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Summary

BSEC: Riding the Waves of Opportunities to Seas of Common Well-Being

Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Keywords: BSEC, Sergey Lavron, economic cooperation, effective operation, infrastructure

THIS YEAR, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) marks an important milestone: its 30th anniversary. The association was created on the wave of global changes, optimism, and hopes for the elimination of dividing lines in the interests of achieving peace, well-being, and prosperity for all.

Since then, the BSEC has successfully evolved from a purely dialogue format into a full-fledged inclusive organization in the Greater Black Sea region. For the first time in its thousand-year history, the Black Sea region has acquired “its own face” and a solid institutional framework.

Russia is proud to be among the founding countries of the BSEC and one of its active members. Together with other states, we have made continuous efforts to strengthen the practical capabilities of the Organization and create conditions for its effective operation. Key initiatives include the construction of the Black Sea ring road, development of sea routes, cooperation on emergency situations and firefighting, as well as between law-enforcement agencies. In the foreseeable future, we expect to see positive trends in facilitating trade and introducing a “single window” customs mechanism.

We will continue work to develop transport, energy, and trade flows with elements of the green and digital economy. We believe that great opportunities could be created by enhancing cooperation in the banking and finance sector, particularly by establishing a regional mechanism of mutual settlements in national currencies, developing infrastructure to use national payment systems across the BSEC countries, and promoting digital currencies and the mutual recognition of credit ratings. This will, of course, require coordinated joint work of all member countries.

Russia is committed to intensifying collaborative efforts within the BSEC Business Council. At the same time, we need to make full use of the BSEC: Riding the Waves of Opportunities to Seas of Common Well-Being 3 considerable potential of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Implementing the full BSEC agenda requires additional extra-budgetary resources. During Russia’s chairmanship in 2016, our country established the Black Sea Project Promotion Facility within the Organization, donating \$1 million. Almost the entire amount has been spent and put to good use. The funds have been spent on developing regional cooperation in tourism, small and medium-sized businesses, digital trade, environmental protection, and gastronomy. We are currently exploring, together with the Eurasian Development Bank, opportunities for creating new innovative project mechanisms.

We are optimistic about the future. Despite the current difficulties, we believe that the BSEC will remain an important and relevant platform serving the prosperity of the Black Sea region and its peoples for many years to come.

Three Geopolitical Revolutions

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Keywords: Versailles system, Yalta-Potsdam system, collapse of the USSR, Russia and the West, current international situation

THREE times in the “short” 20th century – in 1919, 1945, and 1991 – humanity had every reason to say: “The world will never again be like it was.” However, no one knew what the world would be like.

AFTER the Great War, some people desperately hoped that the nightmare would never be repeated, some said that there would be only a 20-year respite, and some had beautiful dreams that Europe would unite around the idea of completely rejecting wars in the name of universal cooperation and the prosperity of the Christian civilization.

All their peacekeeping efforts would have likely gone to waste even without Hitler, but his coming to power in the kind of Germany that craved the Führer with almost physiological lust sentenced Europe to war. While the idea of gathering the German nation was viewed as just mainly by the Germans, the project of building a united fascist Europe guided by a holy faith in its cultural superiority over the rest of the world (Slavs, Jews, Roma, etc.) found many sympathizers in the West. In this respect, Hitler was not only a unique focal point of madness, misanthropy, and racism, but also a “brilliant” manifestation, if not of the European civilization’s secret essence, then certainly of some of its most vile birthmarks.

When the division of Europe between the allies became inevitable, the Americans and the British did everything to reduce the sphere of the Soviet presence to a minimum that would allow them to become absolute masters of the continent. The key task was to prevent the “invasion of Europe by the Barbarians.”

AFTER 1945, the map of Europe underwent a historically unprecedented redrawing. Much of it categorically did not suit the US. The prerequisites for the destruction of the Yalta-Potsdam system were laid at its very foundation. The Anglo-Saxon elites saw it as a temporary compromise, designed to provide a historic transition to their global economic and liberal-ideological dictatorship.

The Iron Curtain gave Europe the “long peace” its philosophers had been dreaming of and strong borders for almost half a century, with all the obvious costs of such coexistence for international cooperation and mutual understanding.

HOWEVER, shortly after it began, the celebration of unanimity was overshadowed in the second half of the 1970s by a rapid cooling of international relations caused by an unexpected discovery. It turned out that the USSR and the West had opposite interpretations of the extent of the application of the main provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.

Reagan went much further than Carter. One of the least educated US presidents, he successfully made up for that shortcoming with piercing intuition and will to act. Like a skilled shooter, he was able to zero

in and focus on a target until it was completely destroyed, paying no attention to the doubts of others about the appropriateness of his choice.

George H.W. Bush, in a sense, proved to be even more brazen than Reagan. When Mikhail Gorbachev, in his desperate quest to curry US favor, was almost imposing his concessions, the American president quite tactlessly announced that friendship with the “city on the hill” had yet to be earned. Gorbachev had no choice but to offer himself as the last sacrifice on the altar of democracy. That would have been fine, had he not taken the USSR with him.

BORIS YELTSIN continued the policy of “earning” [the friendship of the US], even outdoing his predecessor. Largely thanks to him and his aggressively liberal entourage, the “crusade,” ostensibly against communism but in fact against Russia, acquired a truly epic scale and achieved brilliant success in 1991 – the colossal geopolitical catastrophe that became its irrefutable proof. Having lost more than 5 million square kilometers, half of its population, and a huge and irreplaceable share of its natural resources and industrial base, the USSR disappeared from the political map of the world.

The Biblical dream of Zbigniew Brzezinski seemingly came true: American hegemony in the world was established against Russia, at the expense of Russia and on Russia’s ruins.

The Western countries did not show basic gratitude to the Russian people for what fell on these countries as if from a cornucopia, what they could never imagine in their wildest dreams. They began to demand from the Russian elite not just nonresistance, but selfless participation in the further fragmentation of the post-Soviet space.

Today, a cruel global game is being played with unprecedented stakes, intricate and unpredictable moves, and unclear prospects. Even the most brilliant tactical victory could turn into a strategic defeat. Our fundamental task is to completely rule out a combination of circumstances in which we would pay for a momentary Pyrrhic victory with the very existence of the Russian civilization – and to remember who is confronting us: a smart, sophisticated, ruthless enemy, still worthy of deep study and, of course, gratitude for the fact that it has finally stopped deceiving us and revealed its true face. If as a result of this universal struggle everything inside Russia returns to its old liberal-oligarchic ways, with all ensuing consequences, including consequences for the moral and mental health of the people, then such is our fate – once again chosen for us by others.

The United States of America: Beginning of the End of a Great Power

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Keywords: US, politics, interference, double standards, Americanstyle democracy, Chinese-style socialism

THE HISTORY of the US is among the shortest and most paradoxical of national histories, a combination of opposites: progressive slogans about democracy and human rights, on the one hand, and on the other – suppression of and reprisals against those who have had their own ideas about history, freedom, social equality, justice, and democracy.

The US is a militaristic, antidemocratic, terrorist state that disregards all international rules in order to pursue its aggressive and perfidious policy while seeking to impose its laws and rules on others.

The US liberal-intellectual elite is creating an alternate reality with no factual basis and framing it as the only true reality. This reveals not just the double standards of the American elite, but their efforts to implant this “reality” in the minds of millions of people.

Prominent American scholar and public figure Noam Chomsky commented that any attentive reader of the definition of terrorism and all basic documents of the US will conclude that President Reagan’s policy perfectly fit the definition of terrorism. The same can be said about the policies pursued by practically all American presidents of the last decades.

In his 2007 Munich Speech, Russian President Vladimir Putin reminded his American and European counterparts: “This universal, indivisible character of security is expressed as the basic principle that ‘security for one is security for all.’ ” The world crisis can be resolved if we avoid double standards and agree that security should be ensured for each country and the world as a whole. The policy of the US and the West aimed at establishing and preserving a unipolar world is destructive not only for the rest of the world but also for the decision-making center, the hegemon, the only bearer of power. The unipolar world has receded into the past; the time has come to start serious, real negotiations on universal security guaranteed for all.

Today, a quest is unfolding all over the world for a social ideal that would allow each country and each nation to deal with their complex and diverse problems of existence and awareness. Various countries – Russia, India, Iran, etc. – are trying to formulate their social ideals. This is the only correct road, when all nations join forces to deal with the problems of the modern world.

In a historically short time, they have united 1.5 billion Chinese into a single whole to channel their energy to deal with the most important problems of our time: achieving social equality; eliminating poverty; attaining universal accessibility to the top achievements of science and technology; developing a common philosophy and world outlook, as well as ethical and moral ideals of behavior; and aestheticizing feelings and contemplation, friendship, and love.

Unlike American imperialism, which imposes, usually by force, its backward, degrading model of democracy as a kind of pattern for other peoples, China offers its social ideal – “socialism with Chinese characteristics” – absolutely voluntarily. It is an ideal that is quite reasonable with foundations that are acceptable to various cultures and different civilizations.

Time is constantly making its rather significant adjustments, and world history is changing literally before our eyes. But if people live in peace and cooperation, they will arrive at a genuine ideal of existence and development of each person, each people, and humanity as whole, since the self-consciousness of any people and its self-identity have always relied on a firm and highly spiritual foundation, higher values, and the pursuit of Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Justice, Freedom, and mutual Love among people. This is the only possible road for the normal life of all peoples, their development, prosperity, and well-being – the life of future generations in true joy and genuine happiness.

Some Possible Aspects of the Emerging Post-Neoliberal World

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Keywords: East and West, Ukraine, Balkans

IT HAS taken me a long time to get around to writing this article. I kept putting it off, as though I was waiting for something. But soon the cause was Ukraine. It was obvious what we generally needed to do

to make our work in the Slavic world more effective, but I did not know how we should deal with the openly Russophobic Kiev regime that was bent on confrontation with our country. We could not build a fascist element into our system of foreign relations. And anyway, the general climate of international relations actively fostered by the neoliberals was depressing.

The breakup of the Soviet Union, the disintegration of the Eastern bloc, and the demise of Yugoslavia produced a host of independent states – most quite small in terms of area or population and with ruling elites that have had to constantly maneuver between East and West in search of a place in today's turbulent world. Such constant vacillation leads to weakness and an inability to clearly formulate national interests.

Nobody expected Putin to launch a military operation in Ukraine. I must confess, I had underestimated the profundity of our leader. He is a genius!!! I mean it – I'm not being some trite sycophant. Let's just do an analysis.

Humanity entered a new era, not the best in its history – a neoliberal era that benefited the West. Now everything was to be based on supposed rules. The “winners” of the Cold War assumed that the new free-for-all era would erode the moral foundations of the Slavo-Muslim civilization and provide them direct access to its riches. Throughout that period, Russia faced unprecedented external pressure, threats, and blackmail. We have been living in this environment for 31 years. Times of change are coming, and our leader, responding to external security challenges and threats to the country, merely accelerated that process by launching the military operation in Ukraine. He thus hastened the arrival of another world order – one we will have to build and defend.

There should definitely be a major addendum to Russia's foreign policy agenda – the Balkans. Russia should seek a more extensive presence in the region and stronger influence in it.

Today as never before, we need a powerful, well-structured European strategy with a focus on work in countries where we have opportunities to strengthen our positions tremendously.

The situation in Belarus remains complicated. It is essential for us how it pans out. Ukraine has taught us a lesson. Membership in the EAEU, CIS, and CSTO, and observer status in the SCO, remain powerful factors keeping Belarus involved in Eurasian processes.

As for Europe, right now there's nothing to talk about. Europe is experiencing processes that will be prolonged and painful, including for us. The current neoliberal rule will drain all stamina from the EU, and therefore the latter faces inevitable transformation. Self-adoration does little to motivate self-improvement. Narcissus was so entranced by his reflection that he did not notice that he had grown old.

The Balkans are a different story altogether. Russia retains unquestionable prestige in the region. Moscow should focus primarily on relations between ethnic Serbs and Muslims (i.e., the Bosnian Muslim community) and not the Albanian factor in Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. Though few people know this, the Bosnian Muslims are Slavs (unlike the Albanians). They are ethnic Serbs who converted to Islam during Ottoman rule because that made it easier for them to do business or climb the career ladder.

Today, any attempt at conciliation is hindered by “historical memory” – accusations of genocide, etc. But it is essential that conciliation attempts continue, and we should promote them. Why? Because it is in our interest that the Balkan states be stable and pursue independent foreign policies.

But attaining any goal of this kind requires careful systemic work, not emotional drive, which is sometimes our approach, unfortunately.

This should start with extensive expert research. [...] Everyone is waiting for statistics, key dates, and anniversaries, but this should be a mainstream subject.

Next, political scientists, journalists, and historians should be brought in.

Next, there should be broad public debate, targeted action, work with bloggers and students, and the organization of special courses at universities in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Macedonia, and Montenegro.

Finally, the issue must move into the political realm. Some political party or movement will certainly take it up.

Like the Yalta system or Bretton Woods system, the emerging world order must have a name. There can be no unnamed eras, nor can there be a world based on neoliberal rules.

In the early 1990s, Western political scientists and philosophers labeled the neoliberal world “the end of history,” which suggested it was the paragon of excellence. If that were true, it would be pretty bad. But no, Mr. Fukuyama, history goes on!

The Far Eastern Center of the Global Economy

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Keywords: Far Eastern Economic Center, West, China, Japan, Korea, GDP, manufacturing, trade, economic integration

RECENT statistics suggest that China, Japan, and South Korea are increasingly forming an economic unit comparable to the West. One naturally wonders whether this unit is going to become a formal association of some kind and whether such an association would counterbalance the West. There are no answers yet, but the three East Asian countries do possess the resources to form an economic center equal in scale and significance to the West. Let us tentatively label China, Japan, and South Korea the Far Eastern Economic Center (FEEC).

In this context, by the West we mean the US, the European Union, Britain, and Canada. A more detailed division of European countries into Western and non-Western would not be relevant to this study. Let us compare the West and the FEEC from the perspective of production scale, levels of scientific and technological development, and trade characteristics.

The FEEC is ahead of the West in terms of a wide range of manufactured goods. A good example is the steel industry as a producer of materials for the engineering, construction, and automotive sectors. The state of a country's automotive industry, which often normally produces various types of motor vehicles, is an indication of the state of the country's engineering sector as a whole.

China produces about half the world's steel. With its current levels of industrialization and urbanization, China needs large amounts of metal for manufacturing, construction, and transportation infrastructure development.

China's automotive industry is only 10% smaller than the West's as a whole.

Nearly all manufacturing facilities of some of the world's key engineering industries are located in the FEEC. Shipbuilding is one such industry. Practically all of the world's civilian vessels are built in China, Japan, or South Korea.

THE FEEC owes much of its industrial success to the broad use of cutting-edge technologies in China, Japan, and South Korea. All three countries began their outstanding economic development as

exporters of manufactured goods that were competitive due to cheap and increasingly skilled labor and a strong work ethic.

That is no longer the case. Today, the three nations base their economies on state-of-the-art technologies. They are the world's main industrial robot market (about two-thirds of installed industrial robots).

The high robot density in the FEEC countries is not surprising, as those countries are key manufacturers of motor vehicles and electronics; robots are indispensable in the automotive and electronics industries.

There are high technologies – for example, adaptive technology and artificial intelligence (AI) – where the West is the leader.

Statistics show large volumes of trade between the FEEC countries, and in all three partner countries it exceeds imports from Western countries: for China by 28%, for Japan by 34%, and for South Korea by 45%. China imports more from Japan than from the US, and China's aggregate imports from Japan and South Korea are nearly as large as its imports from the EU. China is, besides, the main source of imports for Japan and South Korea.

STATISTICS show that the FEEC is playing a growing role in the world economy and that the FEEC countries have intensively developing mutual economic relations. Let us look at determinants of this increasingly intensive cooperation within the FEEC.

1. Production by the three nations for FEEC markets and the use of Chinese resources and markets.
2. Activities by the FEEC countries in the world market to provide themselves with food, commodities, and fuel.
3. Coordination of activities by the FEEC nations in marketing their goods in developing countries.
4. The combining of forces by the FEEC countries to maintain their positions in Western markets.

Political unity, however, is not yet a feature of the FEEC. In this respect, the FEEC is different from the West, which can be seen as a single political entity due to political agreements and alliances existing within it.

CHINA, Japan, and South Korea have been conducting negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) since the early 2000s and have been holding annual summits on the subject since 2008. China and South Korea signed an FTA in 2014, but there is still no agreement bringing together all three FEEC nations.

It needs to be mentioned that in the past there were wars between China, Japan, and Korea (formerly a single state), which is bound to affect relations between the FEEC countries. But the EU was created by nations that had been enemies during World War II. An official association of China, Japan, and South Korea may never come into being, but formats such as Chinese-Japanese-South Korean summits that have been occurring since 2008 may prove an effective channels for addressing problems.

Statistics show that the Far Eastern Economic Center is a global economic center comparable to the West that is exerting a major influence on "Globalization 2.0" [3] and long-term global economic trends. No matter what economic alliances emerge in East, Southeast, and South Asia, the FEEC will play a decisive economic role in East Asia and worldwide.

Post-Soviet Central Asia: The Threat of Religious Extremism From the South

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Keywords: religious extremism, terrorism, Afghanistan, the Taliban, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, security, militants

THE BEGINNING of 2022 was marked by mass demonstrations in Kazakhstan, one of the largest CIS countries, connected with Russia by the closest economic and political partnership ties. The riots were eventually stopped with the support of a peacekeeping contingent of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) invited by the government of Kazakhstan. Speaking at an emergency CSTO summit meeting on January 10, 2022, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said that a “real terrorist war” had occurred in the republic with the participation of “international terrorists of known origin.”¹ Yerlan Karin, appointed state secretary by Tokayev in January, also noted the participation in the Kazakhstan uprising of “members of a number of radical and extremist organizations.”

The true extent of the involvement of religious extremists in the domestic conflict in Kazakhstan will (or will not?) be revealed by subsequent investigations. In the meantime, in the immediate wake of the events, several preliminary conclusions can be drawn. The first is that the religious factor remains important as an influential component of public life in all Central Asian nations.

BY September 2021, all foreign troops had withdrawn from this South Asian country and power had passed to the so-called transitional government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, formed by the Taliban after the complete occupation of Kabul by Taliban forces on August 15, 2021.

Many are quite pessimistic about Afghanistan’s prospects, believing that the current ruling regime is as repressive as the one that was in power in the 1990s. It is noteworthy that Taliban representatives claim that they adhere to a more moderate approach to daily life in Afghanistan compared to those who ruled the country in the 1990s.

According to data of the UN Security Council Monitoring Group published in June 2021, there are 200 to 500 fighters of Al Qaeda (banned in the Russian Federation) in Afghanistan; despite certain differences with the Taliban, Al Qaeda has until recently maintained ties with it.

Another terrorist organization banned in the Russian Federation, the Islamic State (IS), having failed in Syria and Iraq, has long considered Afghanistan its new station. Despite existing disagreements with the Taliban, IS often operates there through its offshoot, the Islamic StateKhorasan (IS-K).

The militants of Jamaat Ansarullah, who passed all the trials of the war against the US alongside the Taliban, have traditionally been the Taliban’s allies and its partners in the international coalition of Afghanistan government forces. Due to the large number of ethnic Tajiks in its ranks, it is also known as the Tajik Taliban.

A special place in the spectrum of religious extremist organizations represented in Afghanistan is held by those formed by Uyghurs from China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Among them is the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, an organization actively operating in Afghanistan and based primarily in the province of Badakhshan. It is also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party.

President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon shared similar information with the heads of CSTO member states: Since the second half of August 2021, the Taliban has released from Afghanistan's prisons many members of extremist and terrorist groups imprisoned by the previous regime. In addition, there are more than 40 militant training camps and centers in the northeastern provinces of Afghanistan.¹² So the fears that extremist groups in Afghanistan are stepping up their activities and their participants are seeking to strengthen their combat potential have serious merit.

This means that a conglomerate of radical and terrorist formations is openly operating on the borders of Russia's CIS and CSTO partners, which is a very alarming signal for the post-Soviet Central Asian states.

The security situation in the Central Asian region of the post-Soviet space may also be aggravated by the fact that outside forces, behind which generally looms the so-called collective West, are ready to use Islamists to undermine stability here in order to exert pressure on Russia and China, as well as Iran. From this perspective, the drama that played out in Kazakhstan in January 2022 could have killed two birds with one stone, had the forces that planned the rebellion achieved success.

Iran may also face major threats if Islamists move from Afghanistan to Central Asia, given that for Iran, the Caspian Central Asian region represents a peaceful rear that enables the country to concentrate its main forces in the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon) and in the Persian Gulf region.

In general, forecasts suggesting the destabilization of Central Asia by the forces of extremist and terrorist organizations based in Afghanistan are still hypothetical. And yet, such challenges should not be underestimated, especially since Central Asia is quite appealing to Islamist radicals.

The probability of an increase in the activity of international terrorist and extremist organizations based in Afghanistan is growing, and the chances of an expansion of the geography of their activities are also real. And these factors are becoming the main concern of the Central Asian states and their partners.

If the Taliban is seeking international recognition, it will not be able to ignore the growing international pressure aimed at combating all militant groups, including IS-K, the anti-Pakistan TTP, the anti-China ETIM, and other transnational terrorist and extremist organizations based in the country. If the Taliban is unable to guarantee a reduction of their activities or convincingly demonstrate their readiness to counter the threat of terrorism, the world's leading nations will abandon diplomatic recognition of the new government of Afghanistan and withhold the support that would enable the country to avert economic collapse and avoid becoming an international outcast like the old Taliban government that eventually met an inglorious end.

Prospects for a UN Security Council IIS Sanctions Mechanism

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Keywords: UN, cyber sanctions, international information security (IIS), international law, cyber sanctions mechanism, Russian-US relations

SANCTIONS are a political tool of modern nation-states and international organizations. These are restrictive measures aimed at changing the political course of a target country, as well as impacting violators of national and international norms. UN sanctions are coercive measures to enforce compliance with the norms of international law.

Today, digital challenges have become a major international problem. On one hand, cyberspace has emerged as an arena of competition between the leading powers. On the other, digital crime is growing fast, the rights of individuals and entities are being violated, the security of states is being undermined, and national and international laws are being violated. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation worse. Countries are trying to solve cyber problems on their own. They are also using unilateral economic sanctions to retaliate against illegal actions in the digital environment or to force individual countries or persons to change their behavior. The European Union and the US are among the most active initiators of such unilateral measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated the situation in cyberspace. According to the Canalsys research firm, over 12 billion records, containing a range of personal identifiable information, were reportedly compromised in 2020, while the number of known ransomware attacks increased by nearly 60%.

Terrorist organizations are using ICTs to recruit new members and spread their ideology. The main threat, however, is the use of ICTs for military purposes.

THERE is still no exhaustive definition of sanctions in international documents: Each specific case of their use is regarded individually, and a certain set of measures is introduced against the violator as a result.

It is important to note that, according to Russian First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov, Russia considers cyber sanctions unacceptable for IIS cooperation. At the same time, Russia calls for “developing effective rules to prevent conflicts in cyberspace.” In addition, from Russia’s perspective, unilateral restrictive and coercive measures without UNSC authorization, “qualify, under international law, as illegal interference in the domestic affairs of a country concerned.”

It is important to stress that the UN is the only universal supranational source of restrictive measures. At the same time, the leading powers cannot achieve their political goals through UN mechanisms since the organization limits “national egotism.” In this context, several countries impose unilateral sanctions in circumvention of UNSC decisions. In doing so, they “are interested in legitimizing their decisions at the UNSC level, seeking to harmonize their actions with UN decisions.”²² However, it is also important to note that the UN has failed to significantly ease unilateral restrictions introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, in the absence of a global body to ensure compliance with international law in cyberspace, UN cyber sanctions could be a valuable tool to issue a warning to cyber transgressors, enforce compliance, or impose punishments for illicit activities in cyberspace.

ACCORDING to some experts, right now, instead of investigating cyber incidents, states use the attribution of cyber attacks as the main mechanism for imposing cyber sanctions.²⁷ This mechanism is based on leveling an accusation of malicious cyber-enabled activities, unsubstantiated by legally valid evidence, against any individual, company, or state.

The prospects for creating a multilateral mechanism for UN cyber sanctions remain unclear, since interstate competition in cyberspace is hindering consensus in the UN. Nevertheless, in the absence of an institution to ensure compliance with international law in cyberspace, UN cyber sanctions can be an effective tool to issue a warning, enforce compliance, or impose punishments for illicit activities in cyberspace.

New Generations of Russia’s Foreign Policy Doctrine

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a.bobrov@inno.mgimo.ru *The first article about Russia's foreign policy doctrines by A. Bogaturov, O. Lebedeva, and A. Bobrov, "The Evolution of Russia's Foreign Policy Doctrine," was published in International Affairs, Vol. 68, No. 2 (2022), pp. 72-91.*

Keywords: Russia, foreign policy, concept, doctrine, international relations

IN SPRING 2008, when Dmitry Medvedev, first deputy prime minister from 2005 to 2008, was elected president and Vladimir Putin returned to his old post of prime minister, relations with the West were deteriorating. The 2008 presidential election created a so-called "tandem," with all domestic and foreign policy tools in its hands.

The Russian leaders declared that they were ready to respond in the future to any threats to Russian citizens at home and abroad.

In spring 2009, before the US articulated its foreign policy program, Moscow formulated its own platform that allowed Russian diplomacy to respond, in one way or another, to the moods of the new American administration. Moscow concluded that partnership with the West was not the only option: Russia was prepared to achieve its aims in world politics together with the West if possible or without it if this proved to be impossible.

Obama and his administration decided to modify America's policy toward Russia – the "reset" concept, presented during the visit of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Russia, being one of the results.

In Moscow the idea of starting "from scratch" was interpreted as a sign that the US was moving away from the postulates that had prevented dialogue under the Republicans. It seemed as if the Americans were inviting Russia to act together.

Russia's obvious intention to move away from its polemics with the West made it possible to restore its dialogue with NATO. In fall 2010, Medvedev attended a meeting of the Russia-NATO Council in Lisbon, which meant that contacts at the top had been restored. This led to the idea of cooperation on missile defense.

In November 2011, Medvedev announced that talks with the US on a joint missile defense program had been discontinued. The US responded by abandoning its obligations to Russia under the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Tension was mounting. A session of the Russia-NATO Council scheduled for April 2012 was not convened because of incompatible missile defense directives.

The collapse of the "reset" policy affected not only the future of relations between Russia, the US, and NATO, but also domestic policies. The Russian prime minister described the events in Libya as a NATO "crusade," while the president rejected that definition as unacceptable and preferred not to interfere in the conflict in order to preserve the "reset." It seems that Putin decided to run for president in the next presidential election partly because of disagreements on foreign policy issues.

RUSSIAN-AMERICAN relations were gradually deteriorating under the pressure of sanctions tied to the Magnitsky Act of 2012, the Snowden case of 2013, etc. Russia was disagreeing with the West more obviously and more actively. This was most clearly manifested by Russia's position on Syria.

The coup of February 2014 in Kiev transferred power to a proAmerican and pro-European government. The president fled the country, while the country paid for its new orientation with the de facto separation of Donbass and the reunification of Crimea with Russia.

Germany, France, Britain, Italy, and other European countries supported the US in its encouragement of Ukraine's policies. Canada and Japan joined the European chorus. NATO took an offensive stance against Russia and posed as a "defender" of the interests of the country, which is not even a NATO member. In fact, to join NATO, Kiev should be trying to restore the lost unity with southeast Ukraine.

THE US and EU used the Ukraine crisis to introduce more sanctions and thus increase pressure on Russia. Moscow responded with "mirror" countermeasures: It froze the formats of diplomatic cooperation between the West and Russia.

Since 2014, the process of Russia's and China's rapprochement has accelerated; both countries demonstrated a lot of effort to transform the "G-5" (BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) into a platform of a coordinated "not the West" economic program.

THE latter part of the 2010s was filled with various events of international and domestic political consequence. It was quite logical, therefore, that the need arose in early 2022 for an updated Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation that would reflect the changes of 2010-2020.

The specifics of the conceptualization of Russia's foreign policy doctrines suggests that the next version of the Foreign Policy Concept will pay special attention to the problems of Russia's environmental security. In his speeches, President Putin invariably speaks about certain aspects of environmental challenges caused by global warming and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the need to develop international cooperation on the environment and environmental protection.

Speaking at the extended meeting of the Foreign Ministry Board on November 18, 2021, President Putin said: "We will also fix the specific areas of foreign policy, of our diplomatic work in today's difficult international conditions in the new version of the Foreign Policy Concept that is now being drafted. This document, along with the National Security Strategy endorsed this summer, will, actually, become a roadmap for the Foreign Ministry and other ministries and departments."

We Need a New Economic Policy

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Keywords: new economic policy, Grigory Sokolnikov, Russia and the World: Dialogues – 2022, finance and economics

IT IS a great honor for me to be here today. I am not a professional economist. But the walls of this building are associated with finding solutions to problems related to the national economy and our future development.

The financial and economic crisis of 2008 shattered the established paradigm of "exact" economic theories. It suddenly turned out that the human factor in the economy was becoming crucial and that it did not easily lend itself to predictive modeling. Another well-known postulate – that politics is a concentrated expression of economics – does not work, either. Today, politics rules over economics

arbitrarily. What am I driving at? I am not against theories, but Russia's positioning in the real world is equally important, and this world dictates the need for a new economic policy.

We need a "new economic policy" in our day. Some people are scared of the words "mobilization economy." Well, don't use that expression if it frightens you. Call it a mixed or any other kind of economy, as long as it is effective and up to the challenges we are now facing.

We certainly have a shortage of personnel in virtually all important areas of life in the country. I hope that the professionals who are "forged" within these walls will become responsible decision-makers. The time of the generation of economists who relied on laboratory studies is gone. We need a new economic policy, and to implement it, we need people like Grigory Sokolnikov and his assistants.

Dear friends, I have always been suspicious of the assumption that "we will be helped from abroad." We have lived with this assumption for a very long time in both the Soviet and the post-Soviet periods. The trend here was that since the Western states were global technology leaders, this almost automatically ranked them as our main helpers. We saw no point in competing with them for top positions in the system of the international division of labor, especially in a globalizing world. Now we say: Asia is our everything. China, India...

Of course, I am not in favor of "isolationism" – quite the contrary. Using different azimuths in foreign policy and foreign economic relations, we should strengthen the feet on which we stand. We should not go from one extreme to another – from a dependence we have already felt to thinking that China and India are "our everything." To begin with, we have yet to see how exactly they will act. In any case, we should work with everyone while pursuing our main goal: Russia's independence and self-sustainability. In conclusion, I want to say that there is yet another postulate: "Politics is the art of the possible." But there are times and epochs when people, nations, and history itself expect politics to do more than is possible or even to achieve the impossible. We are at a watershed moment in history.

Russian in the Global Linguocultural Space

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Keywords: Russian language, cultural interaction, unity in variety, speech as a source of information, open information society, European multilingualism

EACH language (even those with few speakers) has its own intrinsic potential that makes it irreplaceable to humanity. Its loss deprives civilization of an important cultural layer.

We cannot reject the fact that the development of languages, reflecting the "ups and downs" of nations and civilizations and the extent of their cultural expansion, is an important part of the global landscape. As could be expected, the English language, as the official tongue of a huge colonial empire, dominates the world cultural process. As the state language of the US, a rapidly developing "fragment" of the colonial space, it claims the role of a universal tongue. Due to the long history of the colonial past of Spain and France and their leading positions in the world, their official languages and cultures have become fairly widespread.

The connection between the history of colonialism and the process of the cultural expansion of states directly indicates the need to take stock of Russia's imperial past. There is an obvious, even if superficial, analogy between the factors that ensured the linguistic mobility of the Russian language compared with the languages of other empires. That analogy, however, does not go deep into the essence of this phenomenon.

Unlike Western countries, the political regime of Russia relied on total domination of the state (absolutism), consolidated by means of socioeconomic modernization and territorial acquisitions. Aware of the increasing scarcity of the means needed to maintain its might, the autocracy never tried to reshape the colonial periphery to conform to the Russian cultural code.

In the Russian Empire, this type of "cultural domination" (Alexander Etkind) developed into ethnocultural integration in which "unity is achieved not through the unity of the similar but the unity of varied images and meanings."

The very important civilizational mission of the Russian language as a translator of the cultural achievements of the peoples of the postSoviet space is explained by the fact that for a very long historical period it was developing as a social link of the peoples that lived in one state. Intensifying integration processes and economic cooperation are opening a new page of the linguocultural future of the Russian people and the peoples of the near abroad.

The results of a 2020 study by the Pushkin Russian Language Institute demonstrated the role of the Russian language in the fast-changing contemporary world. Even though the Russian language is eighth among the countries of the world in terms of number of speakers, it is fourth in terms of its status in international organizations.

In current social practice, the Russian language is gradually developing into a basis of two dialectically opposite trends: a material vehicle of the developing national culture (this can be said about any other language) and a source of universal cultural integrity that is manifesting itself as the world moves toward postmodernity.

THE POTENTIAL of the Russian language in the architecture of global postmodernity depends, to a great extent, on its ability to adapt to and develop amid the mounting dynamics of the cultural process.

This brings to the fore two main problems: First, Russian must preserve its status as an aggregator of the national spiritual culture as a whole and, second, consolidate its positions in multiplying Russian traditional values.

The transformation of the cultural landscape reflects certain global trends; it needs navigational aids of sorts – strategic reference points in the "stormy waters of change" in linguistics and other areas. The state should offer "pilot charts" for culture; it should not ban but offer correct axiological reference points to protect and preserve national identity.

THE MODEL of European multilingualism is especially important from the standpoint of possible trends of linguistic globalization.

The fundamental value of an integrational alliance is, to a certain extent, a project of the future common global cultural space and the place and role of national languages in its formation.

The hierarchy of official use of the languages of the EU's leading countries has not been completely removed. While English, French, and German have the status of procedural languages in the European Commission and are used on an everyday basis, Italian and Spanish are treated as "supporting languages." There is a certain misbalance in language studies at European universities.

In Europe, the linguistic situation is determined by the fears of a considerable part of the local population of losing its language and, therefore, national and cultural identity despite the declared strategy of preserving linguistic diversity. This explains why the term “linguistic protectionism” has become part of everyday parlance: Society is focused on preserving the linguistic identity of each of the united ethnic groups and peoples.

It seems that the policy of promoting linguistic universality on the basis of the most widely used languages, primarily English, has very little to do with the declared strategy of multilingualism.

Brexit created a paradoxical situation with respect to the continued promotion of English linguistic universalism.

LIKE ALL other languages, the Russian language, as a living organism or life-giving substance of the cultural organization of identities, is not free from globalizational impacts.

The Russian language and the global linguocultural space as a whole are affected by objective factors that direct development toward a transcultural model that does not exclude identification diversity and subjective, politically engaged forces determined to unify the planet’s linguistic landscape and homogenize it.

The idea of cultural “autonomization” of the national linguistic space amid the growing monolingualism of international communication in English looks unrealistic. In fact, the Zamenhoff project of Esperanto, a universal language designed to overcome the negative effects of the domination of one language in international communication, was cut short in the 1950s by the US’s active promotion of its own language as a cultural dominant.

The natural quality of the Russian language stems from its development from folk origins and its nondifferentiation into a language of the lower class and a language of the elite. Folk culture was and remains the inexhaustible source of Russian culture and language. The negative innovations in the Russian language are forms (mainly integrating linguistic forms borrowed from corresponding Western vocabulary) that serve the linguistic needs of the rich upper class of society who live in “trends,” wear “brands,” are “creative” and, in general, part of “glamour.”

It should be said in all fairness that linguistic globalization may produce positive results as well. Languages of the world are mutually enriching; they borrow the cultural experience of their carriers. It would be hard to imagine modern Russian without such words as assembly, collegium, navigation, etc., borrowed by the Russian language during the times of Peter I and no longer perceived as foreign.

It would seem that the cognitive function of the Russian language is expanding under the pressure of globalization. To a certain extent, the positive assessments of its transformation as an instrument of cognition in connection with the disappearance of the “iron curtain” are correct, yet the increasing integration of Russian into the world academic space has produced both positive and negative results.

Russia’s Policy in the Caspian Region: Challenges and New Opportunities

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Keywords: Caspian Region, Russia, convention, infrastructure, Caspian states

THE Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea, signed in August 2018, opened a new stage of regional development. It specified rules related to many issues and created new possibilities for economic growth of the littoral states in navigation, development of port infrastructure, and the extraction and delivery of hydrocarbons to external markets.

In recent years, countries in the region have been showing a lot of interest in infrastructure projects in the littoral area, primarily related to ports and the extraction of hydrocarbons. Caspian Sea states are actively involved in international transportation projects that attract bigger freight flows. Larger investments in multimodal transportation corridors that cross the Caspian Sea and coastal territories have become a key aspect of their policies. They are developing ambitious projects related to increased transit possibilities that are expected to develop into transportation hubs.

RUSSIA increased its attention on transportation in the Caspian Region even before the signing of the Convention. It developed the Strategy for the Development of Russian Seaports in the Caspian Basin and Rail and Road Approaches to Them in the Period Until 2030.

THE Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea summed up a certain period of Russia's Caspian policy; this "constitution of the Caspian" formulated the "rules of the game."

Russia's Caspian policy had to take into account the increased activities of the Caspian states seeking to implement projects to tap the Caspian transit potential and create new transport corridors. Many of these projects were lobbied by nonregional states seeking to promote their own interests.

Russia has not only upgraded its own ports but also expanded cooperation with its Caspian neighbors. The Caspian countries discuss the implementation of international infrastructure projects at bilateral and multilateral meetings that are normally represented by heads of state.

Russia is especially interested in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), with a "Caspian voice" ensured by participation of Caspian states.

IN ADDITION to initiatives to develop freight transport, the Caspian countries have been looking for options to increase hydrocarbon exports to the external market using coastal Caspian infrastructure. This concerns primarily several Caspian ports, created as a "window of opportunities" for the export or transshipment of hydrocarbons, mainly oil.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were especially interested in oil exporting infrastructure. In recent years, crude oil from Kazakhstan and Russia's oilfields north of the Caspian has been sent through Makhachkala to Azerbaijan. Russia is satisfied with that arrangement, but Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan still hope for direct access to pipelines connected with the West. At the turn of the 21st century, when Azerbaijan increased oil and gas extraction, the trans-Caspian oil and gas pipelines projects were postponed, but not abandoned. The US, and the EU are still interested in building them.

THE SIGNED Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea was a real breakthrough in talks among the Caspian Five. Certain problems, however, remained unclarified but should be resolved to promote positive development of the Caspian Region. Iran is the only state that so far has not ratified the Convention. According to Art. 22: "This Convention shall enter into force on the date of the receipt by the Depositary of the fifth instrument of ratification."

When addressing long-term tasks, Russia should take into account changes in the region and in regional states. Today, Russia is facing increased activity by the TITR countries. China is very much interested in its implementation so that it can expand exports to Europe across Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey.

Growing transport cooperation among the Caspian countries is accompanied by their steadily increasing rivalry and struggle for cargo flows associated with the modernization of their own fleets and port

infrastructure. At the same time, the volume of cargo and hydrocarbon extraction is lagging. To defend their interests, the countries rely on all sorts of mechanisms of state support, including preferential interest rates on loans, subsidies, and co-financing by the state. This is done by Russia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan, while Iran and Turkmenistan use preferential services in ports.

In recent years, Russia has been paying more attention to the Caspian. In the turbulent geopolitical situation, the Caspian Region can remain an “oasis of peace” only through concerted efforts.²⁹ Russia proceeds from the above to build up its regional policies with the help of effective mechanisms of interaction and dealing with regional problems within the Caspian Five format.

China’s “Soft Power” in the Assessments of Russian and Chinese Scholars: A Comparative Analysis

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Keywords: China, Russia, China’s “soft power,” “smart power,” China’s foreign policy, international relations

IN THE first quarter of the 21st century, China’s influence in the world has risen considerably, drawing the interest of researchers from various countries. Analysts curious about the driving forces of this success agree that “China’s peaceful rise” has largely been due to the use of “soft power” tools. The 2022 Winter Olympics is a pertinent example: They offered the world an image of a successful China and a symbolic victory over the COVID-19 pandemic.

ANALYSTS on both sides of the Russian-Chinese border agree that the soft power phenomenon has gone through a long process of adaptation to Chinese realities and has now become an integral part of China’s foreign policy strategy. It should be said that Chinese analysts have offered several interpretations of soft power, which define similar concepts with different meanings. The following deserve special mention: ruǎn lìliàng and ruǎn shíli – “soft power”; ruǎn quánli – “soft might”; ruǎn guólì – “soft rule”; míngzhì de lìliàng – “wise power” [26, p. 182].

Early in the 2000s, China’s fast economic growth persuaded the academic community that soft power played a certain role in the process and that it was closely connected with China’s international image. In May 2004, the revived discussion forced academics to study Chinese soft power at a new level.

The Chinese academic community also discussed the so-called Chinese model, its features and specifics. On one hand, the authors of the discussed works were proud of the achieved results; on the other, they commented that the Chinese model exacerbated already existing problems: environmental pollution and the gap between the rich and the poor.

Chinese researchers had to answer another question: What were the main resources of soft power in the PRC? While some pointed to culture as the key element, others, without diminishing its importance, paid more attention to political power, military might, and public diplomacy (gōng wàijiào) as the basic principles of China’s soft power (ruǎn shíli) strategy.

After the 17th Congress of the Communist Party of China (2007), the soft power concept was adjusted in light of national specifics and the task of promoting China's positive image in the world [16, p. 151].

Today, Chinese analysts identify the attractive economic development model of China and media and diplomacy as the main soft power tools expected to ensure China's smooth transformation into a global leader. Jin Kanrong comments that China's soft power strategy has been embodied in "smiling diplomacy, a smiling face, modesty, charm, equality, peaceful coexistence, etc." [6, p. 18].

Russian experts widely view soft power as a set of "tools and methods for achieving foreign policy aims" without the use of force. Some Russian experts believe that the American form of soft power is used to manipulate public consciousness and interfere in the internal affairs of states, while the Chinese form of soft power largely corresponds with the task of forming a multipolar world order.

As information-communication technologies develop and increasingly impact all areas of life, the smart power strategy is the most rational policy; it is free of myths, ideologemes, and stereotypes. In the Chinese interpretation, this is power reflected in balanced diplomacy and international harmony through the realization of the "scientific development concept" and Deng Xiaoping's seven principles.

Most Russian scholars view the consolidation of soft power as a means of coping with China's domestic problems and transforming it into a global actor in the international arena. On the whole, they theoretically analyze soft power resources and criteria of its effectiveness.

Chinese scientists have no common opinion about how to define China's soft power, but they do agree that it is an effective foreign policy tool. The Chinese academic community has initiated broad discussions and contemplation about China's soft power, which differs from the American model. Overall, Chinese analysts are proud of their results.

We can say that Chinese and Russian authors agree that role of soft power in China's foreign policy is increasing and being used effectively, even if this demands considerable economic and intellectual costs.

Tel Aviv's Position on Events in Ukraine

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Keywords: Tel Aviv's maneuvers regarding the events in Ukraine, Israel's violation of international law, obstruction of the political solution to the Middle East conflict, Israeli occupation practices and the situation of the Palestinian people, Washington's pressure on Israel to take anti-Russian positions.

CURRENT EVENTS in and around Ukraine are attracting the attention of the world community and the media in many countries. Following the trends, many political analysts and journalists have fashioned themselves into "experts" on Ukraine and Russian-Ukrainian relations. In the wake of growing anti-Russian hysteria, politicians from Western countries and their allies from other world regions have also joined in, often making rash and hasty statements for short-term effect in an effort to assert their own importance. At the same time, they care little about the effect those statements may have on finding a resolution to the situation in Ukraine or whether they could be counterproductive.

Alas, this is taking place against the backdrop of the accumulated positive experience of collaboration, when Russia has repeatedly assisted Israel in resolving its very sensitive issues.

Knowing the threat of terrorism firsthand, our country invariably expresses sympathy and unconditional solidarity in connection with terrorist attacks in Israel that unfortunately continue to occur periodically, especially in recent times.

With this in mind, it is especially strange to hear anti-Russian statements from the foreign minister of Israel – the country that for decades has been primarily responsible for the lack of a peaceful solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. One of the oldest regional problems, it continues to negatively affect the lives and destinies of millions of people in the Middle East, as well as international security.

For decades, Israel has been continuously expanding its military, judicial, and administrative presence in territories where, according to UN resolutions and international law, the Palestinian state was to emerge, effectively annexing its territory. As a result of this policy, more than 630,000 Jewish settlers now live in the West Bank. An extensive network of roads, hospitals, checkpoints, and settlements under Israeli military guard has been built for them, some erected on the site of the demolished buildings of Arab residents. At the same time, the lands designated by the UN for the Palestinian state are turning into a “patchwork quilt” of scattered enclaves.

The situation in the Gaza Strip deserves separate mention. For historical, political, and demographic reasons, Gaza ended up in a unique situation. Eighty percent of the population of this region, one of the most densely populated areas in the world with about 2 million people living in 362 sq. km, ended up in the area involuntarily. These are refugees – Palestinians expelled by Israelis from their ancestral lands as a result of the constant expansion of the Israeli state. The vast majority of the sector’s inhabitants are de facto locked in a reservation. They are inmates in a huge open-air prison, living for many years in conditions of an Israel-imposed complete sea and air blockade and almost complete land blockade.

The real situation can be summed up as follows. As noted in numerous documents prepared by UN experts and think tanks in the Middle East, the humanitarian situation of Gazans is constantly on the verge of collapse due to the 15-year Israeli blockade; the delivery of food, fuel, and medical supplies is reduced to the level of physical survival.

In addition to the existing disagreements with Damascus, Israel, under the pretext of ensuring national security, has been striking targets deep in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic in the past few years. Such actions grossly violate international law, trample on Syria’s sovereignty, and create the danger of further escalation of confrontation in the region – a fact that Moscow has repeatedly pointed out.

Attacks by the Israeli Air Force pose a direct threat to the lives of Russian service personnel assisting the legitimate Syrian authorities in their fight against terrorism. An air attack against a Syrian facility in the Latakia region on September 17, 2018 caused the death of 15 Russian officers after a plane crash. Israel would be completely wrong to assume that the incident has been fully settled.

We see how a number of states, such as Israel and, of course, its main ally, the US, have allowed themselves to disregard the need to comply with international legal norms. For many years they have been ignoring binding resolutions of the UN Security Council as well as other decisions of this global organization. They modify the basic principles of international law and multilateral agreements according to their taste and choice, like dishes from a restaurant menu, replacing them with fictitious spur-of-the-moment rules. Both Washington and Tel Aviv seem to have come to believe that they have a special dispensation to commit such violations.

I would like to return to Yair Lapid’s statement, made in the context of the recent events around Ukraine, that “war is not a means to resolve conflicts.” Perhaps, in this case, the Israeli leadership will consider the possibility of immediately starting negotiations with the Palestinians in order to implement the UN decision on creating two states? Or will the Israeli foreign minister, who declared that “the

Russian invasion of Ukraine is a serious violation of the international order,” review the foundations of this order again, if only for academic purposes?

In general, speaking out in support of the Ukrainian regime (and it is not possible to interpret Lapid’s words any other way), which openly embarked on a path of the Nazification of all aspects of its state and public life, can only be seen as blasphemy. This is a betrayal of the memory of the numerous Jews who were tortured to death at Babi Yar, in Volyn, and other places in Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus by Banderite executioners. We hope that Tel Aviv will change its rhetoric in this respect and give an objective assessment of the neo-Nazi practice obstinately imposed by the Kiev regime.

Demonstrating an opportunistic approach and playing along with the Russophobic course of the West is a very short-sighted tactic during a cardinal transformation of the world order. There is no doubt that this line of action will jeopardize Israel’s cooperation with Russia – a global center of 21st-century power and development and a country that continues to play a crucial role in world affairs, including on issues of ensuring international security that also encompass the Middle East.

After Afghanistan: The US Assesses the Results of the 20-Year War

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Keywords: US, 20-year Afghan war, Vietnam War

EVENTS around Ukraine have naturally overshadowed many other aspects of life in other countries, including the US, where the results of the 20-year war in Afghanistan became a hot topic in late 2021. But it seems that this topic will inevitably be revisited as the most recent experience of direct military operations by the US Armed Forces.

Some Russian experts have recently been saying that the US has not won a single war in its history. That way of putting it is not quite right: Critics could say that about any world power. There have been victories in the US’s recent history – for example, the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait in 1990, the war in Yugoslavia in 1999, and the subsequent seizure of Iraq. Meanwhile, major defeats and debacles, such as in Vietnam, are increasingly becoming an area of military historical analysis. Yet, no one would deny that even the US’s victories were partial.

THE US has decided that it would be good to analyze the negative experience of the Afghan war, and it stated that publicly. In this context, a comparison between the Afghan saga and the Vietnam war begged to be made; although, generally speaking, these analogies do not seem all that correct, both in terms of the conditions and extent to which the US was involved in the long-running conflict, as well as the moral component. The same goes for the impact on American society.

THERE are some differences between the Soviet and US actions in Afghanistan, but there are also similarities. There are three key factors here. First, a fundamental difference between the Soviet and US positions in Afghanistan was that almost all countries were opposed to the Soviet Union – the US, Western Europe, China, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and even friendly India. But unlike the US, the USSR directly bordered Afghanistan, which made it easier to supply the troops but required increased technical efforts, considering the undeveloped transportation network along the southern border. The US was located far away, which forced the Americans to deploy their troops in advance and then organize elaborate airlifts.

By contrast, everyone, including Russia, tried to help the Americans. The only exceptions were individuals and organizations who sympathized with Al Qaeda and the Taliban movement, but they were powerless to prevent the redeployment of troops.

Second, the US fell into the same trap the Soviets had, trying to remake Afghanistan according to its own patterns.

Third, the results of the US presence [in Afghanistan] seem worse than those of the Soviet campaign.

Finally, as they pulled out, the Soviets withdrew their weapons and military equipment, whereas the US simply left their weaponry behind for the Taliban.

THE PROSPECT of pulling out of the Afghan uncertainty had been bandied about for several years; it was discussed by the Trump administration, but the decision was not made and implemented until late summer 2021. In this context, Biden's August 16, 2021 remarks explaining the White House's logic and subsequent course of action regarding the Afghan issue are extremely important: "We went to Afghanistan almost 20 years ago with clear goals: get those who attacked us on September 11th, 2001, and make sure Al Qaeda could not use Afghanistan as a base from which to attack us again. We did that."

NEVERTHELESS, American society experienced a certain demoralizing effect. The euphoria over the elimination of Osama bin Laden gradually gave way to doubts regarding the future goals of the US military presence in Afghanistan and disappointment over the failure to establish order there. The feeling that the US had suffered a defeat in Afghanistan became more widespread, including within the military.

Efforts were made to neutralize such sentiments, including through the organization of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, but that was not enough. The US administration paid various benefits and pensions to direct participants in combat operations, but this group of people accounts for the bulk of the discontent. Veterans and ex-military service personnel largely do not understand why they risked their lives.

THE US operation in Afghanistan, known as Enduring Freedom, had a significant impact on relations with allies – Canada, Great Britain, Australia, France, Italy, Turkey, Romania, and Germany, among others. Of course, each ally contributed to military operations and logistical support – in some cases, considerably (Great Britain and Canada).

Clearly, the biggest problem in allied relations was that the US leadership made important tactical, operational, and strategic decisions almost independently, confronting its allies with a *fait accompli*. Many Western observers were troubled by the way the US command treated its allies during the evacuation from Kabul, which looked more like a panicked retreat.

THIS ARTICLE has outlined only the key elements of the failure of the US mission in Afghanistan. The [Afghanistan War] Commission may highlight other problems – for example, lack of interagency coordination, different assessments of ongoing changes and the role of political forces, the state of Afghan society, the underestimation of its moral and motivational components, and the underestimation or overestimation of the US's own actions and combat capabilities. And the main question, of course, is this: To what extent does the US acknowledge the effectiveness of its efforts to transplant its model of democracy into the non-European world?

The Outsourcing of Intelligence Services in the US

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Keywords: private intelligence, corporate intelligence, business intelligence, competitive intelligence, strategic intelligence, outsourced intelligence

MOST PEOPLE learned about the way the state security system functions in the US only when Edward Snowden fled to Russia. It has become abundantly clear that the visible system of US intelligence services is only the tip of the iceberg, while a huge branch of private intelligence agencies is hidden below the surface.

THE HISTORY of cooperation between state institutions and private companies in the field of national security and intelligence goes back to the time when the US appeared.

The first documented experience of cooperation between the US Army and a private intelligence agency (the Mexican Spy Company) took place during the AmericanMexican war of 1846-1848 [2, p. 34].

Not infrequently, American state national security institutions – e.g., the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the precursor to the CIA) and the Pentagon (in particular, the US Navy) – set up private organizations to carry out secret operations and do undercover intelligence work. One such organization was The Pond, a company set up in 1942 probably as a result of a confrontation between OSS head Col.

The highly commercialized scientific-technical intelligence field is another area of interest of US intelligence services.

THE STATE contracts with private intelligence companies for the following reasons:

1. Staff quotas [...to bypass and to find loopholes and “hacks” to avoid federal employment quotas].
2. Bureaucracy. Decision-making in private companies is much faster than in state departments: There is no need to coordinate the planned actions with dozens of other agencies, generals, and bureaucrats.
3. Competence. Private companies are better at dealing with urgent problems created by new technologies and security threats, otherwise they would not be competitive.
4. Financial reasons. One member of a hired private company is much cheaper for the US budget than one staff officer.
5. No diplomatic repercussions for the activities of nonstate intelligence companies.
6. Secrecy and supervision.

ACCORDING to Tim Shorrock, author of *Spies for Hire: The Secret World of Intelligence Outsourcing* [6], based on Edward Snowden’s information, the total number of civilians hired as private contractors by US intelligence is 58,000, of whom 45,000 are employed by the five biggest monopolist contractors Leidos, Booz Allen Hamilton, CSRA, SAIC, and CACI International.

What is extremely significant is the fact that American private intelligence companies are part of expansive efforts to use old and new secret agencies not registered as elements of the US intelligence community in covert operations designed to destroy the economies of certain countries.

TODAY, private intelligence companies are on the rise once again: Nonclassical (both legitimate and illegitimate) actors are invading the realm of international relations, which they are turning into

business projects, while the mounting hybridization of armed conflicts makes the services of private intelligence companies very much needed and in some cases even irreplaceable.

We can say with a high degree of probability that the privatization of intelligence has turned into a sustainable and steadily growing trend. Private intelligence companies offer the widest possible range of services – from open source intelligence (OSINT) to the use of their own agents in the client’s interests. In the US, their clients are the Pentagon and intelligence services that belong to the official intelligence communities.

India’s Foreign Policy Choice in the Context of Military and Energy Security

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SINCE 2014, relations between the US and its allies, on the one hand, and the Russian Federation, on the other, have deteriorated over the incorporation of Crimea into Russia, which led to sanctions being placed on Russia, as well as on third countries interacting with Russia in areas subject to sanctions. A case in point is the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). The US Senate drew attention to a deal that India had signed with Russia to buy a batch of S-400 [surface-to-air missile] systems from [state-run arms exporter] Rosoboronexport, a Russian military organization that was included on the sanctions list. In 2018, sanctions were also imposed on China under CAATSA for similar cooperation with Russia.

Following the adoption of CAATSA in 2018, India established a “rupee-ruble” mechanism for all military contracts with Russia. But in light of the recent events in Ukraine in February 2022, due to the ongoing special military operation, the deterioration of relations between the US (and its allies) and Russia (and its allies) and the imposition of a tough sanctions regime that makes Russia the most sanctioned country in the world, the debate about secondary sanctions against India under CAATSA has reopened.

India’s stance remains neutral: It does not support Russia’s special operation in Ukraine, but it is not joining the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies, either.

In this context, let us consider three scenarios and possible vectors of India’s foreign policy toward Russia and the US.

Scenario No. 1: India Follows the US and Its Western Allies.

IF THIS scenario plays out, India would join all US and Western sanctions against Russia. However, this approach would make India heavily dependent on the US militarily and politically. In this case, India also needs to consider the extent to which the US and its allies would be willing to provide it with the latest technologies and platforms.

Scenario No. 2: India Supports Russia and Defies the US and Its Western Allies.

THE US and India would go their separate ways, with India expanding and deepening military-technical and energy contacts with Russia. Russia would also become a mediator in normalizing relations with China, a guarantor of respect for the interests of and mutual trust between the two countries.

This scenario would minimize Indian-US ties, as well as opportunities that India would have as a US ally in the Indo-Pacific region. Relations with the US would become even more complicated if Indian-Chinese relations normalize.

Scenario No. 3: India Maintains Strategic Relations With Russia and Compromises With the US.

THE THIRD scenario is a balancing act on the part of India to maintain cooperation with both the US and Russia. In this scenario, India would offer significant opportunities to American arms manufacturers and accept some important conditions set by Washington. In return, it would be able to interact with Russia in the strategic military and geopolitical security sphere, as well as on energy security.

India's energy diplomacy is also oriented toward Russia and the US. With high demand for energy (in the current situation and in the future), India is considering all sources of imports at reasonable prices. Both Russia and the US are important partners for India, and it can diversify its supplier base in both directions. Some experts believe that if India has enough weight in its energy diplomacy with the US, then it will be able to find a way to circumvent sanctions and pursue strategic cooperation with Russia. Increased energy purchases from the US and parallel purchases of Russian oil at a discount may be an important step for India. Thus, the third scenario is the most likely for India's foreign policy guidelines.

The consequences of the current sanctions, the scale of possible future sanctions, and the reconfiguration of the world order, which is clearly intensifying, are key issues for India and Russia. India is currently assessing the risks that sanctions pose to its cooperation with Russia to see how the two countries can advance to a new level of relations based on long-term trust.

Germany and the Visegrád Four: One for All and All for One?

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Keywords: the Visegrád Four, Germany, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, EU, NATO, European integration, European strategic autonomy, EU army

GERMANY'S interaction with the Visegrád Four [the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia], or the V4, is indicative of the continuity of Berlin's commitment to preserving the integrity of the European Union with its subregional integration formats. Accentuating commonalities and taking into account the differences between "old" and "new" Europe, the Germans act both as an intermediary in establishing compromises between the V4 and the EU and as an advocate of the interests of young EU member states, which are markets for German goods. The common denominator in Germany's and the V4's policies is sanctions against Moscow, although the approaches of the countries to the problem have their own nuances – for example, Berlin and Budapest differ in their approaches to energy security issues.

THE SO-CALLED self-liquidation of the USSR by its leaders, the subsequent collapse of the Warsaw Pact, Comecon, the hasty withdrawal of Soviet troops from Central European countries, and the reunification of Germany spurred Euro-Atlantic and European integration processes.

Over the years, Berlin's broad sociopolitical, economic, and cultural relations with the V4 have largely become structured. In the military domain, the format for cooperation has become an important component of the European project.

A priori, Germany is very interested in the socioeconomic sustainability of the Central and East European states. About 60% of German exports (for some goods, 80%) go to the markets of EU members; every second euro is earned through foreign economic cooperation.

TODAY, the V4 countries are seeking to improve economic integration within the EU, ties with the US, security through NATO, energy policy, efforts to combat terrorism, and migration policy. Migration is seen as a primary internal and external threat.

Martin Schultz, former president of the European Parliament, leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, and chairman of the board of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, is among the exponents and proponents of the first approach. According to him, the EU is at a crossroads: Either the Union remains a solidary community based on shared values and norms, or the EU will “buckle” under the blackmail of a minority represented by the authoritarian governments of Hungary and Poland.

Relations between Germany and Poland markedly deteriorated after Brussels took legal action against Warsaw after Polish authorities took control over the country’s judicial system, introduced special LGBT-free zones, rejected a new EU policy of including a third gender on new EU identity cards, etc.

Hungary, another violator of the pan-European peace, is also being obstructed by Germany.

THE EXCLUSIVE V4 EU Battlegroup stands out among the Visegrád Four’s common priorities in matters of security and defense as part of the so-called brotherhood in arms. The formation of a rapid reaction brigade of the V4 was announced in March 2013 at a V4 leaders meeting in Warsaw in the presence of German Chancellor Merkel and French President Hollande. Poland assumed responsibility for the formation of the headquarters and command, and the Czech Republic – for the supply of military equipment and logistics. Poland also promised to allocate 1,600 troops; the Czech Republic – 800; Slovakia – 400; and Hungary – 350. The distinguished guests obviously “blessed” this initiative.

At a meeting of the V4 defense ministers in Poland in June 2021, the Visegrád governments expressed willingness to step up efforts to defend the interests of the EU and NATO, to strengthen cooperation between the V4 armies with steadfast support from the UK, Germany, France, and, of course, the US.

IN GENERAL, the subregional integration group V4 has so far been proving its validity, being part of the European project. But to be fair, it should be noted that their economic achievements are primarily due to the noticeable involvement of Berlin in the development programs of these countries. And in this regard, they are interested in Germany’s stable development, because the more successful the development of the latter, the more reliable the V4’s safety nets in case of a financial crisis, especially during the pandemic. Defense and security cooperation helps strengthen the European factor within the NATO system. Showing different approaches to the creation of a European army, the V4 has its own perception of the strategic autonomy of Europe and its sovereignty, which Warsaw sees only under the “umbrella” of the US, under the shadow of NATO’s “bayonets.”

The growing uncertainty, unpredictability, and chaos in both Europe and the world created by Washington and its satellite countries diminish the potential for the sustainable development of countries and alliances. Judging by the content of the coalition agreement of the new German government, Berlin intends to pay great attention to the Eastern Partnership countries – primarily Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Apparently, the Germans consider the mechanisms of the Visegrád Four to be welltuned and the concentration of political efforts and financial resources in the post-Soviet space to be useful. But has Berlin learned the lessons of “authoritarian education” of citizens and the exclusive selection of cadres of obedient executors of the neoliberal model of politics and economics in the CEE countries, or will Prussian experiments on the involvement of the three post-Soviet states in the Euro-Atlantic space continue? Will there be enough funding and arguments to promote the Green Agenda without compromising living standards? In the year of the 30th anniversary of the collapse of

the USSR, the world has acquired different contours and is filled with content dangerous to civilization, with threats, risks, conflicts, and the dehumanization of the individual.

Statement by the CSTO Collective Security Council on the 30th Anniversary of the Collective Security Treaty and the 20th Anniversary of the CSTO

May 16, 2022

WE, the members of the Collective Security Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, in connection with the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Collective Security Treaty and the 20th anniversary of the establishment on its basis of our organization, declare that the choice we made in favor of joining efforts to maintain peace and security in the Eurasian space has passed the test of time.

The Treaty, which was signed in 1992, is performing its main task of ensuring the security, stability, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of its member states. Our efforts to strengthen the Organization and adapt it to the current geopolitical situation have made it possible to intensify military-political cooperation and form an effective collective security system to deal with challenges and threats

Established in 2002, the CSTO has raised our cooperation to a qualitatively new level of allied relations, built up considerable potential to respond to a wide range of modern challenges and threats, and emerged as an important factor of peace and stability in the Eurasian space.

The Organization's structure continues to improve. The scope of its activities is expanding in all major areas, including foreign policy coordination; military and military-economic cooperation; crisis response; peacekeeping; parliamentarianism; combating international terrorism and extremism; ensuring information and biological security; and countering transnational organized crime, including illegal production of and trafficking in narcotic and psychotropic substances and their precursors, arms trafficking, legalization (laundering) of proceeds from crime, and illegal migration.

Since the treaty was signed, tensions in international relations have been steadily rising amid the discord within the international community.

We strongly condemn any attempts to falsify historical events related to our shared contribution to countering the Nazi aggression. We will continue through joint efforts to oppose any attempts to glorify Nazism and spread neo-Nazism, as well as racism and xenophobia. We pay tribute to the memory of our predecessors who died during the Great Patriotic War and condemn the "war" against monuments in honor of anti-Nazi fighters and attempts to whitewash Nazi activists and their accomplices. We express serious concern about attempts to prohibit symbols associated with the victory over Nazism at the legislative level. We stress that the deportation and extermination of civilians in the USSR by the Nazis and their accomplices, as stated in the verdict of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, must be regarded as genocide of the Soviet people.

The path we have trod, as a result of which the CSTO has achieved new heights and emerged as an influential international and regional security organization, enables us to look to the future optimistically.

By making this statement in connection with the 30th anniversary of the Collective Security Treaty and the 20th anniversary of the CSTO, we reaffirm that the Organization will consistently work to ensure the security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of its member states, strengthen global and regional

security, and address international problems based on the universally recognized norms and principles of international law

30th Anniversary of the Collective Security Treaty: Challenges and Prospects for Cooperation in the Interests of Stability in Eurasia

Speeches at “Collective Security in a New Era: Experience and Prospects of the CSTO,” a conference on February 9, 2022, held by the Valdai International Discussion Club with support from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Keywords: Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Valdai Club, conference, collective security

Alexander Pankin, Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia

First of all, I would like to read a message of greetings from *Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation* **Sergey Lavrov**:

I am pleased to greet the organizers and attendees of this conference of the Valdai International Discussion Club, [titled] “Collective Security in a New Era: Experience and Prospects of the CSTO.”

This year we are marking the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Collective Security Treaty and the 20th anniversary of the multifaceted organization created on its basis. I am pleased to state that the CSTO has become established as an important factor in regional and international security. The concerted action of peacekeeping forces to help Kazakhstan stabilize the domestic political situation is solid proof of its maturity and high effectiveness.

This context gives special importance to today’s conference. You are going to not only analyze the experience of interaction within the format of the Organization, but also examine prospects for closer cooperation among its member states in the face of multiplying challenges and threats.

I expect that you will hold constructive discussions leading to practical recommendations in the interests of the peaceful and stable development of all Eurasian nations.

I wish you fruitful work and all the best.

Sergey Lavrov

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my opinion that, although it seems that the nature and scale of new challenges and threats – drug trafficking, cyberattacks, etc. – are the same for everybody, there is a fundamental difference between what threats face us – Russia and our allies – and what threats face, say, the NATO countries.

Surely, none of us, neither Russia nor our allies, are plotting any revolution or the overthrow of a capitalist, liberal, conservative, coalition or any other government in any member country or any group of member countries of NATO. We are accused of propaganda, fake news, and manipulation, but we have no such goals and there has never been any change of government caused by Eurasian, Chinese, Russian, or CSTO factors.

But for some reason, each of our countries is a target of not only scrutiny, but also of intensive efforts to bring about political change. By those efforts I don’t mean competition; let’s leave competition aside.

We perceive our security differently through the lens of someone else’s security.

Another difference between us is that the CSTO is a security system for the area of responsibility of the organization – that is to say, the territory of its member countries.

The CSTO has been able to gradually strengthen its positions, internal solidarity, and mutual confidence among its members, and it has adopted a clear role in the international arena. It has strong ties with international organizations – the UN and many other organizations focused on security. But it hasn't been able to build such ties with NATO, though two years ago the foreign ministers of the CSTO member countries made a cooperation offer to NATO. It's strange that NATO doesn't recognize the CSTO, not even just as a significant player in security affairs, let alone as an equal one, and considers the CSTO a Russian organization in which the other countries are merely pro forma members.

Everything that the CSTO does aims to advance both the interests of all and the specific interests of individual member countries. We can understand why our Tajik partners apparently worry about threats from Afghanistan more than our other partners do – they are closer to Afghanistan, they are the first echelon. We can also understand our Kyrgyz partners – they are the second echelon. Extremist ideologies and religious fundamentalism erode one's mind and therefore erode society.

The CSTO is relevant to more than just its members. The CSTO must also be effective as a global mechanism.

I'd like to finish by saying that I can see [former CSTO secretary general] Nikolay Bordyuzha right in front of me and the incumbent secretary general of the CSTO next to him. These people have striven and continue to strive to ensure that the organization does not fall behind but looks ahead, that it take pre-emptive action, and that if it does respond, it does so as promptly and efficiently as possible.

Stanislav Zas, Secretary General of the CSTO

This is a time of growing international tensions, both global and regional. This negative trend of the degradation of the international security system and the growth of international tensions has been evident for several years now. You may remember that we had some hopes that, in the face of the coronavirus pandemic – a new, uninvestigated global threat – the character of international relations would change, international politics would become less aggressive, and the world community would unify.

As for regional security, the situation in Central Asia remains complicated. Afghanistan remains a long-term hotbed of instability. We can see that there is no direct threat of military expansion by the Taliban into neighboring states, including Tajikistan, which is a member of the CSTO. But Afghanistan does remain a serious source of threats – terrorism, drug trafficking. Moreover, these threats are unfortunately amplified by the socioeconomic crisis – even humanitarian disaster – that is evolving there.

Of course, I can't avoid speaking about periodic incidents on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, both of which are CSTO members, have proven that they can localize such incidents and defuse tensions on their own.

As for Kazakhstan, that country experienced a difficult, even tragic, ordeal early this year.

We, the CSTO member states, have demonstrated our unity and our readiness to jointly advance the interests of any of our states and act for its security. And the third result has to do with the military aspect of the operation. This was our first practical experience, and it made us sure that the CSTO organization has built effective resources and mechanisms over the past 20 years that enable our organization to carry out its tasks successfully.

The Russian Federation has put forward initiatives and is holding difficult negotiations with Western partners to defuse tensions in Eastern Europe, and in the whole of Eurasia for that matter, that are in line with the interests of the CSTO.

We are planning to continue to strengthen our joint armed forces and raise their combat readiness. Of course, priority will be given to the Collective Rapid Reaction Force and the Peacekeeping Forces.

But most importantly, we all realize that political and diplomatic methods are particularly important in such a difficult situation, amid growing tensions. In Article 3 of our charter, which was signed 20 years ago, we pledge to prioritize political means in seeking to consolidate peace and security and in the joint defense of our member states. Diplomatic work is tremendously important today. We should realize this and put our main efforts into it. Of course, we are determined to seek closer interaction with other international organizations and other countries that share our principles concerning international and regional security.

Armen Ghevondyan, Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia

Obviously, conferences of this sort in an anniversary year are a good opportunity to review the development of the CSTO in the decades that have passed since the signature of the Collective Security Treaty and the adoption of the Charter, when the treaty was transformed into the organization.

I would like to base my speech on three key points. One is the 30th anniversary of the signing of the treaty and the 20th anniversary of its transformation into an organization. Another point are issues relating to the existence of the CSTO in the current international situation, which, unfortunately, is characterized by growing global and regional tensions. As my third point, I'd like to dwell on what the Armenian presidency declares to be key current tasks of the CSTO.

The member states of the CSTO are striving to improve the security mechanisms of the organization and hold intensive consultations to coordinate their positions on international and regional problems. The CSTO has also been taking generally recognized action against terrorism, including action to prevent the financing, training, and equipping of foreign terrorists to be used as mercenaries in armed conflicts, something we encountered in our region in autumn 2020. The transborder character of trafficking in drugs and drug precursors and other risks and threats means that we need to step up joint preventive action.

In general, we can say that there is firm conviction within the CSTO that building guarantees for the harmonious development of our countries is becoming one of our main tasks. This would involve dialogue and multilateral cooperation as the sole means of solving problems and would rule out confrontational thinking and attempts at monopoly or domination in international affairs.

Conceptually, we can speak about the fragmentation of security as represented by at least two forms of security. First, the concept of indivisible security that was adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe after the end of the Cold War is disputed more intensively today than ever before. It is no longer a sine qua non to promise not to seek stronger security for oneself at the expense of the security of others. Second, there are different security zones in the OSCE region – the nucleus and the periphery as it were. For example, most OSCE member states may see developments in some region of Eurasia through the prism of so-called peripheral security. At the same time, similar developments in another region are seen as a crisis for the whole system. One example is the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, which represents an extreme form of such fragmentation. The latter, in fact, came into being long before the aggression started.

We are interested in strengthening the international prestige of the CSTO. This can be achieved through interaction with other international organizations and third countries – naturally, with countries and organizations that share the objectives and principles of our organization and have pledged in writing to refrain from any moves that counter the interests of member states of the CSTO and the interests of the

organization as a whole. We believe that international conferences like this one and a conference on security that we plan to organize in Yerevan can help achieve this goal.

Sergey Aleinik, *First Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus*

It needs to be acknowledged that work to that end is not diminishing and that the extremely heated situation worldwide and in the areas of responsibility of the CSTO requires maximum concentration.

We are witnessing the progressive destruction of the systemic foundations of international and regional security. Mutual confidence is being ousted by confrontation, and dialogue – by accusatory rhetoric.

As for the conflict in Ukraine, it's only on the map that it looks like a local conflict. It is a field or rather a pretext for a global political confrontation.

Belarus, like our Russian allies, is being accused of fanning tensions in the region. One of the latest examples is the nervous reaction of the West – primarily our neighbors Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic states – to Union Resolve 2022, a Russian-Belarusian exercise on Belarusian territory.

Who needs this provocative rhetoric that is designed to fuel tensions and escalate the situation in the region? Those who use the “Russian threat” thesis to get more money, primarily from the US, for weapons and for setting up new military bases on their territory. But would that make them more secure and contribute to European security in general? I think that is a rhetorical question. This is a zero-sum game.

Belarus, as the country that has promoted an initiative for a widescale international dialogue to bridge differences and restore confidence between states, welcomes any constructive proposal to reduce tension, bolster international and regional security, and consolidate strategic stability. We expect that there will be substantive bilateral and multilateral discussions on the Russian initiatives. We are willing to take an active part in this process.

Global turbulence and instability and conflicts and crises in the area of responsibility of the CSTO and in the frontier areas of some of its member states mean that the CSTO needs to be strengthened and that it needs more effective mechanisms for reacting to the dynamics of today's challenges and threats.

Special attention should be paid to instituting the office of observer at the CSTO and the office of CSTO partner as ways to improve the organization's system of external relations and enhance its capabilities to strengthen international and regional security. Building public diplomacy mechanisms for the CSTO and developing public institutions at the organization must be priority tasks.

Of course, improving the CSTO's system for responding to crises in its areas of responsibility that may have external or internal causes remains a key task.

Along with seeking greater effectiveness in dealing with terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, transnational crime, and cyber threats, the CSTO has a new statutory area of activity where it must quickly develop competency – protecting its member countries from biological threats.

Marat Syzdykov, *Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan (March 2019 to April 2022), currently the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the CSTO*

FIRST, I would like to thank the Russian organizers of this conference. I'm glad to see my dear colleagues and all those present. Of course, the agenda is very interesting and important. For us, it is particularly important because of the events that we experienced in January. To be honest, the situation developed very rapidly and rather unexpectedly for everyone. And, of course, the Collective Security Treaty Organization played an important role in quickly stabilizing the situation.

One can draw several lessons and some conclusions from this. The CSTO took concerted and very prompt action. Our peacekeeping forces proved they could act quickly and resolutely. Another lesson is that the organization showed its cohesion. All its member states supported its decision to intervene. All necessary decisions were made extremely quickly and efficiently.

Still another lesson is that the CSTO forces were not involved in the actual settlement of the situation. Not a single shot was fired. It was Kazakh law-enforcement and security services that took all counterterrorist measures.

One conclusion we drew from those events was that, naturally, foreign diplomats took great interest in what was happening. It seemed curious, though, that foreign diplomats, and even some of our own citizens, had a very vague idea about what the CSTO is and what it does. There are some stereotypes – for example, that the CSTO is a tool of Russian geopolitics. We all see, hear, and read that.

There are stereotypes to the effect that Russia and its armed forces carried out this peacekeeping mission alone. Many people are amazed to learn that the CSTO bases its decisions on consensus and that a substantial legal basis has been formed over the 30 years since the signing of the Collective Security Treaty and in the 20 years since the establishment of the Collective Security Treaty Organization; that the CSTO holds regular military exercises and constantly runs various recurrent operations such as Proksi [“Proxy,” an anti-cybercrime operation], Kanal [“Channel,” an anti-drug trafficking operation] and Nelegal [“Illegal Alien,” an anti-illegal migration operation] and others; and that the organization has three baskets – politics, military security, and new challenges and threats.

We believe, furthermore, that it must remain a priority for our organization to maintain its spirit of openness. In this sense, we naturally welcome current consultations between the secretariats of the CSTO and the UN. I think there will soon be debates in which you will take part, Mr. Zas, is that right? We should give the organization a lot of PR, promote it.

The fact that member countries have ratified agreements on the status of CSTO partner and CSTO observer will likely contribute to our organization’s spirit of openness. There are candidates whom we can consider and possibly appoint them by consensus.

Nuran Niyazaliyev, *First Deputy Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan*

In the 30 years since the signing of the Collective Security Treaty and the 20 years since the establishment of the CSTO, our countries have done a lot of work to ensure international security and sustainable development in Eurasia.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate us all on this anniversary and to thank Nikolay Bordyuzha, the former secretary general of the CSTO, and Stanislav Zas, its incumbent secretary general, for their contributions to the development of our organization.

All these years, the CSTO has not only played an important role in maintaining international security but also helped create favorable conditions for the national security of our countries. In other words, the CSTO has become not only a collective security tool but also a security tool for each of its member countries.

However, unfortunately, threats are not becoming less numerous or less serious. We are encountering new kinds and manifestations of security threats.

The purpose of creating the CSTO was to counter external threats, but today boundaries between foreign and domestic threats and between external and internal aggression are disappearing.

I want to emphasize that, due to the coronavirus pandemic, biological security has become a more important field of our collective efforts, and so has cybersecurity due to increasing digitalization processes in recent years.

I want to stress that the military capability of CSTO member countries is difficult to seriously enhance without mutual support, mutual understanding, and mutual confidence. Article 1 is an important provision of the Collective Security Treaty that states that the signatory states “shall undertake to settle all disagreements among themselves and other states by peaceful means.”

The fundamental principles of the CSTO and its political and military resources enabled it to respond to the Kazakh appeal without delay.

As you know, Kyrgyzstan is closely involved in CSTO activities, is interested in increasing the organization’s potential, and consistently advocates constructive interaction among member states in all fields, especially in crisis situations when the interests of all our states are affected.

As for Afghanistan, I believe the CSTO needs a coordinated position on the situation in that country. As you know, the socioeconomic situation in Afghanistan is verging on a humanitarian disaster despite the efforts of the Taliban government.

I’m sure that more extensive interaction with the CIS would help strengthen the armed forces, security services, and law-enforcement agencies, and boost the effectiveness of regional and international cooperation in countering security challenges and threats.

Kyrgyzstan believes that in 2022 the CSTO should focus on the following:

First, coordinated activities to enhance biological security.

Second, enhancing cooperation to build more effective information security.

Third, boosting youth diplomacy.

Fourth, expanding the geography of the CSTO and measures to make the organization more recognizable

Sodiq Imomi, Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan

I agree with my colleagues that, amid current turbulent international relations and growing challenges and threats, it is extremely important to step up information work. Last year, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs signed a decision on joint measures to expand information work concerning the activities of the organization.

A military and political analysis confirms the unfavorable nature of the security situation in the CSTO’s area of responsibility. Our colleagues and the secretary general of the CSTO, Stanislav Zas, have spoken about this in detail, and I have nothing to add to what has already been said. Very correct assessments based on meticulous analysis have been made. Tajikistan lies along the southern boundary of the area of responsibility of the CSTO, with the main threat to our country being challenges coming out of Afghanistan, so I would like to talk about them in greater detail.

In effect, in August last year, a terrorist organization seized power in a whole country. This may become an example for imitation in regions where international terrorist forces are present on a very large scale.

We support the nonacceptance by an absolute majority of the international community of the Taliban regime, which so far has failed to fulfill the commitments that the Taliban declared when it seized power. We can see the result, which is effectively a humanitarian disaster. There have been numerous deaths from starvation, and so we should demonstrate our solidarity with the Afghan people and give them all kinds of assistance. Tajikistan has made all its transportation facilities available for this. We

have six bridges on our border with Afghanistan that are being used for delivering international humanitarian aid.

The government of the Republic of Tajikistan has decided to provide the people of Afghanistan with humanitarian aid that would be delivered by the UN and other international organizations. Despite difficulties within Afghanistan, we are continuing to supply the country with electricity, since we know this is vital in wintertime.

While before August we saw terrorist groups at the Tajik-Afghan border numbering no more than 2,000 or 3,000 [fighters], today their number has at least doubled. Moreover, the terrorist groups, which make no secret of their goals regarding the Central Asian countries, are currently well equipped and have a very high level of combat readiness.

Another danger, something our colleagues have already spoken about, is growing drug aggression.

Of course, the work of dealing with these challenges and serious circumstances requires a solid basis, and we are certainly concerned that we still cannot resolve border issues with our neighbors. But we hope that principles of good-neighborliness and the many centuries of constructive peaceful coexistence, something my esteemed [Kyrgyz] colleague has spoken about, will enable us to find solutions to the complicated problems that we have inherited. Bilateral negotiation opportunities are by no means exhausted, and next week our experts will continue work. Moreover, civil society has become actively involved. This is a grassroots initiative, and it deserves comprehensive support.

In conclusion, I'd like to say a few words about the international position of the CSTO. Concurring with my colleagues, I would like to stress that we demonstrated for the first time our power and our ability to react promptly by dealing with a very serious challenge that confronted fraternal Kazakhstan.

Nevertheless, we state that the CSTO is purely a defensive alliance. We do not seek to rival anyone. Our task is to ensure peace and general security in our area of responsibility. We have nothing against any of the countries surrounding us. We are willing to cooperate with other countries, with all international institutions, primarily the UN, the SCO, the CIS, and other partners that are involved in our activities in one way or another. As regards our institutional activities, on the basis of what was decided at a Collective Security Council session in Dushanbe, we quite recently finished work on institutionalizing the status of CSTO partner and the status of CSTO observer. I believe that this will enable us to develop international cooperation and maintain a position that is based on the principles that we followed in creating our organization.

Theoretical Premises and Practical Possibilities of Russian-Belarusian Cooperation

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Keywords: Union State of Russia and Belarus, traditions of neutrality, Belarusian opposition, Moscow and Minsk in multi-vector integration

IN THE 21st century, a certain confidence persisted for a long time that the specific nature of contemporary challenges in international relations was a deviation from the norm and was not destroying their essence. "Individual violations of the existing system, which states allow as an exception, should not necessarily be perceived as a movement toward the dismantling of the system of

international law as such.”¹ However, today it is obvious that the interpretation of even the inviolable principles of international law depends on political expediency. Put more starkly, you could say that law has practically disappeared, giving way to transient rules of foreign policy expediency. Of course, in places where initially there were difficulties adapting to codified law – for example, in Eastern Europe – the understanding of neutrality and multi-vector policy turned out to be simplified and formalistic. Idealism in economic or political theory can be considered a possible approach that, under certain conditions, leads to the required academic results, but in foreign policy, it can yield negative and irreversible results.

One major contradiction of the contemporary practice of international relations is the categorical rejection of any forms of integration in the post-Soviet space other than those promoted by Brussels or Washington. This thesis fully applies to Euro-Atlantic policy toward the integration of Russia and Belarus.

Speculating on issues such as sovereignty, neutrality, and the multi-vector approach was supposed to create a level of mutual misunderstanding that would make it possible to not only halt Russian-Belarusian integration, but also destroy all forms of cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Union. There was a moment when our opponents seemed close to achieving their plans. Nevertheless, by late 2021 and early 2022, the failure of those plans became obvious.

The traditions of neutrality and its rules began to be violated during World War I. The assertion that a neutral state undertakes not to allow the warring sides to use its land, sea, and airspace ceased to be absolute in the 20th century. Recall that Sweden, as is widely known, provided its land to German troops without abandoning its neutral status.

A number of theoretical provisions of neutrality require a substantive revision taking into account today's international realities. Neutral states, or rather states that position themselves as neutral, are actively integrating into economic unions in the context of globalization, which, in turn, can be associated de facto or de jure with military-political blocs. In recent decades, the nature of threats and the causes of potential conflicts have changed, and the number of regional conflicts has increased. At the same time, the status of neutrality is under active pressure from various states and international organizations, including economic unions. Post-globalization leads nominally neutral countries to interpret neutrality in a broader, blurred manner from the standpoint of the norms of international law.

We believe that the departure from neutrality was inevitable by the turn of the century. It was justified geopolitically – only the forms of its evolution, timing, and concrete results could be a subject for discussion. However, for a long time, other approaches prevailed.

Until the 2020 Belarusian presidential election results were announced in August, Minsk had been ignoring the unfriendly policies of Ukraine. And for obvious reasons: First, it is impossible to quarrel with all neighbors at the same time. Second, Ukraine was an important trading partner for Belarus, second only to Russia in terms of its role in Belarus's foreign trade. This is very important for understanding current processes in Belarus and Belarusian-Ukrainian relations. However, Ukraine's policy in 2021 and Kiev's nonrecognition of the results of the Belarusian presidential election set a steady trend for the deterioration of relations between Kiev and Minsk.

It should be noted, as members of the Belarusian opposition do: “An assessment of the possible costs and benefits of Belarusian neutrality shows that in today's conditions, the benefits are more relevant for the West than for Russia. At the same time, Belarusian stakeholders need to understand that the idea of such neutrality may fail to inspire enthusiasm in Western states.”⁷ An extremely important conclusion, but the path to it turned out to be too difficult and long.

Today, Moscow and Minsk are ready to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy and strive for normal and mutually beneficial relations with all countries and organizations of the world. The absence of real

premises for such a practical policy does not negate the objective desire of the countries of the Union State to maintain good-neighborly relations with all countries.

The current situation is naturally becoming the subject of public opinion research. Unfortunately, these works do not always have an objective academic content. In this context, we note the polls carried out by “independent” Belarusian pollsters under the stamp of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, which is in fact a British foreign intelligence unit. The subject of the polls is the special military operation. The poll results are interpreted as the defeat of President Lukashenko, who failed to rouse the people to take direct military action against Ukraine. At the same time, the position of the authorities, which should be described as nothing more than “friendly neutrality” with respect to Russia, is ignored.

In addition to the information war, in February and March 2022, the Belarusian opposition switched to direct sabotage. In particular, a massive and, regrettably, successful attack was carried out on the computer system of the state railways. The stated goal of this attack was to disrupt rail services in order to prevent the movement of Russian military equipment into Ukraine.

In the most challenging times, in times when foreign and/or domestic threats are aggravated, Russia and Belarus and the peoples of Russia and Belarus always stand together. Tactical disagreements have surfaced in relatively favorable periods of economic and political development and were more of a reaction to the domestic environment. Today, the foreign challenges are absolutely unique for both Russia and Belarus. Paradoxically, these challenges have determined not the directions of integration (those have long been known), but the speed of this integration – i.e., they help solve one of our main common problems. The foreign threats to Moscow and Minsk leave no room for any “third path” alternatives. There is either common victory or common defeat.

Russia and Italy: A “Privileged Partnership”?

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Keywords: Russia, Italy, bilateral relations, cooperation, economy, energy, culture, crisis, media, fake news

RELATIONS between Russia and Italy depend on several factors – their extensive historical ties, intensive economic contacts, and similar positions on certain key issues of world politics. These issues include international security and the threat of terrorism, Italy’s domestic political situation and position in the international arena, and the mutually favorable image of the two countries.

However, Euro-Atlantic influence has become the determining factor at the present stage. Italy’s desire to show solidarity as a member of unified Europe and NATO has led the country’s officials to take a hard line toward Russia. Bilateral relations have been seriously tested, and successful cooperation already achieved in various areas has been threatened.

Russian-Italian contacts have traditionally been positive and are marked by active bilateral cooperation in many areas. This is because the two countries’ interests in the international arena have never clashed – no major disagreements have ever arisen between Russia and Italy on key issues of world politics, and there have been no geopolitical, territorial, or other disputes. Throughout the entire postwar period, Russia and Italy have maintained mutual respect and a desire to expand contacts in various fields. The

growth of mutual trust and the resulting expansion of cooperation in several areas were particularly evident in the 1990s, when the domestic political arenas of both states were in a period of radical transformation.

The Russian Federation has been playing a particularly important role in Italy's foreign policy in recent decades. Russia is a key actor in international relations involved in resolving some acute global political problems. Cooperation with Russia in solving the most important problems of modern international relations has underscored Italy's significance and allowed it to gain additional weight and increase its status in the foreign policy arena.

Italy's position within the European Union remains an important factor influencing bilateral relations; Italy's traditional desire for a leading role in pan-European politics is complicated by the state of its economy and its unstable domestic political situation. As a result, the country seeks political and economic partners outside unified Europe, and the Russian Federation meets its foreign policy requirements. Despite Russia's difficult relations with European states since 2014, Italy has remained a major economic and political partner of our country.

RUSSIAN-ITALIAN relations are based on a broad documentary and legal base. Over the past three decades, the two states signed more than 30 official documents in various areas that are still in force.

The Russian-Italian Civil Society Dialogue Forum began to function in 2004. It is a long-term project aimed at further developing relations between Russia and Italy whose range of activities relate to the economy, culture, and humanitarian and public contacts.

Political interaction between the two countries has traditionally developed positively, as evidenced by extensive contacts in various areas, numerous meetings between the heads of state or heads of government, and interparliamentary consultations. Summits have been held regularly for over 15 years.

The Italian Foreign Ministry has a special section devoted to Russia on its website in the "Europe" geographical block. The section "Italian-Russian Relations" traditionally focused on the following subjects: "political relations," "economic relations," and "cultural ties."

IN THE early 21st century, Russian-Italian relations in the trade, economic, monetary, financial, industrial, and energy sectors gained great significance. Italy has long been a key Russian economic and trade partner.

The sanctions imposed since 2014 had a noticeable negative impact on economic relations between Russia and Italy. An important innovation that allowed both countries to minimize their economic losses was the "Made with Italy"/"Made with Russia" cooperation model (instead of the usual "Made in Italy" brand). Under this model, new Italian enterprises started production operations in the Russian Federation. Thanks in no small part to this idea, the decline in cooperation observed from 2014 to 2016 was replaced by a period of recovery starting in 2017.

Italy has always been extremely interested in Russian energy supplies. For many years, cooperation in this area formed the basis of economic relations between the two countries. A number of agreements reflecting the positive dynamics of bilateral contacts were reached in the gas industry.

As for the oil sector, LUKOIL and the Italian company ERG SpA signed an agreement on June 24, 2008 to establish a joint venture to manage the ISAB oil refinery complex located in Priolo (Sicily).

THE CULTURAL sphere plays a very important role in Russian-Italian bilateral cooperation. Cultural ties between the two countries have traditionally been deep and multifaceted.

For many years, both countries have actively implemented various cultural projects; bilateral culture and education events have become a regular practice.

The drop in political interaction since 2014 seems logical considering the general “cooling” in Russia’s relations with European states. However, positive trends in various areas of cooperation suggest that political dialogue between the two countries could also reach a higher level. Italy’s understanding of Russia’s present-day role as a key actor in international relations assumes special significance in this context. The Italian public has traditionally been of the opinion that maintaining a high level of cooperation with Russia, expanding and deepening it in several areas, has emphasized Italy’s independence in the international arena, giving it a certain weight in world political processes and contributing to Italy’s growing influence in its key foreign policy areas (the Mediterranean, European and Atlantic vectors). The “soft power” policy is of great importance in Italy-Russia relations – the interpenetration of cultures has reached a fundamentally new level in recent years, contributing to the rapprochement between the two states.

Decreasing interaction in the energy sector will obviously lead to a noticeable decline in economic relations. The fact that authoritative Italian media outlets deliberately form a negative image of Russia will affect the interaction of our civil societies, inevitably leading to diminished cultural, educational, and academic cooperation. The key responsibility for this development lies with Italian politicians who exacerbate the situation with their statements and actions. However, the tradition of strong bilateral relations brings hope for the restoration of contacts – if not in the political sphere, then in other areas of interaction.

Russia and Benin: 60 Years Together

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Keywords: 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Russia and Benin

JUNE 4, 2022, marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Benin.

This West African state gained independence on August 1, 1960. Since then, our country has been its reliable and trusted partner. Our cooperation has stood the test of time and is independent of politics.

The Republic of Benin takes its current name from one of the most developed early states of Africa that existed from the 12th to the 19th century in the lower reaches of the Niger River in what is now Nigeria. Previously, Benin was called Dahomey, after the powerful state located in its territory in ancient times. That state, with its capital in the city of Abomey, was ruled by kings, whose bodyguards were the famous Dahomey Amazons. Today, a monument to these women warriors has been erected near the presidential palace in Cotonou.

In 1974, the country’s leaders took the path of socialist transformation, and Dahomey was renamed the People’s Republic of Benin. In the late 1980s, a democratic transition process began in the republic, as in many other African countries. It culminated in a national conference of the “healthy forces of society,” held in Cotonou, the republic’s largest city, in February 1990. That was followed by the first multiparty elections in February 1991, which resulted in the election of a new president, Nicéphore Soglo. The country was renamed the Republic of Benin.

From the very first years of the republic’s independence, the Soviet Union set a course for developing equal and diverse cooperation with the young African state.

Along with the Soviet Embassy, Cotonou hosted a Trade Mission of the USSR, an Office of the Military Attaché, a Representative Office of the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (SSOD), offices of the Soviet news agencies TASS and APN, and an Aeroflot Representative Office in the country. Aeroflot airlines operated flights between Moscow and Cotonou.

In the 1980s, mutual trade reached \$10 million. Soviet exports to Benin included fresh-frozen fish, cotton fabrics, passenger cars, and other necessary goods. Under a technical assistance agreement, Soviet geologists engaged in geological exploration in the country.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Benin reached their peak when President Kérékou made a state visit to Moscow in November 1986 and met with Mikhail Gorbachev, general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. As a result of the talks, the parties signed a Declaration of Friendship and Cooperation, expressing their mutual intention to develop bilateral relations in various fields and reaffirming the common approach of the two countries in the fight against imperialism, colonialism, and racism.

Regular political dialogue is a key element of relations between Russia and Benin. In November 2016, Benin's Foreign Minister Aurélien Agbénonci paid a working visit to Moscow for talks with Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The two ministers had a substantive discussion on a wide range of issues related to promoting bilateral relations in political, trade, economic, and other areas, noting prospects for further cooperation in geological exploration, mineral resource management, hydropower, national personnel training, agriculture, transport, and tourism. There was a thorough exchange of views on relevant topics on the global and African agenda, with emphasis on the central coordinating role of the UN in international affairs.

President Talon's participation in the first Russia-Africa Summit, held in Sochi on October 23-24, 2019, was a major landmark in political dialogue between Russia and Benin.

Russian film festivals are held annually in Cotonou, and thematic photo exhibitions designed to acquaint the public with the culture of the peoples of Russia and the realities of Russian life invariably arouse interest among the Beninese.

Moscow also provides humanitarian aid to Cotonou. In January 2022, for example, the Russian Direct Investment Fund gave Benin, free of charge, 100,000 doses of the Russian Sputnik Light COVID-19 vaccine. This goodwill gesture on the part of Russia received wide and positive coverage in the republic's media.

Despite the painful transformations of the late 1980s and early 1990s, both Russia and Benin have maintained a willingness to strengthen their wide-ranging cooperation over the years, and in the year of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, it is safe to say that Russia-Benin relations will continue to develop in a spirit of equality, solidarity, and unflinching friendship between the peoples of our countries.

The Temptation to Focus on Immediate Concerns Should Be Avoided

Yuri Shafranik, *Chairman of the Board, Union of Oil and Gas Producers of Russia*

Keywords: oil, Europe, renewable energy, reduction in dependence, different energy situations in Europe and the US

The situation is tough indeed. But government institutions and companies are showing no sign of being flummoxed.

Oil and gas are capital intensive. Since the 1970s, hundreds of billions of dollars have been invested in their production, logistics, infrastructure, and other chains. They cannot be stopped overnight. Note that the gas pipeline continues to function even amid the ongoing special operation in Ukraine.

I have recently had many invitations to comment on current affairs, but I have refrained, because the temptation to focus on immediate concerns should be avoided.

The Europeans wanted to build communism in one particular part of the planet. They have failed. They wanted everything to be perfect, with diversified and renewable energy sources. I remember the hue and cry that was raised when gas supplies from Russia had exceeded 20%, as if there were other sources for purchasing hydrocarbons. Who prevented Europe from developing mutually beneficial relations with Syria, Iraq, and Iran – from ensuring the stability of these states? Who prevented the Europeans from investing tens of billions of dollars in the energy sector of these countries, from laying pipelines and thus creating for themselves other sources of hydrocarbons apart from Russia? No one was stopping them. But the Europeans kept saying: “Russia is bad, it’s bad.” This imprudent, incompetent policy is precisely what characterizes the system taking shape in Europe – a system known as Eurocracy. Does it act in the national interests of Europe, of each state, or only in its own interests?

Even its “green” policy appears to be guided by wishful thinking rather than real opportunities. As an inhabitant of this planet, I also want to live in world with a clean environment. But we should move toward that goal gradually, not in one jump.

We, too, have made mistakes. We were right to start reorienting toward the East, but this should have been done five years earlier.

A more serious mistake was not using the high oil and gas prices to diversify the economy, engage in import substitution, and develop our own technologies.

A few years ago, the Europeans began to take internal measures to reduce their dependence on Russian hydrocarbons. This applies to energy efficiency, the use of renewables, and a search for other sources of hydrocarbons. The events in Ukraine have accelerated that trend. It is difficult to predict what actions the Western states will take. If they shoot themselves only in the foot and not in other vital organs, it will take Europe three years to reduce its consumption of hydrocarbons from Russia by about 30%. More drastic decisions would simply lead to a collapse.

I do not consider myself an expert in the area of big global finance, but I would say that the measure we have taken is primarily a hedge against our funds being frozen.

In any case, the dollar era will eventually come to an end. It is hard to say when – I’m not a financier

Having visited China on many occasions, I have a good idea of what they have done and continue to do in correcting “developmental errors,” especially in the energy sector. They are doing fine. There is no need to worry about the capacity of the Chinese market.

We are not just building our Eastern vector – it has already been formed. This is clearly evident when comparing coal, oil, and even gas supplies over the past 10 years: The figures for 2020 are several times higher than for 2010. Moreover, the figures for general cargo ports have also multiplied.

We are all concerned about Europe and China, but we should first of all think about ourselves. Things will be very difficult for us, because we depend on their technologies. But we will have new opportunities in the petrochemical industry, downstream chemistry, polymer production, etc. Russia is a major producer and exporter of fertilizers, so who is preventing us from continuing their production

with our cheap gas? Let them try to do the same using expensive gas! That is why, as we move from Europe to China, I would advise us to take a firm stand in pursuing our interests (I insist on the word "firm," as in the 1950s and 1960s, when many sectors of the national economy were being created almost from scratch, when oil in the country was in short supply and there were no exports, and when the country was developing using internal resources) and to spare no effort to saturate the domestic market with cheap gas, cheap electricity, and cheap oil products, and develop the downstream sector to obtain finished products.

Of course, this also applies to ordinary Russian citizens. The government must supply the whole country with cheap gas, oil, and coal.

The Time Has Come When We Can Pay Attention to What Is Happening Inside the Country

Alexander Karelin, *Member of Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, an Olympic champion*

Keywords: import substitution, internationalism, Russian language, sport and patriotism, information war, split of the Orthodox Church

The time has come when we can start paying attention to what is happening inside the country and really support domestic producers. To do this, we need laws. We have been in a difficult situation and engaged in import substitution for years now. And now is perhaps our only chance to make this import substitution really work. For sophisticated products that would be in demand both at home and abroad to come off the assembly line, fundamental and applied sciences need to be stimulated with funding. I am speaking as a representative of Novosibirsk Province in the Federation Council.

Siberian scientists are a phenomenon of fast breakthrough solutions. And this applies not only to the Institute of Nuclear Physics, but also to other scientific centers of Akademgorodok. The mission of the state is to ensure that the scientific developments of Russian scientists find their place in the market.

We need to support our citizens who are entitled to special benefits, to implement an affordable mortgage program.

Pyotr Stolypin [Russian prime minister from 1906 to 1911] argued that, due to its historical and geographical location, Russia must not orient itself toward either the West or the East: It should connect the East and the West. And this is more than just transit, transport, or other corridors. Our role and strategy should finally become clear both within the country and to other powers.

There should be interest in us as a connecting link, given our territorial location in both the West and the East. The logic is simple. We are now talking about the Northern Sea Route and the possibilities for developing the Trans-Siberian Railway. Our transport potential is not fully utilized.

There were three reasons for the creation of the Transsib. The first was for the transfer of manpower and military equipment to deter Japan. The second reason was to hold territory. Economic reasons aimed at reviving trade turnover, etc., only came after. I believe that today we need to act in this direction as well.

Open tournaments, in my opinion, will not have much effect today. We need to make sure that national championships and the title of the champion, the winner, at the national level are truly revered and that these athletes are ready to restore their positions at the international level.

You cannot attain great heights without being part of the system. And sports in the Russian Federation is a large system confirmed by multiple victories. We need to understand that everyone, especially famous athletes, is very important today for any citizen and for our identity. So I urge all athletes to demonstrate resolve, endurance, restraint, and common sense.

We should not assume that if something is obvious to us, to our generation, then we don't need to talk about it. If we are convinced of our own rightness, we must still find the right arguments when talking with the younger generation about why manifestations of fascism, the distortion of history, and the split of the united Orthodox Church are unacceptable to us.

I would start with basic values. And, of course, we must choose the style of presentation. It should not be too condescending; it should be truly informative and be presented in proper Russian language.

We have a special relationship with Belarus. I see the potential for cooperation with the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and not just economic cooperation. Recall that at the beginning of this year, the forces of the Collective Security Treaty Organization prevented the destruction of a post-Soviet state. I say this without any intentional drama.

Red Lines Should Not Be Crossed

Natalia Koneva, *daughter of Marshal Ivan Konev, Chair of the Board of the Victory Commanders Memorial Foundation, Professor, Military University of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*

Keywords: Great Patriotic War, Marshal Ivan Konev, red lines

Often, in my father's notes, I came upon an idea that seems important to me in the current situation. He always emphasized that the commander's talent lies in taking a creative approach. After all, during the war, he carried out a huge number of operations that were totally unique. Why was that? Because he took a creative approach.

I tried to find a transcript of that famous June 1946 Supreme Military Council. By that time, the documents and evidence collected by the intelligence services were on Stalin's desk. The essence of the accusations against Zhukov was that he was inflating his role in the war. As my father told me, Stalin even remarked at the Council: "And what were we doing there?"

In his speech (and it is always difficult to be the first), my father set an emotional and very profound tone. After him, [Pavel] Rybalko and other marshals who attended the Council, in particular [Vasily] Sokolovsky and [Konstantin] Rokossovsky, spoke in Zhukov's defense. Stalin backed down when he heard the soldiers, the elite of the armed forces, who had gone through wars, men of national glory, speak. And he said, "Well, we'll send Comrade Zhukov to command the Odessa military district."

My father recalled that when the call came from Moscow to "pack your bags and come to Moscow at once," he had many different thoughts, and he went there not knowing what to expect.

In the Commissariat, he was ordered to go to the Far East and lead the troops that would be deployed to Mongolia. Because the events related to the capture of Mongolia by the Japanese were unfolding, and the international situation was very tense

And he went there. Our troops were literally pioneering the Gobi Desert. There was nothing there at all, everything was brought in from the Soviet Union – even food and timber. They lived in dugouts. The situation was difficult. But they did well, and the mission was completed successfully.

My father recalled that Stalin was a very generous host – he tried to feed everyone. It was a very small group around the table; there weren't even waiters. A woman brought in the dishes, placed them on the table, and they helped themselves.

When he was asked this question [*Which military operation did Ivan Stepanovich [Konev] consider the most important?*], the answer everyone expected was the capture of Berlin. But he would reply that it was Moscow, when we drove the enemy away from the walls of our capital in extremely difficult and dramatic circumstances and were able to win the first victory – a very important one for us. By the way, Zhukov had the same answer to that question.

For my father, the capture of Kharkiv was a very important step in the liberation of the cities of Ukraine, because our troops took Kharkiv twice before him and left it twice.

And then there were the battles in Ukraine for Poltava, Kirovograd, the Battle of the Dnepr, and the most terrifyingly intense one for my father – the Battle of Korsun. In that battle, my father outplayed Field Marshal Erich von Manstein. It is no coincidence that it is known as the Stalingrad on the Dnepr.

And then there was Europe.

After the nuclear weapons test, it became clear that the army was entering a new phase of development. And Khrushchev set the goal of reforming it. As a result, many traditional weapons had to be phased out and, accordingly, the people who serviced them had to be laid off. My father also understood that reform was necessary, but he did not fully agree with many things. Incidentally, I found a very interesting speech on reform that he gave at the Supreme Military Council, where he spoke about the need to pay very close attention to the ground forces. He was always of the firm belief that victory was impossible to achieve without these troops. As it turned out, this is still relevant as well.

At one of the meetings, Khrushchev barked at my father: “See, the Minister has signed, so why aren't you signing?!” Father replied: “Nikita Sergeyeovich, I have a different point of view.” Then Khrushchev said: “Just you wait, I will put you on your knees.”

But, of course, it is quite difficult to bring someone who knows what life and death are to his knees. It became clear to my father that he would no longer serve. Khrushchev summoned him and said: “There is a rumor going around, Ivan Stepanovich, that you are not feeling well – that perhaps you are ill. Maybe you should rest?” Father clicked his heels and said, “Of course, Nikita Sergeyeovich.” And he resigned.

An Unfinished Discussion With Intelligence Official and Diplomat Vyacheslav Trubnikov

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Keywords: Afghanistan, resistance movement, Taliban

ON APRIL 18, 2022, former intelligence official, diplomat, and politician Vyacheslav Trubnikov passed away. He was a subtle analyst, a patriot, and a man with a strong sense of responsibility that is rarely encountered these days – someone who thought you should tell your boss the truth, no matter how inconvenient. He had wanted to be a mathematician, but instead became a specialist in international relations and India. Born into an ordinary Soviet family, he became a member of the elite of the former

Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. In 1961, he enrolled, with an endorsement from the Komsomol, in the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Soviet Foreign Ministry (today the Russian Foreign Ministry's MGIMO University), having received top marks on all entrance exams. After graduating, he wanted to become a diplomat, but was offered an intelligence position, which he accepted.

I will not go over all his career milestones – information about them is easy to find – I will just mention that he climbed to the very top of the service ladder, an arduous and at times dangerous trek, becoming head of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and receiving the rank of general of the army.

In those difficult transitional years, when politicians and public figures began openly attacking the Russian security services, especially offshoots of the Soviet KGB, Primakov and Trubnikov managed not just to preserve but to strengthen the SVR. The two men developed a close working relationship that grew into a lifelong friendship. When appointing Primakov as foreign minister, President Boris Yeltsin asked him whom he would recommend as the next SVR head. "Trubnikov," Primakov said without a moment's hesitation. Primakov's recommendation was accepted, and in January 1996, Trubnikov became head of the SVR. In 1999 he was awarded the Hero of the Russian Federation medal for his service in that capacity.

After leaving the SVR, he fulfilled his childhood dream of working in the diplomatic service. He started this part of his career by being appointed as first deputy foreign minister, a position he held from 2000 to 2004. After that, he served five years as ambassador to India, a country he knew well and loved.

I enjoyed talking to him very much. He was very knowledgeable, held sober-minded views on what was happening in the world and in politics, and had a sense of humor and subtle irony.

He could listen to people expressing opposite views and admitted that he might not have an ideal opinion.

Trubnikov was known as an insightful expert on India. His analytical works about India and Pakistan will always be relevant for experts.

But my conversations with him increasingly focused on Afghanistan – a countries with which he had had some involvement. He would always talk about the Soviet presence there, the US-led NATO military invasion, and the Afghan resistance movement. We discussed not only mistakes but also the heroism of our soldiers and officers. Trubnikov praised Pavel Grachev as a division commander. Although appointing him defense minister was an ill-advised move.

I have records of my conversations with Trubnikov over the past few years. He expressed ideas and drew conclusions that were very interesting and important and have lost none of their practical significance to this day.

WE HAD been planning to talk about what would happen in Afghanistan when the Taliban returned to power, but we did not get the chance.

Churchill and Roosevelt on the Role of the Red Army in the Victory Over Nazi Germany

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Keywords: Red Army, victory over Nazi Germany

IN APRIL 2022, on the 77th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, the Department of History and Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation prepared and published a collection titled *W. Churchill and F. Roosevelt on the Role of the Red Army in the Victory over Nazi Germany*.

The publication contains quotes from the personal correspondence of the Western leaders of the anti-Hitler coalition with Joseph Stalin, the British prime minister's speeches in parliament and at conferences during the war, radio addresses of the US president to the American people between 1941 and 1945, as well as photographs from the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation, the Russian State Archive of SocioPolitical History, and the Battle of Stalingrad State Historical Memorial Museum.

This collection is one of the clearest testaments of the spirit of alliance, the high level of support for our country in the fight against the German military machine, and the recognition of the decisive role of the Red Army in the victory over Nazism. The Allies' pursuit of a common goal formed an unwavering confidence that the entire civilized world was united in the fight against Hitler's aggression.

The standing of the Soviet Union during the war years was so high that in the UK, the new Soviet national anthem was played during prime time, before the 9 p.m. news on Sunday night, by the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

The defeat of German Nazism and the deliverance of the world from the brown plague were truly perceived as the beginning of a new era. It seemed that the most trying ordeals were suddenly over. The aspirations and hopes so reverently guarded by all free people were given a chance for a new life. By destroying the enemy, the Soviet people gave humanity a future.

On Victory Day, Winston Churchill visited the Soviet Embassy in London, and his wife Clementine, who was on a visit to the USSR, conveyed his congratulations: "I send you heartfelt greetings on the splendid victory you have won in driving the invader from your soil and laying the Nazi tyrant low. It is my firm belief that on friendship and understanding between the British and Russian peoples depends the future of mankind. Here in our island home we are thinking today very often about you and we send you from the bottom of our hearts our wishes for your happiness and well-being and that after all the sacrifices and sufferings of the dark valley through which we have marched together we may also in loyal comradeship and sympathy walk in the sunshine of victorious peace."

The collection is also available on the website of the Department of History and Records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, in the documentary publications section.

Heroes of Chemulpo in Saigon

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Keywords: Russo-Japanese War, Varyag, Korietz, evacuation, Médoc, Captain V.F. Rudnev

ONE OF THE most legendary events in the history of the Russian Navy, the memories of which are still preserved by grateful descendants, took place in the first days of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.

On February 9 (January 27 O.S.) 1904, the cruiser Varyag and gunboat Korietz moved out of Chemulpo to confront a much stronger Japanese squadron. The Russian sailors did not lower the St. Andrew's Flag in the face of the enemy's superior forces. They fought to the end to become a symbol of courage and

honor. The crew of the Varyag, which sank after the battle, and of the demolished Korietz were rescued by cruisers moored at Chemulpo: the French Pascal, the Italian Elba, and the British Talbot.

In light of the Japanese demand that the surviving sailors never join the ranks of those fighting in the Far East, the decision was made to transport them to Russia via the Indian Ocean and the Black Sea. The British decided to send them via Hong Kong to Singapore or Colombo. The French captain received instructions from Paris to send the crew of the Russian ships to Saigon.

On February 26, after a brief stop at Shanghai, the first group of Russian sailors was moved aboard the cruiser Pascal to the main naval port of French Indochina, where the heroes of Chemulpo were greeted with obvious admiration.

In Indochina, far from the French capital, the local colonial authorities and residents spared no effort to demonstrate their attention to and respect for the Russian heroes during their stay in the capital of Cochinchina.

As soon as the Russian sailors reached Saigon, Paris and Hanoi insisted that the Russians be sent to Russia as quickly and as comfortably as possible. Governor General of Indochina Paul Beau5 in his telegram to the military and colonial powers of Cochinchina suggested that they be evacuated by the steamships Chaudoc or Annam of the Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes. The Chaudoc, which was scheduled to leave Saigon on March 18, could accept 450 rank-and-file crew members, including 130 wounded, but had no room for the officers and noncommissioned officers.

There was a lot of genuine enthusiasm among the French in the French colonies and a sincere desire to help their Russian allies. But in Paris, meanwhile, political games continued unabated: The initiative to take the Russian sailors straight to a Russian port was rejected. On March 8, the vice-governor of Cochinchina and the local office of Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes received a letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France indicating that the Médoc should follow its usual route without stopping in Odessa.

A joint Russian-French commission to organize the outfitting of the ship was set up on the order of the vice-governor. The commander of the French Pacific Squadron was instructed to appoint three officers of the cruiser Pascal to the commission, and V. Rudnev – one officer. F. Chevillon, attaché to the office of the vice-governor, was appointed the commission's secretary.

The resulting protocol contained all the details of the required outfitting of the vessel to make it suitable to transport the officers and sailors, including the wounded.

The planned outfitting was to be completed in two days, when the second group of Russian sailors traveling on the Italian cruiser Elba would arrive in Saigon.

On March 12, the Australien set sail with a group of officers followed by the Médoc that carried Rudnev, Lieutenants S. Zarubaev and P. Stepanov, doctor M. Banshchikov, a medic from the battleship Poltava, 217 sailors from the Varyag, 157 sailors from the Korietz, 55 sailors from the landing unit of the battleship Sevastopol, and Cossacks of the guard of the Russian mission in Seoul.¹⁸ Two sailors sick with dysentery remained in Saigon for medical treatment and were sent to Marseille on March 19 aboard the packet-boat Chaudoc.

The Russian sailors were very appreciative of the support and assistance of their French counterparts; they had especially warm feelings toward the crew of the Pascal that had shared with them all hardships starting with the evacuation after the battle. When parting with the crew, the Russians gave the cruiser's commander Victor-Baptistin Sènés a memorial plaque of polished onyx made in Saigon. The silver plate said in French: "The commanders of the Varyag and the Korietz and the officers wholeheartedly thank M. Captain Second Rank Sènés, commander of the Pascal, and its valiant officers

for their noble behavior after the Chemulpo events of January 27 (February 9, N.S.) 1904. We will cherish our indelible memories of the magnanimous hospitality demonstrated by true sons of glorious France. Saigon, February 29 (March 12 N.S.) 1904.”

It should be said that although the French assistance was sincere, it was not disinterested. Documents in the colonial archive confirm that the Russian treasury later reimbursed everything (2,023.35 francs) that the Cochinchina authorities spent on our sailors.

Life and Meetings

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Keywords: book by K.M. Dolgov, culture and politics, A.N. Kosygin, Ye.M. Primakov, Father Paisios

MEMOIRS are interesting not only for the portraits the author paints of others, but also for what they reveal about the author’s own personality. In the reviewed book *My Outstanding Contemporaries: People and Meetings** [in Russian], Konstantin Dolgov, one of the best experts of his generation on the history of world and Russian philosophy and culture, displays the rare talent of a scholar and researcher who has analyzed documentary evidence of his contemporaries, as well as of an artist – a writer who has painted their bright and highly personalized portraits. His essays are also valuable because the portraits he paints of his contemporaries and their remarks and statements are like parts of a puzzle that together offer an expansive picture of the contradictory and dramatic era of the latter half of the 20th and the early 21st centuries, allowing us to take a fresh look at today’s problems.

The biography of the author, who in 2021 celebrated his 90th birthday, speaks for itself. He was born into a peasant family that fled to Central Asia to escape de-kulakization [repressions against prosperous peasants and their families – Trans.]. As a teenager he spent five years as a machinist and electrician at a munition factory and five years as a conscript in the Navy.

He then entered Moscow State University, where he studied under outstanding philosophers. As a postgraduate student at the Institute of Philosophy of the USSR Academy of Sciences, he kept company with the brilliant young philosophers Evald Ilyenkov and Alexander Zinoviev. He soon became a prominent expert on aesthetics and political philosophy.

His life strongly affected his approach to the subjects he discussed with the central figures of this book – an approach that combines culture and politics in their global and Russian dimensions. That topic is a unifying theme throughout the book. Dolgov retains not only an excellent memory, which is reflected in the vivid details of his narrative, but also a keenly relevant view on many historical issues.

Dolgov presents him as a highly educated man with vast knowledge of Russian and world history, literature, and painting.

Alexey Kosygin, another outstanding statesman of the era, appears on the pages of the reviewed book quite unexpectedly in his reflections that writers, as genuinely creative people, are an exposed nerve, as it were, of human society that is extremely sensitive to all that is happening in society – primarily

manifestations of good and evil. “I learn much more about the positive and negative aspects of our society from the works of our writers than from reports submitted by our senior officials” (p. 45).

Konstantin Dolgov had a rare opportunity to get acquainted with cultural policy not only in the Soviet capital, but also in the Union republics at the level of such significant figures as Pyotr Masherov in Belarus, Geydar Aliev in Azerbaijan, and Dinmukhamed Kunayev in Kazakhstan. [His] conversations with them are of considerable interest in the light of current events in the post-Soviet space. This is amply confirmed, for example, by his meetings and conversations with Kunayev in connection with a heated discussion about the book *Az i Ya* by Olzhas Suleimenov, a young writer and future diplomat accused of nationalism and Pan Turkism.

But the fate of reforms ended up in the hands of politicians with a low cultural level. Leonid Leonov, a classic of Soviet literature, offered his opinion: “Destroyers, rogues came to power. They had no profound knowledge, no culture, no positive strategic ideas, no understanding that perestroika must be consistent and organic for the development of the social organism, i.e., society. They did not understand that genuine reforms are not impulsive, one-off solutions designed to solve complicated problems in an instant, but profound internal structural transformations of existing political, economic, and cultural relations” (pp. 261-262).

Primakov took useful lessons from the hardest moments in his life; he shared his experience with Dolgov: “First of all, you must not under any circumstance lose yourself – your ‘self,’ your conscience, your dignity. This is the only way to overcome any problem and hardship” (p. 57).

In the 2000s, President Putin continued and developed Primakov’s policy. In his conversations with Dolgov, Giulietto Chiesa, a well-known Italian writer, commentator, and political figure, commented that Russia had managed to survive thanks only to Putin, and that Putin was pursuing a wise foreign policy, seeking to consolidate and develop Russia and its relations with other states.

And, finally, there was the life-changing meeting on Mount Athos with Saint Paisios of Mount Athos that was of particular importance in bringing Dolgov to the faith and the Church. Father Paisios used to say: “Bringing love into everything by which man lives and into everything which he creates is one of the most important principles, since God is absolute love and man should strive to be like God and bring love into all spheres of being and consciousness” (p. 422). Many years have passed since that time. Konstantin Dolgov selected as an epigraph for his book of memoirs about his outstanding contemporaries a quote from the Apostle Paul: “Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”

We are confident that Dolgov’s book will make a great contribution to understanding Russia’s place in world culture and world politics, to making sense of the catastrophes of Russian history at the beginning and end of the 20th century, and to finding ways to develop modern Russian society.

The Ocean We Love and Trust...

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Keywords: I. Peyev, book, Decade of Ocean Science, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Three Seas Initiative (Trimorye)

THE PUBLISHING house Morski Sviat (Sea World) in the Bulgarian city of Varna has published a book in Bulgarian titled *To the Ocean With Love, Faith, and Hope** by Doctor of Science (Psychology) Professor

Iliya Peyev. This is a scientific monograph dedicated to the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), announced by the UN on December 5, 2017.

Professor Peyev is currently the only Doctor of Science (Psychology) in Bulgaria in the field of maritime education, naval forces, and the merchant fleet of the Republic of Bulgaria.

This book is devoted to the leading role of maritime professionals in developing the world economy and social life on the planet, the heroism of seafarers, and their families. Articles on marine topics, published by the author in recent years and included in the book, constitute its compositional characteristic. What attracts attention is the originality of not only the content, but also the structure of the book: Its five chapters stir in the reader's memory a children's song about the five oceans that not only helps study them, but also instills a love for them. Thanks to this, the author managed to imbue the main slogan of the Decade "From the ocean we have to the ocean we want" with concrete substance. At the moment, this book is the only scientific study dedicated to the Decade of Ocean Sciences. It is no exaggeration to say that the book is intended to make a significant contribution to solving two fundamental problems of the Decade.

It is on these tasks that the author focuses readers' attention, calling for the pursuit of knowledge about the ocean and its current state, as well as problems that the people of the planet should solve in this regard. Without this knowledge, according to the author, people will not be able to comprehend that their well-being directly depends on the potential of the World Ocean resources and on their own contribution to solving the problems of the ocean and seas.

In the course of his research, the author pays special attention to the Black Sea as part of the World Ocean. His line of reasoning enables the reader to understand all the multiple linkages between this sea and the problems of other seas in particular and the ocean as a whole. The book offers an interesting essay from the standpoint of geological and historicalgeographical analysis. The sea's unique beauty and natural resource wealth are described.

Regrettably, in recent years, we have been witnessing a major transformation of the situation around the Black Sea. Increasingly, the messages in the world's mass media concerning the situation in this basin are imbued with anxiety and growing tension. It is no secret to anyone that this is due to the actions of forces from outside the region. It was US intervention in the domestic affairs of Ukraine, one of the Black Sea countries, that led in 2014 to the "Maidan events" and the degradation of the entire sociopolitical life of that country. Coming to power using peacekeeping statements, its puppet regimes are increasingly escalating the international situation, relying on their overseas patron, and are raising tensions around the Black Sea and in Europe as a whole.

The book presents readers with the author's new interpretation of the so-called "safety triad" and the issues of navigation safety, as well as an interesting overview of the Khebrov-67 underwater experiment, carried out through the collective efforts of scientists from several countries.

interesting overview of the Khebrov-67 underwater experiment, carried out through the collective efforts of scientists from several countries.

I would like to express hope that Peyev's new book *To the Ocean with Love, Faith, and Hope* will be met with great interest in the scientific community, among politicians, specialists engaged in maritime affairs, as well as a wide range of readers.