca.

In principle, fundamentalists propose a return to the Middle Ages in its worst form. They do, however, make exceptions for some innovations: modern weapons and technical equipment, including computers and cars.

No other interpretations of jihad exist for fundamentalists. To them, jihad is war against infidels, whom they consider not only adherents of other religions, but also Muslims who do not subscribe to their views and, in particular, do not follow the four schools of Islamic law. Hence their propensity for violence and desire to revive the caliphate or build an Islamic state.

Salafis comment that Western influence and Muslims who fall under it pose the greatest danger to Muslims. Contemporary fundamentalists blame the West for colonizing Islamic countries and instilling in them values that directly contradict the Koran and the Sunnah. Jihadist activity is gaining more and more momentum. Fundamentalists believe that the holy war should target heads of state, law-enforcement agencies, and all Muslims who refuse to support Salafis. Jihad is becoming a threat to those who are far from disagreements about the nature of true Islam. Mass killings and terrorist acts against innocent civilians, kidnappings for ransom, slavery, and drug and weapons trafficking have become common in today's world.

Salafis represent an active segment of the population, and information about their acts is spread all around the world thanks to the availability and adroit use of advanced communication technology.

Nevertheless, fundamentalists remain a minority in the Islamic world. Most of the population adheres to reformationist, liberal provisions of Islam. Adherents of this version of Islam advocate the adaptation of Islam to modernity and the formation of a national bourgeoisie and capitalist relations.

Unfortunately, there are no grounds to doubt that the killing of Muslims and the colonization of territories will continue, that there will still be underdevelopment, economic backwardness, poverty, misery, illiteracy, despair, social and political problems, cultural degradation, ideas of national humiliation, and dissatisfaction with leaders. All this serves as a breeding ground for Salafism, which means that the threat of terrorist attacks orchestrated by fundamentalists will persist.

Some Results of the Implementation of EU Maritime Policy in 2021

Marina Kolesnikova, *research associate, Department of Black Sea and Mediterranean Studies, Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences; kml2007@mail.ru*

THE EUROPEAN UNION is actively involved in developing the world ocean. Today, it positions itself not only as a consumer of "ocean resources," but also as a leader of sustainable development and a "global actor" playing an independent role in shaping the system of international ocean governance.

Over the past 15 to 20 years, Brussels has developed several initiatives directly or indirectly related to maritime issues.

AMONG the six European Commission priorities for 2019-2024 is the Green Deal. It is essentially a road map aimed at decarbonizing the EU economies by 2050. The EU believes that implementing this framework will reshape the way energy is produced and consumed in the EU. Analysis of the goals set by Brussels leads to the conclusion that the Green Deal will bring changes to fields unrelated to energy resources.

The EU believes that new digital solutions will serve as the basis of reforms. ... One European financial instrument focused on the development of digital technologies is the Digital Europe Program. It is designed to be synergistic with other programs, including the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund, a key European program for financing projects in the marine sector, including international ocean governance commitments.

IN 2021, the EU focused its efforts on adjusting the Blue Economy development strategy to ensure its sustainability as a factor in implementing the Green Deal [17:2]. This may imply, first, stricter regulations on ocean use. In particular, the EU does not rule out introducing additional measures to reduce the carbon footprint of maritime activities – for example, the extension of the EU Emissions Trading System to maritime transport.

The application of modern forms of marine management such as marine spatial planning, together with reliance on digital technologies for monitoring compliance with environmental standards, will enable the EU to personalize access to marine resources, water bodies, and ecosystem services.

THE EU pays special attention to the fishing industry, and 2021 was no exception. EU fisheries are regulated by the Common Fisheries Policy (reformed in 2013), which is a main component of the EU's maritime policy. In 2021, Brussels focused on improving the EU fisheries control system, including a digital transition. Such measures are logical, since control functions should become a key factor ensuring the sustainability of food systems. Initially, a proposal to revise this system was put forward by the European Commission in 2018, followed by its approval in March 2021 by the European Parliament Committee on Fisheries.

The EU pays considerable attention to region-tailored maritime policies. Comprehensive framework programs developed at the regional level are one example of an integrated approach.

BRUSSELS aims to achieve compliance with sustainable development principles, which essentially involves introducing new environmental regulations for its marine industry and monitoring their compliance. Currently, the EU's main efforts are focused on creating conditions for the sustainable development of fisheries (based on a Common Fishing Policy), the Blue Economy, and the aquaculture sector.

The EU considers the transition to a sustainable Blue Economy essential to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal. At the same time, achieving the sustainable development goals of select marine industries is becoming an independent area that may become a factor determining the EU's economic image and competitiveness.

Contemporary Integration Processes in the Post-Soviet Space (Part 1)

The 12th International Conference in Yalta, Republic of Crimea, October 26-27, 2021, was organized by the journal International Affairs with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Session 1

30 Years Since the Parade of Sovereignties in the Former Soviet Republics

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

DEAR FRIENDS and colleagues, This is the 12th time that Russian and foreign political and public figures, scholars, journalists, and businesspeople are meeting here in Yalta for the conference "Contemporary Integration Processes in the Post-Soviet Space" to discuss current problems and processes that concern each and every country that used to be part of the Soviet Union.

This time, the agenda is very full. We will talk about information processes, security issues, and our shared history, as well as attempts to rewrite it. But the conference's key, unifying theme will be the

30th anniversary of the signing of the Belovezha Accords and consequently the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the parade of sovereignties. The three decades lived in the new reality allow us to assess the current situation in the post-Soviet space.

To the Organizers and Attendees of the 12th International Conference “Contemporary Integration Processes in the Post-Soviet Space”

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

I CORDIALLY welcome the organizers and attendees of the 12th Yalta International Conference.

Over the course of its more than 10-year history, the forum has evolved as a much needed, important discussion platform, bringing together reputable representatives of public, political, expert, and academic circles, as well as media outlets from Russia and a number of other countries. Your work, aimed at forming a comprehensive understanding of complex international processes, is laudable.

I am pleased to say that the agenda of this meeting is, as usual, a very full one. You will address a wide range of topical issues affecting the situation in the post-Soviet space – from international information security to the situation around Afghanistan.

You will also focus on such important historical dates as the 80th anniversary of the start of the Great Patriotic War and the 30th anniversary of the collapse of the USSR and the creation of the CIS. A depoliticized discussion of the past serves as a reliable guarantee against the misunderstanding of a shared history.

I am convinced that, as usual, the conference will take place in a friendly atmosphere and allow participants to establish mutually beneficial contacts and, of course, appreciate the beauty and hospitality of Russian Crimea.

I wish you productive discussions and all the very best.

Sergey Aksyonov, *Head of the Republic of Crimea*

IT IS an honor for Crimea to host the annual forum of the journal International Affairs. It is a laboratory for analyzing international events, primarily in the space of historical Russia.

Tavrida has always been a birthplace for new, creative ideas with significance for the fate of the Russian World. It has become an integration point, a starting point in the formation of our common civilizational space.

This is where numerous events in search of solutions to the most complicated global problems take place.

We hope that the Crimean land will inspire you to come up with breakthrough ideas for creating a new, reliable world order, which is an urgent and highly relevant task for humankind.

I sincerely wish you strength, energy, and creative drive in addressing these tasks, and good health and well-being to you and your families in these difficult times.

Grigory Rapota, *Member of the Russian Federation Council's International Affairs Committee*

FOLLOWING THE breakup of the USSR, we, all states, all former Soviet republics, became absolutely confused – utterly at a loss about how to go on, how to interact, how to coexist. We faced some very difficult questions, such as what to do with the nuclear weapons that were located on the territory of the Russian Federation and elsewhere, as well as what to do about the cooperative links that had evolved over the course of decades between former Soviet republics, their cultural ties, and the system of education that had been used in all schools across the former Soviet Union.

I believe that the decision to create the CIS – even if it was not entirely clear what kind of association it would be – demonstrated a desire to preserve all the good, main, and vital elements that existed in relations between the union republics.

When we deal with matters related to developing the Customs Union or the single economic space, we thoroughly analyze and compare our documents to know what the situation is like in partner organizations. In the Union State, we need to know exactly what the situation is in the Eurasian Economic Union, and vice versa.

Recently, a plan was approved to sign 28 road maps or programs under the Union State. Many of their provisions (such as coordination of industrial and economic policies and the creation of a single energy and transit space, among others) are pilot projects of sorts for the EAEU, and the success of integration in the EAEU will to a very large extent depend on the success of integration in the Union State.

Mikhail Yevdokimov, *Director of the First CIS Department of the Ministry of Foreign Ministry Affairs of the Russian Federation*

As a follow-up to Sergey Lavrov's message of greeting, I would like to reiterate that 2021 was full of various events and landmark dates, including the 30th anniversary of the disintegration of the USSR and the creation of the CIS, and the 80th anniversary of the start of the Great Patriotic War, among others. The memory of lessons from history that we lived through together is extremely important for preserving and enhancing mutual understanding among the former union republics that emerged from a common Soviet past.

History has clearly shown that we can become competitive in the world arena only if we restore the ties that were broken in the 1990s, and do so on a new, equal and mutually beneficial foundation. The CIS has become one such foundation. Over the past 30 years, it has advanced from a so-called "civilized divorce tool" to a universal platform for wide-ranging, comprehensive cooperation and a relevant international organization playing a key role in building a regional system of cooperation among its member states.

It is important to note that no regional international organization has such a powerful institutional and legal basis for its activity as the CIS. Since it was founded, the CIS has adopted 2,650 documents, 1,750 of which are still in force.

Meetings of the Council of CIS Foreign Ministers and the Council of CIS Heads of State were held in Minsk 10 days ago, also in the context of 30th anniversary of the CIS. The CIS leaders summed up the results of cooperation within the organization and defined priorities for the future.

In order to strengthen the foreign policy coordination of CIS member countries, the CIS heads of state issued several statements in connection with the 30th anniversary of the CIS – in particular, on cooperation in ensuring biological security and cooperation on migration.

A decision was made to create an international association (commission) of historians and archivists from CIS member countries to counter attempts to distort history.

In recent months, the security issue has acquired new urgency due to the rapid turn of events in Afghanistan and the resulting threats to CIS countries – and not just to the countries directly bordering it.

For the past 30 years, CIS countries have been successfully combating terrorism, organized crime, corruption, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and arms smuggling.

It is extremely significant that along with strengthening its defense capability, the CSTO is creating conditions for collectively advancing shared political interests in the world arena, as evidenced by the successful coordination of our countries' efforts at the UN, the OSCE, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), where we are jointly upholding our shared national values and approaches to addressing current international peace and security issues.

It is essential that our countries keep up the pace of multilateral interaction.

Georgy Muradov, *Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Republic of Crimea, the Crimean Republic's Permanent Representative to the President of Russia*

I WOULD LIKE to respond to the comment that we are moving from a civilized divorce to a civilizational divorce and propose that we call the post-Soviet space the space of historical Russia. This definition is already catching on. Regarding the remark by Grigory Rapota, a wise and experienced man who has intimate knowledge of the events of the early 1990s, I have to say that I was struck by his assessment of the leaders of the three Union republics, who with their own hands produced that nuclear explosion in our state, tearing it apart, and that we were at a loss over what they did. I generally share that assessment. After all, despite endless negotiations, a unified and structured integration system – reintegration in our historical space – has failed to materialize. I will now move on to the subject of my presentation.

I would like to say right off the bat that regarding the current situation, I have more questions than answers, which is quite natural. We are still at a crossroads.

First, I would like to thank Armen Oganessian for consistently holding for 12 straight years a conference that is invaluable from an analytical, political, and informational perspective and is dedicated to studying tectonic processes in the historical Russian space.

Enough time has passed to assess the current post-Soviet configuration and analyze the emerging trends, as well as to consider the various development scenarios in the formation of a new world order.

I was already old enough to remember everything that happened back then very well. The new authorities sought to have us believe that the question of partitioning the Union was not on the table. Only the form of allied relations would change [they claimed].

At the same time, there was high demand for changes in society, which influenced the public mood and created the impression that everything was being done correctly.

In dialogue with European institutions, in which I also had an opportunity to participate, we were assured that the Baltic countries would adopt high European democratic standards without fail: Respect for the rights of ethnic minorities, their languages, culture, and education would help neutralize the policy that we now call the "shameful policy of noncitizenship." It soon became clear that those assurances were yet another deception designed to cover up the military-political and economic expansion of the EU and NATO in the post-Soviet space.

Similar trends prevailed in the early 1990s in Georgia and Moldova. However, they almost immediately led to armed conflicts.

Alarming turbulent trends are growing in Central Asia. The local ethnocracy is fueling anti-Russian sentiments in Kazakhstan, which still has a sizeable [ethnic] Russian population (about 25%), especially in the north, west, and east.

Clearly, the ideological drift by [political] elites in a number of Central Asian states that are embracing the concept of building a Great Turan also poses a danger to the Russian World. With encouragement from [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan, this trend is steadily gaining momentum, and his inspirational leadership is strongly affecting the countries of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. Ankara is successfully promoting its ideology of new pan-Turkism.

Which is prevailing right now: integration or degradation of the postSoviet space? Considering the splits and breakups of many of the former Soviet republics, as well as the fact that [integration] processes are far from complete, I believe that the latter trend seems to be prevailing.

So far, there is only one example of successful and full-fledged integration in the post-Soviet period. It took place seven years ago. I am referring to Crimea's reunification with Russia.

In conclusion, I would like to recall that Russian President Vladimir Putin has described the Russian people as the largest divided nation. It should also be noted that the Russian people are separated from their country along with a significant portion of the historical land on which they have been living. Addressing this problem is of principal importance for Russia, especially if the threat of ethnic cleansing continues to grow.

Is there any hope of restoring our traditional civilizational family? In recent years, countries have emerged – not without outside influence – that have opted for a nontraditional civilizational orientation. Banderovite Ukraine and Georgia have left their traditional family – the Eastern [Orthodox] Christian civilization that has evolved over centuries. Is there any hope of bringing them back into the fold? Humankind, the community of individuals, and the international community all live according to the same laws. Once trends encouraging people's nontraditional orientation have emerged, they will be extrapolated to the international level. [Such people] would need long-term, wide-ranging help and assistance to return to the traditional way of life. However, from all appearances, opposition, including from the outside, would be fierce.

The world has entered a new era of radical transformation. Its current phase is offering us no idea yet about the course of our future development. Unsurprisingly, several of the questions that I raised earlier have remained unanswered. The answers cannot be formulated in haste, but it is also unacceptable to waste time dilly-dallying. This especially applies to our Eurasian civilizational home, where traditional values still prevail.

Vladislav Deynego, *Foreign Minister of the Lugansk People's Republic (Ukraine)*

A thorough analysis of this subject would make it possible to achieve practical results and resolve the current conflict. When it proclaimed itself to be an independent state, Ukraine declared certain postulates: a nonbloc status and a nonnuclear status. Then a trend emerged toward the destruction of those postulates, primarily by deviating from the "nonbloc status": The Ukrainian Constitution clearly states the country's aspiration to join NATO.

Ukraine's current authorities are raising the issue of restoring Ukraine's nuclear capability – to use it as a club, as an argument in discussions with Russia. And these discussions are far from abstract, but concern

primarily the issue of Crimea's sovereignty, its reunification with the Russian Federation, and the situation that is evolving in the Donbass.

Regarding the Donetsk Basin, the situation is extremely complicated. The domestic conflict emerged long before the Lugansk and Donetsk people's republics (DPR/LPR) proclaimed their sovereignty. So it is necessary to decide which prevails in the recognition of a people's right to self-determination – the territorial integrity of a state or the right to national identity.

International law is practically nonexistent today. Instead, there is the law of force, the law of declaring one's will and imposing it on those around, those who cannot object. We are talking now about the parade of sovereignties. Who really has the right of sovereignty today? Such countries can be counted on the fingers of one hand: the US, the Russian Federation, and China. Turkey took a bold step in that direction. With regard to NATO, Russia has clearly asserted its right to sovereignty to the fullest possible extent.

The concept of sovereignty for small countries exists only in cooperation with those countries that can help them exercise this right. The US is not performing that function. It takes advantage of the situation not to support other countries, but to derive some benefit from these relations. In other words, it is interested in providing such support only if it can be monetized – not literally, but figuratively. That was what happened to Afghanistan: The US lost interest and [Afghanistan] was left in the lurch. Then a conflict broke out, but that is a separate topic.

In recent years, Ukraine has relied not on the export potential of its production, but on the fact that a significant number of Ukrainian citizens have left Ukraine, sending remittances to their families, ensuring hard currency revenues. However, Ukraine's trade balance shows that the situation is almost critical.

Ukraine's degradation, its degeneration, which began when the state refused to perform its functions in part of the country's territory, is currently spreading to almost the whole territory. Ukraine is unable to perform state functions, among other things, due to a lack of qualified personnel, a lack of a clear-cut stance, and most importantly, a lack of self-dependence. IMF loans are being used to dictate to Ukraine what it should do. Remember the dismissal of the prosecutor general? It was an "exchange" for yet another IMF tranche.

Russia is taking the next step. Several such steps have been taken. The most important is the opportunity for people living in the Donbass republics to acquire Russian citizenship. There are already more than 650,000 Russian citizens in the Donbass. By making this decision, these people have demonstrated their intention and readiness to integrate with the Russian Federation. They made a decision that was unequivocal and self-evident to them. Now they are Russian citizens. Nevertheless, they continue to live in the Donbass, the land that raised them and is close to them and that they are ready to defend by force.

I don't want these republics to remain long in their current state. A solution must be found.

Nikolay Mezhevich, *Head of the Center for Belarusian Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Europe, President of the Association of Baltic Studies*

Vladimir Shamakhov, *Director of the Northwest Institute of Management, Russian President's Academy of National Economy and Public Administration*

THREE DECADES since the end of the USSR also marks the 30th anniversary of the so-called transformation race. All former Soviet republics, including the Baltic countries, have shown some common development trends despite formally different, multivector transformation models. Over time,

“post-Sovietness” ceased to be self-evident and now needs thorough analysis. We believe that there are at least three views on the concept of the “post-Soviet space”:

1. There is no “post-Soviet space.” There are independent and fully sovereign countries that were once part of one state and are now free to choose their own economic and political integration vector.
2. Their prolonged coexistence as USSR republics predetermined common trends in the future states’ development, as well as their similar cultural, social, and economic values. This does not negate the diverse and multivector nature of their development trends. Despite their obvious national specifics and peculiarities, post-Soviet states have many common features, as well as many common problems associated with the evolution and strengthening of their statehood.
3. The third approach recognizes the objective nature of the post-Soviet space and its theoretical and practical value for years to come, while also acknowledging the significant economic, political, and ideological changes that have taken place over the past 30 years.

We proceed from the premise that the post-Soviet space objectively exists, even where this fact is denied de jure. The current development of Lithuania, Turkmenistan, Russia, and Armenia is strongly influenced by their Soviet past.

Obviously, post-Soviet integration has already passed through the most difficult stage. Emerging during the absolute domination of decentralization trends, it has gone through the period of uncritically embracing globalization and now has a chance to succeed in the context of new regionalization at the start of the third decade of the 21st century.

The establishment of the CIS offered long-term opportunities to accumulate and develop resources to address the most complex problems in all sovereign member states. At the same time, “as a result of the abundance of legally nonbinding bilateral agreements, along with the systematic use of exceptions and the intergovernmental nature of integration, the CIS not only failed to transform into a real economic association with a high level of integration and elements of supranational governance, but it also prevented the development of a genuine political alliance within its framework,”¹ as Lithuanian experts rightly observed.

Both political and economic conditions existed for integration. Economic instability alone could have stimulated integration, but it was combined with political volatility and an inadequate perception of key global development trends. Furthermore, regardless of the viability of the USSR as a federative institution, it was certainly not an optimal disintegration model. The aggravation of interstate relations and territorial and ethnic conflicts for a long time precluded integration at any level, except perhaps for joint public debates.

The CIS was not an artificial form of association. Its development concept was formulated, and an effective mechanism for interaction between member countries was created. The CIS is a full-fledged international organization of a consultative nature; it is recognized by the UN, and the CIS Charter is registered at the UN Secretariat.

What was most illogical from the standpoint of economic and political theory was the desire to ensure real sovereignty amid a qualitative, not just quantitative, economic decline, but that was precisely what happened in the 1990s. At that time, complete sovereignty was a priority not only for the independent republics, but also for Russia.

It should be recalled that the USSR was originally created as an integration project and positioned itself as such for decades. Its termination, regardless of the causes, cast a shadow on any post-Soviet integration project. It would take time for integration not to be perceived as something other than building a USSR 2.0.

POST-SOVIET INTEGRATION is the process of continually accumulating experience and learning lessons. Starting a new stage of integration with the Customs Union was a logical decision.

In 2003, an attempt was made to involve Ukraine in integration processes. On September 19, 2003, at the Yalta summit, the heads of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on creating a single economic space. The document provided for an array of measures to create a single economic space. A total of about 50 treaties were to be signed. A concept for creating a single economic space was approved. However, in early 2005, Ukraine steered a course toward integration with the EU and NATO. Unfortunately, as is known, all subsequent attempts to build relations with Ukraine came to naught.

The highest form of integration in the post-Soviet space was achieved under the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union, signed on May 29, 2014, by the presidents of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. It is an international organization for regional economic integration, an entity under international law, and the most successful and forward-looking integration project.

Over the past years, the situation in the world has drastically changed. The changes in the last 30 years have affected all areas of public life, including the economy and international relations. Classical globalization is over. China has become a great power. Brexit, Syria, the Ukrainian impasse, IMF reform, and US [presidential] elections have greatly compounded economic and political uncertainty. The US remained the largest power, but no longer the only one. The forecast of our colleagues at the Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO) proved correct: "If Russia holds out until 2020, and if all attempts by its opponents do not lead to an economic collapse, chaos, and the country's disintegration, then it will be safe to say that Western dominance has come to an end, and international relations have officially entered a new era." That is exactly what happened.

The Eastern Partnership showed that the idea of EU integration was a direct alternative to post-Soviet integration in the post-Soviet space, and so the structure, organization, and reorganization of the post-Soviet legacy is no longer the exclusive concern of the "sovereign countries" in the post-Soviet space.

THE POLITICAL and economic institutions historically established in the post-Soviet space, primarily within the western perimeter, as if in some kind of fantasy world, quickly acquired a classic Euro-Atlantic form while retaining their Soviet and post-Soviet trappings. In the post-Soviet countries, the political class has been institutionalized in the form of a nomenklatura, and the multiparty system has been displaced by a quasi-party. Difficulties with genuine democracy in Europe arose after decades, if not centuries of successful development. However, democracy came to the post-Soviet space in form only, without its precious substance.

It should be noted that integration models in the post-Soviet space were not difficult to predict. The first scenario (a negative one) assumed disintegration – controlled or uncontrolled. That strategy envisioned former Soviet republics entering the global economic and political space on the "each on their own" principle, without meaningful integration projects. The second scenario, which allowed for comparatively rapid economic and even political integration in the post-Soviet space (without the Baltic countries, of course), was unlikely for objective reasons.

Finally, post-Soviet integration is not about restoring the USSR in one form or another, but about developing economic and political cooperation in part of a previously existing state.

Vladimir Morozov, *Associate Professor, Department of Diplomacy, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Science (History)*

In mid-October 2021, the main topic of Central Asian media was an October 15 CIS summit in connection with the 30th anniversary of the CIS. The summit paid a great deal of attention to security issues, including threats that the situation in Afghanistan poses to the Central Asian states. Television in the Central Asian countries provided detailed coverage of this topic and cited the positions on this new threat that state leaders made at the meeting. Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon slammed the Taliban, accusing it of being a threat to Central Asia as a whole. Some leaders, in particular Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, called for establishing stable contacts with the Taliban. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan offered to give Afghanistan humanitarian aid. Russian President Vladimir Putin recommended that the CIS should not hasten to recognize the Taliban.

Security has become an especially acute issue for Central Asia due to the threats that emerged after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan. There are arguably three main types of threats. The first is the possibility of militants physically crossing the border from Afghanistan into Central Asia. The second includes ideological influence and terrorist sleeper cells in Central Asian countries. And the third is the drug trafficking problem.

Russian experts comment that the Taliban, which has been designated a terrorist group by the UN and various countries and is banned in Russia, is not the only reason for the alarming situation in Afghanistan. Another reason is Islamic State (IS), another organization banned in Russia. It is estimated that today there are more than 2,000 IS militants in Afghanistan. It is also important to note that conflicts exist between the Taliban and IS, and these make it difficult to predict how the situation will evolve.

There are two sets of issues that need to be addressed separately: the involvement of internal and external players in Central Asian affairs, and intraregional conflicts. One form of outside involvement is the role of Russia. Another is interference by the US, the EU, China, and Turkey, which the OSCE Program Office believes may hinder the region's development.

China and Turkey are pursuing an active foreign policy in Central Asia. While China, which is involved mainly in infrastructure projects in the region, is seen strictly as an economic actor in Central Asia and thus raises no apprehension among specialists living and working there, Turkey's growing presence in Central Asia is fueling great concerns because of the "Great Turan" initiative – the idea, mainly advocated by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, that Turkey should bring together all Turkic peoples under its wing (the Turkic nations of Central Asia being Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan). This stirs fears in Kyrgyzstan, because its government has been spending a lot on secondary and higher education for decades. Ordinary people eagerly send their children to a nationwide network of schools that provide completely free education and full board. People who were educated during the Soviet era and can speak Russian are afraid that an inactive Russian position in the region, including with regard to Central Asian education systems, could lead to a shift of emphasis.

Attitudes toward the OSCE in Central Asia are mixed but mainly negative. Rogov confirmed that the OSCE played a minimal role in the most recent conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for example. Both countries rejected an offer from the OSCE to mediate the conflict.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that Russia has every opportunity to take advantage of the situation that has developed in Central Asia against the backdrop of threats emanating from Afghanistan and to take the lead in unifying the Central Asian countries to tackle external threats.

From the viewpoint of information security and monitoring radicalization, Russia should consider cooperating with China as a digitization leader in Central Asia.

Hayk Babukhanyan, *Member of the Second, Fifth, and Sixth National Assemblies of the Republic of Armenia, Chairman, Constitutional Rights Union (CRU), Executive Committee member, "A Strong Armenia with Russia: For a New Union" movement, co-founder, International Association of Eurasian Civilization (Armenia)*

IN THE LATE 1980s, a group of historians tasked with creating a negative image of the USSR, its Army, way of life, and achievements was formed under the direction of Alexander Yakovlev, member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The country's press, television, and publishers were required to renounce the glorious traditions of the Fatherland and its heroic history, which began to be painted in dark colors. The Soviet people were induced to develop an inferiority complex, to feel shame for their history, way of life, and value system, and to worship the West.

After the defeat in the Cold War, the new "democratic totalitarianism" regimes established in the post-Soviet countries provided ample opportunities for the active injection into these countries of totalitarian sects, foreign controlled destructive nongovernmental organizations, and various promoters of so-called "minorities," coupled with infiltration by intelligence agencies from unfriendly states. Propaganda of "market values" and the Western lifestyle, rejection of the spiritual and moral foundations of traditional society, and a revision of history and educational programs, combined with massive financial injections designed to form a "new citizen," led to the emergence of not only a fifth, but also a sixth column in these countries, as Sorosist ideology penetrated all government and social structures. Everything Soviet was presented as a vestige of a shameful past that was backward, totalitarian, and uncivilized.

Another postulate for the ideological brainwashing of the population (especially young people) in the post-Soviet republics and even in some republics of the Russian Federation was that all negative or supposedly negative aspects of pre-Soviet and Soviet history were associated with Russia, which had allegedly imposed them on the countries and peoples it had "colonized."

In the 1990s and early 2000s, any attempt to take a critical look at the Westernizing ideological clichés led to the marginalization of political forces or public figures who questioned the indisputable Western values. Patriotic forces finally managed through great effort to shatter the idols of totalitarian "Western democratic" dogmatism as an object of worship, so that the public in our countries currently regard neo-Western values as questionable and many consider them totally unacceptable. Nevertheless, the enemy's ideological doctrine has taken root in the hearts and minds of the younger generation.

That unhealthy atmosphere is what facilitated the "color revolutions" in several CIS and Eastern European countries (in 2018 in Armenia). The whole post-Soviet space now lies on a huge geopolitical and ideological fault line: Western technologies have achieved their goal.

As a result, the post-Soviet space continues to see wars, conflicts, revolutions, coups, and a steadily increasing number of unresolved national and territorial issues, none of which has been settled conclusively in the past 30 years. Communications remain blocked, infrastructure is crumbling, and economic development is stalling.

The demographic situation is a cause for concern. In the words of President Vladimir Putin, were it not for the October Revolution and the collapse of the USSR, the country's population would have exceeded 500 million. But today, the population in most post-Soviet countries is dwindling.

To quickly remedy the situation and grow stronger, the Eurasian Union (EAEU) must develop and implement a common ideological platform for our countries. At the same time, the basic postulates of such a platform must not only meet the interests of the EAEU member states, but also be acceptable to most post-Soviet countries.

The protection of common civilizational values, combined with opportunities for the harmonious development of the self-identity of each ethnic group, should provide the basis for a new ideology of the Eurasian civilization.

Another ideological pillar of Eurasian civilization must be the ability and willingness to conduct dialogue with friendly nations and the possibility for such dialogue with unfriendly nations in order to resolve problems peacefully.

Finally, the third ideological pillar of Eurasian civilization could be the idea of reintegration in the post-Soviet space as the only way to restore global greatness, economic and cultural development, universal security, political stability, and public welfare.

Once a common ideological platform is developed and implemented, priorities in relations between strategic allies will have to be rethought.

Unrecognized or partially recognized republics could become subjects of the union state with special status. Let us recall, for example, that the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region was a constituent entity of the USSR, and in the last years of the Soviet Union's existence, it was placed under direct rule from Moscow.

In summary, I want to emphasize that the current discussion on the future of the Eurasian region is taking place in an extremely complicated geopolitical situation.

In these difficult conditions, special attention should be paid to the need to create a union state to jointly protect the rights and interests of each member of the new union.

Nikolay Makarov, *Deputy Director, Foreign Policy Planning Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia*

This conference is being held at a turbulent time. The year 2021 is drawing to a close. It is already clear that this was a difficult and to a certain extent watershed year. The world is still in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, which poses an unprecedented challenge to humanity. The novel coronavirus infection has been a shock to both the global economy and global politics. But most importantly, it has been a real test for millions of ordinary people. And although increasing vaccination rates help to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, it is already clear that normal life is still a long way off.

The overall situation is compounded by the fact that COVID-19 has invaded a far from "perfect" world. It has come on top of chronic problems, cross-border challenges, unresolved crises, and conflicts that have accumulated over the decades. All this together has thrown into turmoil the international legal system formed as a result of World War II, with the UN as its cornerstone.

Most states in the world, including Russia, follow the main, classical school, which holds that such work must be done collectively, based on generally accepted norms of international law, and that the UN should be the key platform for this joint effort. Such is the philosophy behind the well-known Russian initiative to hold a summit of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who continue to share special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Unfortunately, several Western states led by the US now dispute that axiom. There is growing criticism in Western capitals of the universal organization and its Security Council, which are supposedly no longer capable of making useful decisions. Voices calling for a revision of the conceptual framework for multilateral cooperation are growing louder every day.

The problem is that our Western colleagues, who proclaimed the “end of history” after the breakup of the USSR, today continue to see themselves as masters of the world. Washington and its closest allies stubbornly refuse to acknowledge the objective reality associated with the emergence of a fairer and more democratic multipolar world order.

The world is invited to live by “the law of the jungle,” where might makes right.

There is probably no need to describe in detail how our Western colleagues have long and persistently tried to implement this policy in the post-Soviet space.

At the same time, despite all these attempts, this aggressive policy is doomed to fail, primarily because international relations today are not Western-centric. The world will never be unipolar. Humanity is growing up. The myth about the lack of alternatives to the ultra-liberal model of development, based on the principles of individualism, the free play of market forces, and moral relativism, has been dispelled once and for all. We see that countries with coherent national interests and a so-called “power vertical,” where society and citizens uphold traditional values, are much more resilient.

A good example of constructive multipolarity is the activity of BRICS. Within its framework, countries with different political and economic systems and distinctive value and civilizational platforms effectively cooperate in different areas: from politics and security to economics and culture. The five-member BRICS is a kind of cooperation “grid” superimposed over the traditional North-South and West-East lines. Another association of this type is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which functions on similar principles.

It is clear that Europe is no longer, so to speak, a trendsetter in politics. It is not perceived as an undisputed role model, an ideal of democracy and prosperity. The EU has lost its monopoly over the integration agenda and can no longer aspire to leadership in Greater Eurasia. The cooperation arrangements it has promoted based on the “master-slave” principle, such as the much-vaunted Eastern Partnership program, have proved totally ineffective.

Recent events have clearly demonstrated that universal recipes for development do not and cannot exist. Human creativity is endless. That is why the post-COVID multipolar world of sovereign states should be based on national, cultural, and confessional identity, and on the right of peoples to determine their own destiny.

Alexander Stoppe, *Adviser to State Secretary of the Union State of Russia and Belarus, Professor, Chair of International Relations and Foreign Policy of Russia, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*

THE YEAR 1990 went down in history as the year of the “parade of sovereignties”: Russia, Georgia, and Moldova declared their sovereignty in June, followed in July by Belarus and Ukraine, and in August – by Armenia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Kazakhstan signed its Declaration on State Sovereignty in October, and Kyrgyzstan did so in December.

Under Article 72 of the 1977 USSR Constitution, constituent union republics retained the right “to freely secede from the USSR,” but there were no legal norms regulating secession. In view of that legal gap and centrifugal trends obvious in the still united country, the USSR Congress of People’s

Deputies passed, on April 3, 1990, the Law on the Procedure for Resolving Questions Connected with a Union Republic's Secession from the USSR.

Today, nothing is said about the fact that on December 11, 1991, the Committee of Constitutional Supervision of the USSR issued a statement denouncing the Accords. That statement indicated that the union republics did not have the right to address, on their own, issues related to the interests of other union republics, thus making the statement in the preamble of the Accords that "the USSR as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality no longer exists" merely a political assessment with no legal power.

Ahead of the 30th anniversary of the Soviet Union's disintegration, we will learn a lot of "interesting" things. Today, by my count, about 50 former deputies of the RSFSR Supreme Soviet have already stated in all sorts of interviews that they voted "against" ratifying the Agreement on the CIS. But according to official sources, 188 deputies voted "for," six voted "against," and seven abstained.

Can many of the former union republics be proud of their sovereignty today, 30 years after they acquired it? Very few political analysts dispute the fact that Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia are being governed from the outside. Indeed, no further arguments are needed.

We must also not forget that at the dawn of the new Russian statehood, American advisers occupied offices in buildings on Staraya Ploshchad [i.e., the location of Russian presidential administration offices – Trans.]. Thank God they were promptly evicted, something the West cannot forget, let alone forgive.

It is no secret that recent developments have demonstrated that Belarus's and Russia's confrontation with the West has reached a boiling point. How does the Union State ensure the sovereignty of Belarus? The answer is obvious: The Union Treaty of 1999, read in its original rather than interpreted form, fully permits the preservation of the sovereignty of its members. It consolidates their statehood and ensures their national security through the synergetic effect of the combined potentials of its members – Belarus and Russia.

The Union State is not about sovereignties transferred at an abstract "supranational" level; it is about specific and closer cooperation between two states; their social and economic progress; united economic, humanitarian, scientific, technical, educational, cultural, information, transportation, and migration spaces; and active promotion of Belarusian and Russian interests in the international arena as part of a coordinated foreign policy.

The CSTO has repeatedly confirmed its effectiveness, particularly in 1999-2000, during the Batken events, and in the 1990s, when the Taliban came dangerously close to the CIS borders.

The West, for its part, has spared no effort to assert dominance over the newly independent states and turn them away from Russia as the only guarantor of their sovereignty: At various times, it tempted them with GUAM and the Balto-Black Sea Arc, and now with the Intermarium project, the Lublin Triangle, and the Eastern Partnership program.

Comparative analysis of the possibilities offered by the Union State and the so-called Karta Polaka (Polish Card) shows that the Union State offers much more in all areas – employment, health protection, pensions, etc. Education is the only area where we are objectively lagging behind the Poles. And it is not the quality and accessibility of higher education that is the issue here, but the fact that a diploma issued even by some third-rate university in Poland is accepted in Europe. Unfortunately, even prestigious Russian universities that are well known and respected in the world such as Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities or MGIMO cannot issue such diplomas.

Unlike communism, the Union State is a real project, and its results are obvious in the social sphere, health care, education, the freedom of movement (the pandemic restrictions aside), human contacts, etc. – and all with strict mutual respect for sovereignty.

Alexander Bobrov, *Assistant Professor, Department of Diplomacy, Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Candidate of Science (History)*

THE CONCEPT of Eurasia, although a seemingly obvious and a widely used term, remains one of the most convoluted terms in international relations studies. Due to its vague geographical borders and the multiplicity of potential angles on the subject, it is used in many different contexts with different meanings and connotations that strongly affect its conceptualization.

THE BRAINCHILD of White émigrés, today, the ideology of “Eurasianism” is a sum total of varied historical-philosophical and national-political schools of thought.

Eurasianism as an ideology of inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence of different civilizations was gradually winning the sympathy of many peoples outside Russia. For example, the First President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev not only relied on it to define the identity of his own people, but he also used it as a cornerstone of his country’s international self-identity.

It should be said that despite the continued development of the Eurasian ideology, the extent to which it influences integration across the post-Soviet state is grossly exaggerated. First, none of the official EAEU documents mentions the ideology of Eurasianism and related theories. Second, integration is being carried out not so much through practical realization of the ideas of Eurasianism as through the borrowing and critical analysis of the experience of the European Union. Finally, against the backdrop of souring Russian-Western relations, Moscow’s foreign policy rhetoric is not becoming more pro-Eurasian (despite assertions to the contrary of many foreign analysts who are seeking to detect the influence of the ideas of Gumilev and Dugin on Russia’s leaders) but more conservative, which is amply confirmed by the fact that President Putin frequently mentions or even quotes Ivan Ilyin, Nikolay Berdyayev, and Konstantin Leontyev.

In the 1990s, this led to the geographic dichotomy of the “near” and the “far” abroad, actively used to categorize the outside world and distinguish former union republics from the rest of the world. After a while, the term “near abroad” was replaced with two common concepts – the CIS and the “post-Soviet” space – neither of them perfect.

At some point, North American, European, and even Japanese researchers, seeking to avoid the term post-Soviet, which invariably recalled the Soviet Union, opted for the term “Eurasian.” It is applied to Russia and the former union republics (minus the Baltic countries) or used to tie together these 11 countries minus Russia. “Eurasian” integration, however, proceeded on account of intraregional consolidation and coordinated efforts rather than foreign borrowings.

In a 1994 speech to the faculty of Moscow State University, Kazakh President Nazarbayev first formulated the idea of Eurasian integration as a new type of integration in the post-Soviet space. A year later, that idea served as the foundation for the Customs Union Agreement signed by Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia. Those countries remained the main drivers of closer, more intensive cooperation and did a lot to draw other regional countries into the process.

RELATIONS between the West and Russia have been deteriorating since 2012. Russia, however, has not abandoned its active integration efforts in the post-Soviet space and has pivoted to the East, pursuing greater involvement in the Asia-Pacific region.

Russia, which is geographically removed from many regional production chains, is seeking not only full-scale involvement in economic cooperation in this part of the world through connectivity between the EAEU and the Chinese initiative, but is consistently promoting its idea of Greater Eurasia and a united continent and space of creative development and prosperity, which presupposes interaction between all integration organizations.

Of course, the Russian concept is by no means the only project of geoeconomic or even cultural and civilizational rapprochement between the classical political categories of West and East, about which the famous English writer Rudyard Kipling wrote in the 19th century: "Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." But Russia's approaches are inclusive and geared toward intercivilizational dialogue, so that the Eurasia concept is conceptualized as a geographical term and a political and economic construct not through the denial of "Europe" and "Asia" (based on the logic of "neither Europe, nor Asia" or "between Europe and Asia"), but through their implicit association in the paradigm "Europe and Asia" based on the apt expression "best of both worlds."

Session 2

Problems of International Information Security in Post-Soviet Countries

Olga Melnikova, *Head of a section at the Department of International Information Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Candidate of Science (Political Science)*

POLITICAL, military, terrorist, and criminal use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is becoming an increasing global challenge and threat. It is a growing trend to use ICT to attack the critical information infrastructures of countries and to maintain information inequality. The degree of access to the Internet and other ICT differs from country to country. Such access is sometimes artificially restricted to make a country that has no ICT achievements of its own dependent on a more technologically advanced nation.

All these issues are becoming extremely urgent in the CIS. Because all CIS countries except Russia are more consumers than producers of ICT, they are forced to become clients of foreign ICT companies.

CIS countries have begun to formalize their joint efforts to build a common international information space and system that can ensure information security; meet the information needs of the population, companies, various organizations, and governmental bodies; and also provide a sound basis for cooperation and the adoption of concrete practical decisions.

Russia has already signed governmental agreements on information security with Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan. CIS and CSTO member countries have similar principles on international information security. Because CIS countries share Russia's approaches to forming a global information security system and support the principles, norms, and rules for the use of ICT advocated by Russia, they have invariably been coauthors of Russian-proposed UN resolutions on international information security since 2018.

It is imperative to continue this cooperation to counter global threats related to the use of ICT.

However, this cooperation is running into obstacles that go back decades.

Eager to assert their independence, the ruling elites in the states that emerged after the breakup of the Soviet Union were very wary of reintegration processes and Russian influence on those processes.

Western programs (some of them overseen by NATO) to help nonWestern countries build up ICT capacity pursue several goals: to gain access to the information infrastructure of sovereign countries; to make that infrastructure dependent on Western cyber technologies; to make Western principles the basis of information security legislation in target countries (incidentally, information security is a component of national security); to prevent CIS countries from cooperating with Russia on any ICT projects; to hinder integration efforts in the CIS; and to block moves to create a common information space in the CIS, a concept for which was approved back in 1996 but obviously needs to be implemented because of new challenges and threats.

Under the pretext of building up digital capacity and bridging the digital divide, the West makes its “allies” permanently dependent on its ICT, forcing technologically less developed countries to adopt strategies that counter their long-term interests and damage their information security.

Russia is becoming a digital capacity-building resource for CIS countries due to its level of ICT development. This provides extensive cooperation opportunities both to governments and to high-tech businesses. In Russia, all industries and social services are provided with Russianmade high-tech products as part of import substitution.

The natural desire of CIS countries for uniform Commonwealth ICT regulatory legislation based on Russian standards or methods angers the West, which sees this as a form of Russian cyber expansion.

Incidentally, the Taliban made extensive use of ICT (Facebook, Telegram, Signal, YouTube, WhatsApp) to in effect win the information war in the offensive that brought them to power in 2021.

Other power centers – India, Iran, China, Pakistan, and Turkey – are also building up influence in the CIS and carrying out information expansion in CIS countries, using ICT to disseminate their own information and promote their own digital technologies.

Other power centers – India, Iran, China, Pakistan, and Turkey – are also building up influence in the CIS and carrying out information expansion in CIS countries, using ICT to disseminate their own information and promote their own digital technologies.

Artyom Berezovsky, *Acting Head of the Representative Office of the Russian Foreign Ministry in Simferopol, Crimea*

THE RAPID global development and scale of use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is making information security a national priority.

Providing accurate information and combating fake news are key means of achieving information security.

Crimea, which Pablo Neruda called “a beautiful medal on the chest of the Earth,” has always been at the crossroads of the interests of various civilizations and today is at the center of ideological struggles, fending off vicious attacks from our so-called partners. In addition to Western sanctions, the peninsula has been put under electricity, water, food, and information (digital) blockades.

It has become a frighteningly regular practice at annual international conferences on human rights or, what is especially curious, freedom of speech issues for Crimeans to have their microphones switched off when they are speaking or to be simply barred from taking the floor. Moreover, Crimean websites are often blocked by key Western hosting services and social networks.

Western media regularly publish mendacious information about Crimea, and most of it is written to fit a certain narrative by journalists who have never set foot in Crimea

Despite intensive efforts to breach the information blockade, including people's diplomacy initiatives to invite foreign nationals to Crimea, the situation remains tense, and fake news still leads foreigners to see Crimea as an unfriendly and dangerous place.

In this connection, we would like to stress the importance of our joint efforts and thank the editorial staff of International Affairs and journalists in Crimea and the rest of Russia for regularly, objectively, and professionally covering developments in Crimea and to express hope for further fruitful cooperation.

Valentina Komleva, *Deputy Director for research, National Research Institute for Communication Development, Head, Department of Foreign Area Studies and International Cooperation, Russian President's Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), Doctor of Science (Sociology)*

IN 2020, the National Research Institute for Communication Development began to develop a methodology for studying the communication regimes of countries. In 2021, the Institute carried out its first study of communication regimes in post-Soviet countries. The study included analyzing factors in forming communication regimes, the extent to which they were controllable, and their degree of stability.

THE CURRENT communication regime of each Central Asian country has evolved through the institutionalization of its government's concept of the ideal model for organizing information and communication processes in society and by trying to adapt the communication regime to new practices, which have changed especially rapidly on account of digitalization.

The Central Asian ruling elites' image of an ideal communication model is based on sweeping public support for norms and rules. This support ensures the reproduction of the communication regime. The core element of an ideal communication regime in the view of the Central Asian ruling elites is the place and role of civil society and the state in regulation and in decision-making on norms and rules, the extent of state control of communication and information, the degree of freedom for state and private media, and red lines that cannot be crossed when communicating and conveying information.

Our analysis showed that each Central Asian communication regime has a visible zone – a façade – and an invisible, “blind” zone. Laws, public and political discourse, and governmental decisions make up the façade. The blind zone is harder to study, as it is represented by informal regulators of domestic and cross-border communication – e.g., religion, traditions, customs, cultural codes, or mentalities. These factors are not immediately discernible, but deeper analysis brings them to light. To obtain a better understanding of them, we turned to the opinions of Central Asian scholars, to earlier academic studies of the politics of Central Asian countries,² and to works that could help us understand the mental and sociocultural dependences of communication actors.

A surge in general digital literacy brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, by the educational activities of international bodies such as nonprofits, and by the work of foreign media groups in Central Asia has resulted in new communication practices (in this regard, we would like to cite an interesting study of the Islamic cyberspace by Marat Murtazin). Such practices exist in all Central Asian countries, though they are less common in some than in others.

IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN countries, national identity issues are seen in terms of security and are assessed from the standpoint of whether they involve any threats to the national language, traditional values, and national historical memory. Textual analysis of speeches of the presidents of Central Asian countries shows that society is being sent the message that it faces the potential danger of losing not simply reference values but indispensable features, without which it cannot survive and which form the basis of its consolidation. To avoid such threats, the Central Asian governments make changes to the communication regimes of their countries – i.e., amend laws on communication and information.

Thus, social engineering underlying the Central Asian communication regimes is partly based on the securitization of national identity.

OUR FINDINGS suggest that by combating radicalization in their societies, Central Asian governments involuntarily provoke radicalization by creating a sense of urgency in the media and information space around threats to their nation's identity, language, traditions, and values.

Struggles may escalate among the region's countries not only for economic but also for cultural supremacy in Central Asia. Such struggles may be encouraged by third parties that do not always want peace in Central Asia.

LEGISLATION is not the only source of institutionalizing the communication regimes of the Central Asian countries. There are also informal regulators of public and political communication. Central Asian governments' perceptions of the future of their countries and their ideas about the role of the state and civil society in achieving this future determine what they see as ideal communication models. These perceptions of ideal models lead to the formalization of new principles and rules for communication and new roles for communication actors.

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THESE DAYS, modern information and communication technologies (ICT) create unprecedented opportunities for shaping global public opinion and actively influence political processes. Without in any way denying the positive value of ICT for the world's progress and development, I would like to consider some aspects related to ensuring state security.

It is worth recalling that, for example, during the 2020 US presidential election, President Trump's Twitter account de facto became the most important source of information for the international community, and White House officials often first found out about important political decisions, appointments, and resignations from their Twitter feed.

The growing political engagement of the owners of global Internet companies is also worth mentioning. In the 2020 US election, they proved to be a real third force, along with the global industrial and financial oligarchies. Until recently, information campaigns simply provided communication and information services. Now, telecom providers can model what users should write and with whom to communicate. Providers can also make program corrections and participate in information warfare.

The Russian Central Electoral Commission (CEC) reported round-the-clock massive cyberattacks against the federal remote electronic voting (DEG) system. In Moscow, the cyberattacks reached 47,000 requests per second on the CEC website alone. About 246,000 requests were blocked on the morning of the election. Powerful attacks originated from the US (50%), Germany (25%), Russia (10%), and China (5%), among other places, and were directed against the portals of the CEC,

elections, state services, the Unified Information Agency, and others. Anti-Russian propaganda and fake news were also disseminated through foreign digital platforms: Western media, foreign agent media, and in the Russian language segment of the Internet. The collective West relayed them into our information space in Russian.

Another egregious example of the use of political censorship by the collective West with the help of Internet giants took place on September 28, 2021, when YouTube banned its users (under the threat of blocking their channel) from posting content that challenged the results of all past US elections and expressing any doubts about the results of the parliamentary elections held in Germany the day before.

YouTube has de facto declared its adherence to the political position of the US and the EU states; meanwhile, it has not blocked a single inaccurate video about the Russian State Duma elections.

Western spin doctors tried to influence Russian voters through ICT and information campaigns, “dividing” the Russian audience into several target groups – the country’s political and business elites, some of whom the West believed could take its side. The “sanctions wars” ultimately intend to produce a coup d’état by splitting the elites. The expectation that some of them would support Western provocateurs is one “color revolution” method.

At the same time, attempts were also made to influence other social groups. Particular attention was paid to young people (an easily swayed group and a driving force of “colored revolutions”), as well as to representatives of certain regions viewed by the West as potentially vulnerable “weak” links. Anti-Russian propaganda on the Internet and every other possible platform targeted specific age, geographic, professional, social, and religious groups.

The script had been prepared in advance: First, the OSCE ODIHR refused to participate under a far-fetched pretext; next, based on this refusal, the European Parliament passed Russophobic resolutions and the State Department issued a statement intended to create an “international stir”; finally, the collective West declared the elections unfree and illegitimate.

But in their attempt to influence Russian citizens using the same “horror stories,” the provocateurs miscalculated, failing to take into account the differences in mentality. Our people always respond to pressure by consolidating. The Russophobic statements of the OSCE, the European Parliament, the State Department, and others produced an unintended result: The population rallied around the authorities. The campaign organizers failed due to their stereotyped thinking, their inability to take into account differences in mentality, and their experts’ lack of professionalism.

The long game of the collective West and its oppositional “fifth column” inside the country is to destroy the state political system and Russia altogether. Russia’s countermeasures must be proactive and employ the full range of hybrid information warfare methods. However, no efforts of the authorities can bring the desired result unless the state begins to competently “shape the street” and restore national identity as an enduring human value. A political regime must have a mobilizable social resource, which becomes possible if certain moral and ethical foundations are instilled in citizens early on. Our youth, family, and educational policies, among others, need improvement to ensure the revival of our original national values, which, in turn, will serve to strengthen the information security system in general and protect our national interests.

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SCIENTIFIC and technological progress gives all actors in the digital space, including cybercriminals and terrorists, the opportunity to use information and communication technologies (ICT). Online distribution of illegal content is becoming a growing problem. The absence of an appropriate conceptual framework, regulatory basis, and mechanism for responding to this challenge at the global level hinders international cooperation in this area.

A key obstacle to international cooperation in the fight against illegal content is the lack of consistent terminology that allows individual states to retain a free hand when qualifying information as illegal. The attempts of the collective West to hide politically objectionable information behind the concept of “illegal content” have become a popular practice not only in the foreign policy of these states, but domestically as well. The politicization of this term transforms it from a security threat to a tool for pressuring an opponent manipulating public consciousness. At the same time, Russia’s calls for the removal of content that poses a real threat to human safety, health, and life (such as incitement to suicide) run up against a wall of misunderstanding from Western colleagues who believe that such measures violate free speech.

A DISTINCTIVE characteristic of Russia’s approach is its support for a depoliticized assessment of online content. This position implies preventing unfair competition and preventing attempts to boost a state’s international image by denigrating the image of its opponent under the pretext of combating destructive information.

The most important step in that direction was the development of the “illegal content” concept in Russian law. Under additions to Federal Law No. 530 “On Amendments to the Federal Law on Information, Information Technologies, and Information Protection” of February 1, 2021, social networks are responsible for moderating online content that has been deemed illegal on the territory of the Russian Federation.

Russia, its partners, and allies seek to codify a common understanding of “illegal content” as a concept in regional organizations in the postSoviet space – the CIS and the CSTO – although, similarly to the bilateral treaties, the regional agreements do not contain this term directly.

The Agreement on Cooperation of the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Combating Crimes in the Sphere of Information Technology recognizes the following threats: dissemination of pornographic information, including images of minors, on the Internet or through other telecommunication channels, (Article 3e) and dissemination of extremist materials and propaganda of terrorism (Article 3h).

In practice, measures to counter the dissemination of illegal content in Russia are taken at all levels – national and international (bilateral, regional, and global) – with the involvement of all interested parties (public and private sectors).

AS FOR international cooperation, bilateral and regional agreements aim to stimulate practical cooperation on the issues in question. For example, the 2015 Agreement between the Russian Federation and the PRC identifies several distinct areas of activity (Article 3): exchanging information and strengthening cooperation between law-enforcement and other competent agencies of the two states, jointly counteracting threats associated with the use of ICT, jointly assessing risks in the information space, and continuing to search for solutions to international information security problems.

A legally binding Convention on cybercrime is being developed by an ad hoc intergovernmental committee of experts that is drafting a comprehensive international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes. The committee was created based on UNGA Resolution 74/247 (December 27, 2019) and adopted on Russia’s initiative.⁸

Russia presented its draft UN Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communication Technologies for Criminal Purposes in July 2021, in Vienna.

The adoption of this document at the global level would significantly increase international cooperation on countering the dissemination via the Internet and other telecommunication channels of information that poses a threat to human safety, life, and health.

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THE DIGITAL WORLD is becoming more and more a part of modern society. We are witnessing the exponential growth of technologies that are changing the everyday life of individuals, businesses, and states. At the present stage, an information landscape has emerged with a full-fledged, comprehensive structure that affects all areas of life. In this context, the actively developing Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is increasingly addressing issues of the successful integration of state information systems and the introduction of the practice of using digital technologies.

Today, EAEU member states already possess the technical capabilities to develop an integrated information system that can address technical issues and form the basis for the strategic future of member states in the most promising areas of the modern digital transformation. Important challenges for actualizing Eurasian cooperation in this direction are the awareness of the need to create conditions for the digital economy, the development of a competitive financial market, and the need to overcome the crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digitalization of the modern world is a driving force for global, innovative, inclusive, and sustainable growth and can help reduce social inequality. As a driver of integration processes and a source of a wide range of synergetic economic effects, it provides a foundation for achieving the goals of the Eurasian Union's digital agenda.

Experts are increasingly promoting the idea of seamless cross-border cooperation between digital public administration services. Today, the creation of a single EAEU platform is becoming the basis for effective and transparent long-term development, which will increase the possibilities of high-tech exports and raise the importance of cybersecurity issues.

When analyzing the evolution of the digital integration of EAEU countries, it is necessary to mention already implemented projects, including the Work Without Borders search engine, which helps citizens of member states find jobs in any member state. As part of the development of this dimension, a comprehensive ecosystem of digital services is to be formed to help citizens of member states seek and obtain employment; the Eurasian Labor Exchange is being created.

Digitalization is now becoming a factor of global competition. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind the risks associated with the digital space – primarily cybersecurity and cybercrime issues.

At the present stage, the Eurasian community is undoubtedly on the threshold of a global historical evolution in which digital technologies are the foundation for the formation of a new society. In the 21st century, innovations are fundamentally shaping the transformation of all areas of life of both the individual and the state. Everything is changing, including business and society. The stakes and level of responsibility for such transformations are too high, and this issue must be approached carefully. The risks of the digital world are great, and it is very important to weigh them in advance.

As countries deal with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, cooperation among EAEU member states will provide strong support for implementing governmental socioeconomic programs. At the present stage, the Eurasian Economic Union has the opportunity to transition to the progressive scenario outlined in the Main Directions of Economic Development of the EAEU until 2030. Conditions are gradually emerging for the introduction of basic industries of the new technological order.

A global indicator of the success of the digital integration of the EAEU countries will be higher standards of living and greater opportunities for citizens, which in turn will create conditions for accelerated economic development, a high level of public welfare, and the realization of every citizen's potential.

Ryazan and Russian America

Mikhail Malakhov, *Hero of Russia, Honored Polar Explorer, Chairman of the Ryazan regional branch of the Russian Geographical Society*

Viktor Shlyakhin, *Executive Director of the Ryazan regional branch of the Russian Geographical Society*

RUSSIA'S Ryazan Province is a long way from the country's Pacific shores. There are no seaports or shipyards there. But somehow, in recent years, Ryazan Province has become a center for scholarly and practical research of the heritage of Russian America, which have included expeditions to Alaska.

The first Ryazan expedition to Alaska took place in 2009. It followed the route taken by Lavrenty Zagoskin [1808-1890], a famous Russian explorer who lived in Ryazan for many years. He gave a large share of his extensive collection to a local museum and is buried near the Ryazan Kremlin. Subsequent expeditions took other routes to Russian America and made fascinating documentary films. And then a remarkable historical fact came to light: A search of the archives revealed that Saint Herman of Alaska (1751-1836), an Orthodox Christian enlightener of America, had been born in Ryazan.

An international conference held in 2016 in Herman's birthplace, the town of Kadom, was an event of significance that extended far beyond Ryazan Province. The conference received a message of greeting from Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Conferences of this kind have become annual events. The most recent conference was held in September 2021, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

International Affairs has kindly given space on its pages to the organizers of the event, who will likely continue to pursue new endeavors. They have a new expedition in mind – one to explore the Pacific travels of Vasily Golovnin (1776-1831), a vice admiral and a native of Ryazan governorate.

THE YEAR 2021 marks the 280th anniversary of the expedition of Vitus Bering and Alexey Chirikov that included the European discovery of northwestern America and started off a period of Russians exploring and settling the lower reaches of the Amur River; Sakhalin; the Kuril, Aleutian, and Hawaiian Islands; Alaska; and Northern California – lands that came to be known as Russian America.

Between 2009 and 2020, the Ryazan branch of the Russian Geographical Society carried out 14 expeditions to Alaska, the Aleutian and Hawaiian Islands, Northern California, and the Russian Far East. For the first time since Russia's sale of Alaska to the US in 1867, it was possible to examine more than 22,000 square kilometers of territory that had been discovered and explored by Russians and was part of what was once known as Russian America. The expedition parties explored dozens

of hard-to-reach villages and settlements. An amazing discovery was made: For 150 years, Russian culture had survived in large measure in a foreign country despite the absence of the bearers of that culture

Cross Point was as far as Zagoskin managed to traverse on the Yukon River. Here, where Russia's eastern border used to pass, Zagoskin placed a cross on the high bank of the Yukon in 1843. That cross disappeared a long time ago, but we placed a similar symbol with a plaque on the spot where it once stood.

Orthodox Christianity is still the most common religious denomination in Alaska.

During our 2010-2011 expedition season, we visited Napaimute, a village described by Zagoskin in the 1840s and lying near the famous Kolmakov Redoubt, one of the earliest Russian forts in inner Alaska.

Remains of Russian buildings exist elsewhere, too. We had a stroke of luck when paddling down the Holitna River and its tributaries. At a stop at a place called the Mailing Trading Post, locals showed us the excavated site of a former Russian wooden house on a high hill. What had been unearthed by the archeologists looked like the foundations of a traditional Russian five-walled wooden house. Most likely, the house predated the Kolmakov Redoubt and was the first Russian house to be built in the Kuskokwim basin. Naturally, we measured, photographed, and took video footage of the remains of the house.

What happened to the expedition of Ruf Serebrennikov in 1847-1848 is a mystery. Twenty-year-old Serebrennikov, who served as a navigator for the Russian-American Company, managed to take his party up the Copper River to Tazlina Lake and accomplished his first assignment from the company – to map the Copper River and find a site for a new redoubt. But he never returned. He and the rest of his party were killed under mysterious circumstances in the upper reaches of the Copper River. Most historians believe that the newcomers were disrespectful of local Ahtna chiefs and this sparked a deadly conflict, but we have another theory.

During our journey, we spoke several times with Ahtna people, whose forebears had shown such persistence in killing Russian-American Company expedition members. Today's Ahtna are also very unfriendly to outsiders. The Ahtna pass on legends about the life of their people from generation to generation, including stories about when Russians first visited their territory. In one village, we were told that local shamans cursed strangers who came to Ahtna land.

Our conversations with locals shed light on the tragic fate of the Serebrennikov party. It had nothing to do with disrespect for Ahtna chiefs. The likeliest reason why the Ahtna tried so fiercely to keep strangers out were local unique deposits of native copper, which the Ahtna used to make arrowheads, spear tips, and fishing hooks and to barter with other tribes. The Ahtna were simply guarding their vital territory, and the first Europeans to try to enter that territory happened to be Russian. So Russian explorers paid with their lives for their geographical discoveries.

The Russians stayed in the Aleutians for only about 70 years, but some local place names have immortalized that period of Aleutian history.

The 2017 expedition involved the study of a portage route from Dillingham to Aniak and summed up our expeditions of 2010 to 2017 that focused on studying portage routes in inner Alaska. We moved along routes described by Russian America pioneers such as Lieutenant Zagoskin and navigator Mikhail Vasilyev and studied the current state of those routes.

The 2019 "Russian Forts of Alaska" expedition focused on the fate of the Russian-American Company ship St. Nicholas, which sank off North America in 1808. We visited places where that

event and consequent developments are still remembered. We formed the preliminary conclusion that the company had more serious interests than had been assumed and that it sought to expand the territory of Russian America to Pacific coastal areas in the states of Washington and Oregon, something that had previously escaped the attention of researchers.

We made a remarkable expedition to the Hawaiian Islands. We found the sites of all four Russian fortifications that had existed on the islands. Previously, the exact locations of only two had been known. Russian traders are remembered even there, even though they spent a very short time on the islands.

Our expeditions were the inspiration for the creation of the Ryazan Museum of Explorers, which opened in May 2012. The bulk of its collection consists of artifacts gathered during our expeditions and the many photographs and videos taken during them.

Thus, Ryazan rightly became the capital of memorial events of 2021, the main event being the Russian America 2021 international conference, initiated by the Ryazan branch of the Russian Geographical Society and Ryazan State University. It was supported by the Russian presidential administration, Foreign Ministry, and Academy of Sciences, and by some Russian regional administrations and higher education institutions.

The forum was a great impetus for further work. Fragments of Russian America on the territory of today's Russia is a separate project. We have only just started it and so far have made only a couple of expeditions, but already we are seeing things that have not been studied much. We hope to make more discoveries and uncover more stories about them in the future

Georges Pompidou

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SUMMER 2021 marked the 110th birth anniversary of Georges Pompidou, the second prime minister and second president of the Fifth Republic. The life of this energetic and exuberant man was cut short by a protracted and severe illness that prevented him from completing his seven-year presidential term. This exceptional man and his unconventional political career deserve much more attention than he receives in Russia.

Pompidou was born on July 5, 1911, in the commune of Montboudif, department of Cantal, Auvergne, into the family of Marie-Louise and Léon Pompidou. His ancestors on his mother's side were engaged in commerce while his father belonged to a peasant family.

His abilities were apparent at an early age; he was a top pupil who excelled in ancient languages – Latin and especially Ancient Greek – and avidly read Ancient Greek and Roman literature in the original. As he was growing up, reading became his true passion.

In 1929, Georges graduated from the lyceum with top marks, and after passing the baccalaureate examination, became eligible to take a higher program in his lyceum for subsequent admission to the École normale supérieure (ENS), one of the most prestigious universities in France.

In 1934, he graduated with honors from ENS with a diploma that allowed him to teach at lyceums and universities. The memory of his happy youth and his studies at ENS remained with him till his last day.

While on leave in Paris, he met Claude Cahour, a tall beautiful blond daughter of a provincial doctor, a law student. He fell in love and asked for her hand in marriage. They were married in October 1935.

Practically at the same time, the young couple moved to Marseille, where Georges had been offered the post of professor of French, Latin, and Ancient Greek at St. Charles High School. The young couple soon missed Paris. So in 1938, when Georges was offered a position at the famous Lycée Henri-IV, the couple jumped at the opportunity to return to the capital, where they immersed themselves in the rich cultural life of Paris.

World War II changed everything. Georges was mobilized. During the “phoney war,” his regiment was stationed in Grasse, in the south of France; later, it was moved to Lorraine and deployed along the Maginot Line. In May 1940, when the Germans had crossed Belgium and the Netherlands in a lightning offensive, his regiment relocated to the country’s north, where it engaged the enemy. Pompidou saw his share of fighting until Marshal Pétain came to power in June 1940. Pétain wanted to end the war and did so by signing an armistice on June 22.

Demobilized after the armistice, Georges returned to the occupied French capital to continue teaching at the lyceum. In July 1942, the couple, who had no children of their own, decided to adopt a three-month old boy, Alain. Pompidou listened to de Gaulle but felt no desire to join him in London. He accepted, to an extent, Pétain and the Vichy government and therefore did not try to contact the Resistance movement that had been growing in France since 1942.

The year 1944 marked an important point in French history: General de Gaulle returned to his homeland as head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic. In late summer 1944, Allied troops liberated Paris and, later, the rest of the country. The Vichy regime was removed, while thanks to the efforts of the general, the savior of the fatherland, France occupied a worthy place among the Allies of the anti-Hitler coalition and was gradually restoring its status as a great power. ... Georges Pompidou, who instinctively felt that he was on the sidelines of great events and who regarded de Gaulle as “a legend, a mythological hero, and very fascinating individual,”⁴ decided to join the whirlwind of events.

In late September 1944, Pompidou began a new career as an official in the Cabinet of the Provisional Government of France headed by de Gaulle. His job was to compile analytical reports on education and information services. He excelled due to his excellent education, good writing style, and careful and thoughtful approach.

Everything changed in January 1946, when the head of the Provisional Government relinquished his post following disagreements with the leftwing political parties over France’s domestic political configuration. It was the leftist parties – Communists (FCP) and Socialists (SFIO) – that had played the decisive role in the Resistance that enjoyed a lot of influence. Less numerous radicals of other hues were on their side.

De Gaulle’s departure sent his supporters in disarray. Many of them joined political parties, but not Pompidou – he remained in state service. With the general’s help, he was appointed maître des requêtes at the Council of State, a body set up by Napoleon in 1799 to supervise the functioning of all structures of state governance.

Aware of Pompidou’s professional aptitude, de Gaulle knew that he could rely on him on certain delicate issues and that his loyalty was absolute. In 1948, the general invited his former staffer to serve as his office director. Pompidou, who had just received the post of lecturer at the Institut de Sciences Politiques de Paris, could not refuse the invitation.

Pompidou retained his post at the Institute de Sciences Politique and the State Council but relinquished his work with the committee for tourism.

Pompidou also fulfilled certain of the general's personal requests. In 1948, de Gaulle's younger daughter Anne died at the age of 20. The general and his wife, Yvonne, were devastated. They decided to establish the Anne de Gaulle Foundation for sick children and asked Pompidou to set it up. He did an excellent job, and the de Gaulles were pleased. In 1952, de Gaulle drew up his last will and gave it to Pompidou for safekeeping. In the early 1950s, de Gaulle started writing his *Mémoires de guerre*. After the first volume was completed, the general asked Pompidou to find a publisher and negotiate publication. Pompidou selected Plon Publishers. The first volume appeared in 1954. De Gaulle had absolute trust in Pompidou, who became his closest associate.

Pompidou threw himself headlong into politics. Throughout the second half of 1958, he remained de Gaulle's closest assistant and an intermediary between the general and the Cabinet members that the general had been forced to include in the Cabinet. De Gaulle was not willing to honor all their requests. As one eyewitness later recollected: "Pompidou was a crocodile sleeping in the bushes yet ready to devour any prey thrown his way by his master."

According to certain sources, Pompidou, on de Gaulle's instructions, visited Algeria in 1959 to contact representatives of the Provisional Government. Preliminary negotiations prepared by Pompidou and held in Switzerland in early 1961 brought no results, yet it was the first step in the desired direction. Continued in the latter half of 1961, they were concluded on March 18, 1962, with the signing of the Évian Accords that ended the long colonial war.

A dark page of French history was turned, and de Gaulle wanted to forget about it; he wanted to move on without people with an "Algerian background." The country had to address new challenges, which required a new prime minister. De Gaulle decided that this post should go to his former office director. Everything the general wanted was regarded as law. George Pompidou once said that "at certain points in your life, you become a prisoner of your fate."⁷ In April 1962, like it or not, he was appointed prime minister of France, and from then on his life was tied to politics.

As prime minister, Pompidou viewed his task as promoting economic development to increase his country's competitiveness in world markets. In France, the tradition of dirigisme was established in the prewar period, while after World War II, the country's economic policies were based on specially developed plans. A liberal of sorts, the prime minister could not oppose planning, but he was convinced that rather than being imposed as directives, plans should be flexible and revised according to circumstances.

It goes without saying that as prime minister, Pompidou worked closely with the president. They met several times a week to discuss the most important issues of French and world politics. Pompidou did not forget the "barons du gaullisme"; some of them received ministerial posts.

The year 1968 proved to be the most dramatic in Pompidou's political career. It began very calm, with no social or political upheavals or radical changes on the horizon. Pompidou later wrote in his memoirs that he never expected what was coming.

Everything started in March with student unrest at a university faculty in Nanterre, a Parisian banlieue.

The dean of the faculty in Nanterre canceled classes and expelled Cohn-Bendit. Students responded by moving their riots to the center of the French capital, to the Sorbonne and Quartier Latin. The Sorbonne was promptly closed, and many of those who called for riots were detained. Then, between May 6 and May 10, real disturbances broke out. Students broke shop windows, set cars on

fire, cut down trees, and built barricades. Six hundred students and 345 policemen were wounded in brutal clashes.

The prime minister, who spared no effort to alter the course of events, did not sleep at all. On May 25, he launched negotiations, approved by de Gaulle, with trade unions at the government residence in the Rue de Grenelle. Pompidou's "adjutants" and loyal supporters – Jacques Chirac and Édouard Balladur – supported him during these difficult talks.

The May events, however, drove a wedge, so to speak, between the prime minister and the president. They were no longer on the same page. On one hand, de Gaulle noted the efficiency, firmness, and dignity that the prime minister demonstrated during the May events. On the other hand, he said that Pompidou had conceded too much to the trade unions,¹² which undermined the French economy. The prime minister was of a different opinion. He was insulted and felt that the president no longer trusted him.

Exhausted by everything that had transpired in recent months, Georges and his wife decided to spend some time in Bretagne to breathe the healing air of this historical province along the Atlantic. It was there, far from the maddening crowd, that he started writing *Le Nœud gordien*, to present to the public his political thoughts and ideas. It was published in 1974, after his death. In late summer 1968, doctors insisted on a medical examination; his blood tests raised certain concerns. They revealed the first signs of a haemopathy, the disease that would eventually take his life five and a half years later. Pompidou brushed the diagnosis aside to pursue his political ambitions: De Galle was getting older, which meant that sooner or later he would leave the presidency.

George Pompidou is remembered by his country as the successor of the great General de Gaulle who further developed the ideas of his predecessor. As prime minister and president, he made France an industrial power; as a person, he taught his compatriots to appreciate contemporary art.

Informational Support for Foreign Policy as a National Security Issue

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THE IDEA of using information and communication technologies (ICT) as a crucial means of achieving political goals is one of the most relevant issues in modern politics and political studies. Some of the main aspects elucidated by studies on this topic are the formation of a global information society, technologies of information wars, and many other issues around ensuring the state's information security, including ways to push the Russian Federation out of the foreign information space. Until recently, Russian historiography did not pay adequate attention to the tactics and methodology used by states to achieve their foreign policy goals by manipulating public consciousness through modern ICT. Olga Melnikova's monograph "Global Cybersecurity and the Manipulation of Public Opinion" aims to shed further light on this topic.

This work can be considered an example of extensive scientific and significant political research that contains timely data about how information wars are waged, as well as about digital operations to affect public opinion and, ultimately, shape it. The monograph also pays due attention to the legal regulation of states' activity in cyberspace, informational support for their foreign policy as an

essential element of so-called “soft power,” and other facets of the use of ICT in today’s international relations.

Russian readers who are curious about information security and politics in general may take added interest in this publication due to the fact that its author is a career diplomat who currently heads an office in the Department of Informational Security of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

This book pays significant attention to the previously unexplored topic of informational support for a state’s foreign policy: It reveals the gist and content of such support, outlining ways to increase its effectiveness and presenting the place and role of this area of diplomatic activity in the implementation of the Russian Federation’s foreign policy priorities. In this regard, the author proposes a definition of the concept “informational support of foreign policy activities.”

This work describes in detail the role of today’s ICT in the political strategy of states, as well as in the creation of an arsenal of tools to exert goal-oriented impact on mass consciousness, making it easy to bend and channel public opinion.

In the first chapter, the author shows how the special kind of social and information space inhabited by international political communication engenders a host of new phenomena under the influence of ICT (such as the “mediatization of politics,” “political media reality,” and “political media effects”), which are designed to serve the foreign and domestic interests of the state.

The second chapter of the monograph offers a systemic view of the most significant elements of the process of informational support for foreign policy activity, as well as the ways it is implemented through ICT.

A section about the use of information technologies in the foreign policy of modern states provides factual data on the practices of the US, France, Great Britain, Germany, and China. By analyzing the work of foreign policy agencies and other bodies that exercise the “soft power” of these states in the international arena, the author demonstrates their invariable pursuit of two objectives: to provide informational support for the foreign policy of the state itself, and to weaken its political competitors.

The third chapter of the monograph contains practical recommendations for improving the effectiveness of governmental bodies and civil society institutions whose jurisdiction includes informational support for foreign policy.

All in all, Olga Melnikova’s monograph is an obvious contribution to Russian political science and represents a constructive view of the state of affairs in the field of information as an essential element of Russia’s national security.

Global Threats to Security and Stability: A New Cyberreality

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“International Security, Strategic Stability, and Information Technologies” is a monograph on the most pressing problems of our time associated with threats posed by the harmful use of information and communication technologies (ICT). These issues are critically important for strengthening global security and protecting Russia’s national interests in the international arena.

Since the time of Clausewitz, it has been generally accepted that war is a continuation of politics by other, violent means. It is no longer possible to fully rely on this understanding of war in the 21st century. Obviously, not all contradictions in the world can be resolved politically, and the use of armed force in various forms continues in the new century. ... Novel threats to international security and the national security of states are starting to play an increasing role. One of them, of course, is the misuse of information technology.

Can these so-called unconventional methods be viewed as completely new instruments of confrontation between states? Of course not. Always and everywhere, wars have been fought not only by military means but also through cunning, deception, and misinformation. Ten centuries ago, Ancient Byzantium won many wars using military operations only as an auxiliary means or as a threat.

Humankind is currently taking what appears to be the sharpest turn in its history. In this period, instabilities develop rapidly, risks grow, and war appears very imminent. At this juncture, it is very important to understand the essence of this era, its challenges and technological imperatives, and the nature of wars in which Russia may have to participate. The better we understand them and the better we are prepared to repel and counter emerging threats, the more likely it is that events will not take a turn for the worst for our Fatherland and the world as a whole.

Today, science and technology “deal the cards of the future,” changing the format of wars and their nature. One could think back to the creation of nuclear weapons and strategic nuclear offensive forces, which determined the history and geopolitics of our time. The presence of such restraint mechanisms has brought us 75 years without world wars.

In the 21st century, there is a tendency to blur the distinction between the states of war and peace. Wars are no longer declared, and once they have begun, they do not follow the customary pattern.

The experience of military conflicts, including those associated with “color revolutions” in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, confirms that a prosperous state can in a matter of months and even days turn into an arena of fierce armed struggle, become a victim of foreign intervention, or plunge into the abyss of chaos, humanitarian disaster, and civil war.

The information confrontation opens up broad asymmetric opportunities for reducing the enemy’s combat potential; technologies to influence government structures and the population via information networks are being actively used.

The monograph reviewed here focuses on this relatively new but vital problem of the impact of rapidly developing information technologies, and, in particular, cybernetic technologies, on strategic stability and global security.

Despite the global contradictions between Russia and the West and associated difficulties in achieving results, work on discussing the problems of international information security on the UN platform has helped advance Russia’s views on these issues for several years. Political resolutions put forward by Russia under the general title “Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security” have been approved by consensus for many years at the UN General Assembly and attracted an increasing number of cosponsors. This became possible due to the growing understanding of the reality of threats presented by modern ICT if used to undermine peace and strategic stability, interfere in the internal affairs of states, or incite enmity between ethnic groups or religious confessions.

What sets the monograph apart is that the authors use interdisciplinary, complex, and systemic methods to study various aspects of ensuring the information security of the military-political system not previously presented in Russian and foreign academic publications. The ICT influence on

international security and strategic stability is subject to interdisciplinary analysis not in name only, but in practice— the monograph presents the results of its authors' technological and military-political research.

The monograph coherently and logically explains why Russia regards the malicious use of information technology as a threat to global security and its own national security. It emphasizes the expediency and importance of creating an international regulatory protocol for controlling harmful information and communication technologies under the auspices of the UN.

This work of Russian scholars is becoming even more important today, when the discussion of ICT influence on strategic stability has moved to a new level with the announcement of the launch of dialogue on strategic stability.

The publication will help both government officials and the public understand the main military-political aspects of the information security problem in both its national and international dimensions and the specific dangers that arise when developments in the information field are weaponized.

In addition, this monograph can serve as a source of information on the issue of ensuring international information security in general and its particular aspects that are relevant to politicians, diplomats, military personnel, scholars, the business community, government and public organizations, and undergraduate and graduate students. It will also be of interest to a broader audience: everyone who has sufficient expertise and deals with issues of security and strategic stability in Russia and abroad