

**Russian Diplomacy Today Sees Its Mission in
Maintaining a Global Balance of Interests**

M. Zakharova

Keywords: countries of the Global South and East, BRICS, Russian- Chinese relations, digital diplomacy, AI, Foreign Policy Concept, role of Russian diplomacy

Russia is at a turning point in international relations that requires the steadfastness, professionalism, and full dedication of Russian diplomats to properly represent our country in the international arena.

Washington and their obedient satellites have placed their bets on preserving their hegemony with its neocolonial order. Along the same lines, the Western minority is trying to replace the UN-centric international architecture with a certain “rules-based order.”

The Westerners themselves may not follow these “rules,” but they force them on the rest of the world community as mandatory.

However, the ongoing development of a multipolar world can no longer be slowed down. Russia is actively helping to design a new international relations infrastructure; it is expanding its dialogue with countries of the Global South and East within modern cooperation mechanisms. These include the EAEU, CSTO, CIS, SCO, and BRICS.

As for Russian-Chinese relations, 2023 was extremely fruitful. The comprehensive strategic partnership between our countries continued to expand.

Partnerships are expanding in industry, the financial and investment sectors, transportation, and logistics. Energy and agriculture cooperation is steadily developing.

An important component of Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation is mutual support on issues affecting our core interests, especially in terms of protecting sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and ensuring state security.

The decision to expand the BRICS membership was a significant event of

2023. The influence of the association's countries and their economic, cultural, scientific, and technological successes are a strong testament to the potential of our states and their ability to shape the global agenda.

Today, BRICS is perceived as one of the pillars of a new, fairer world order. It is designed to give all countries equal opportunities and to free the states of the Global South and East from the role of obedient suppliers of cheap labor and raw materials that has been imposed on them by the West in line with its typical neo-colonial paradigm.

As for digital diplomacy in its traditional sense, Russian diplomacy is already mastering the new applied capabilities of neural networks in this field.

As long as a human being controls artificial intelligence with their natural intelligence, morality, and ethics, the development of AI can only be welcomed.

Russia's progressive development, ensuring the country's security, its sovereignty in all areas, and its territorial integrity as the fundamental principles, goals, and objectives of our country in the international arena.

Since the new edition of the Foreign Policy Concept took shape amid dynamic transformation of the international environment, it takes into account the profound changes happening in the world. In particular, the document recognizes Russia's status as a leading global power and its balancing role in international affairs. The framework goal is to promote the emergence of a multipolar world order based on principles that include the sovereign equality of states, ensuring their right to choose a development model, as well as cultural and civilizational diversity of the world.

**Diplomacy for All Times: On the 90th Anniversary of the Diplomatic
Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

A. Yakovenko

Keywords: 90th anniversary of the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Moscow had to pursue a proactive policy to prevent renewed German aggression, and it drew on the historical experience of the Russian Empire. Unfortunately, it did not and could not produce significant results, but it did prepare Russian diplomacy for subsequent challenges – both during the Great Patriotic War and after its conclusion.

These were the conditions under which Soviet diplomats had to operate. The job of the Institute, established in February 1934, was to prepare diplomats for work in the rapidly evolving world.

The Institute was reorganized in 1939 into the Higher Diplomatic School, directly subordinate to the Foreign Ministry of the Soviet Union. On January 8, 1974, the Higher Diplomatic School was transformed into the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, which the Soviet leadership entrusted with the training and systematic professional development of senior diplomatic personnel – i.e., providing second higher education. Today, we have three departments that offer first higher education degrees.

The Great Patriotic War was, of course, the most difficult yet heroic period for our entire country, including the Higher Diplomatic School. Many of its staff and students volunteered for the front and signed up for the militia. Many did not return. A number of those who remained in the diplomatic service participated in the preparation and organization of the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam conferences, which determined the fate of the postwar world order.

Later on, the diplomatic service played an important role in addressing very difficult political challenges to prevent nuclear war and the escalation of international tensions and to contribute to the elimination of the colonial system.

In the 1980s, Soviet diplomats, working under the sanctions regime imposed

by that same united West led by the US, displayed the highest level of professionalism and patriotism.

In 1991, when the history of the Soviet Union came to an end, the Diplomatic Academy restructured its work in accordance with the new realities. Both the Russian state and society and the Academy survived the difficult 1990s, and it not only survived but continued to train highly professional international relations specialists.

Today, the Diplomatic Academy is a multidisciplinary modern higher education institution with all advanced training tools, including digital ones. Particular attention is paid to the Faculty for the Advanced Training of Diplomatic Workers. Recently, its work has been significantly improved, which has allowed us to triple the number of diplomats seeking to enroll in our course.

The second area of work of the Diplomatic Academy is education; it encompasses all three levels of higher education: bachelor's, master's, and postgraduate studies.

The Diplomatic Academy has a strong teaching staff: 27 Doctors of Sciences and 26 Professors, 92 Candidates of Sciences and 86 Associate Professors, 72 Senior Lecturers, and nine Lecturers. In the current academic year, a total of 1,855 students are studying at the Academy.

The Faculty for Advanced Training has developed a special course for reorienting our diplomats, especially young people, from the Western direction to the countries of the World Majority.

There is demand from our diplomatic missions in CIS countries. Besides, we train specialists not only for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also for the staff of the Federal Assembly, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Economic Development, and large state and commercial companies that work with foreign partners – Gazprom, Rosneft, Lukoil, and science and media centers. So our graduates will not be left without a job.

“We Have a Hard Battle Ahead, Not an Easy Fight”

A. Fursov

Keywords: SMO (Special Military Operation), Global South, macrozone, twilight of Europe

Ukraine’s so-called counteroffensive failed, and it is clear that there will be no more counteroffensive operations. The Russian Special Military Operation in Ukraine is shifting to a completely new stage. Yet another zone has appeared in the military cycle that began with the events in Syria – i.e., the Middle East. Unfortunately, it is not the last one. And this is a trend.

Another trend is that those whom I call the ultraglobalists have not abandoned their plans: The “green” agenda and digitalization remain.

Of course, the Global West is weakening. It is weakening together with the capitalist system that is already 500 years old. Capitalism is dying of old age, not because it was brought down, as the Soviet system was. The Global South is becoming stronger economically, but the more economic successes it has, the more social problems there are, including inequality.

We often confuse globalization with two other processes – integration and internationalization. The process of integration has been going on since the mid-16th century, right when capitalism came into being. Internationalization began in the 1870s, when the industrial revolution reached many European countries beyond Great Britain. The globalization process began in the late 1980s. It is worth noting that globalization was not possible while the Soviet Union was around. Now, in hindsight, we realize that globalization is the sweet agony of capitalism, as it were.

Now, as for “the Soviet leadership failing to notice,” this is more of a metaphor. In reality, they did not want to notice, because in the second half of the 1960s, the Soviet leadership was intent on joining the world capitalist system – naturally, on an equal footing. In this respect, they even passed the point of no return.

I am often asked whether China will be the hegemon of the 21st century. I say: “No, it will not.” Because hegemony is comprised of many things, not least

culture. One foundation of Anglo-Saxon hegemony is the English language, but the Chinese have characters.

Speaking of the forecast for 2024, in the present situation, Ukraine is unable to conduct offensive operations. I am not sure that it can conduct even defensive operations. However, it is too soon for us to rejoice and relax.

There needs to be a real economy. Incidentally, the military- industrial complex in the West, in Western Europe, is the only thing that will now keep Europe afloat so that it does not get sucked down into the vortex of history. And if we do not have our own military-industrial complex, we will be feeding somebody else's military-industrial complex, and so on and so forth.

Climate mania will continue. I am using a term that I have coined: "bio-eco-techno-fascism." "Bio" is vaccination; "eco" is the "green" agenda; and "techno" is digitalization. "Fascism" is not used in the strict sense of the word here. It is simply that in the European tradition, there is nothing worse than fascism.

Hegel and the Theory of International Relations: General Paradigm of the Hegelian System

A. Dugin

Keywords: Spirit, Idea, World Empire, multipolar world, simulacra

The influence of Hegel's philosophy on the theory of international relations most pronounced in Marxism and liberalism, while Hegel did not have much influence on realism.

Hegel articulated his views on politics most comprehensively in his *Philosophy of Right*. These views are based on his philosophy as a whole and represent an integral part of the entire system. Nevertheless, Hegel's theory of the Political is presented in a rather original way and should be briefly described in order to identify his set of views on international politics.

Hegelian thought is based on the triadic principle "thesis – antithesis – synthesis" formulated by Johann Fichte. Fichte, for his part, derived it from the Neoplatonic tradition. Hegel did not, in fact, use the expression "thesis – antithesis – synthesis," although the structure of his dialectics constantly revolves around a similar triadic scheme.

According to Hegel, at the beginning of everything is the Idea-in- itself, or subjective Spirit. This is the main thesis.

In *Philosophy of Right*, he considers only the human and their moments of "potentiation" – the dialectic of movement through various layers of the self-revealing spirit.

In Hegel's system, when it comes to the state as the culmination of the ethical manifestation of the Spirit, we are talking about not just any state, but specifically the one in which civil society has been sublated and transcended. It is between such states – postdemocratic (constitutional) monarchies – that the system of international relations takes shape.

Only when the multipolar world is more or less built – i.e., when a certain number of full-fledged philosophical postdemocratic (constitutional) monarchies arise in the world (illiberal hierarchical states built on the foundations of the ethical

moment and under the direct influence of the Spirit that gravitates toward complete and absolute self-expression) – will we move on to the next dialectical phase, which for the first time truly corresponds to what Hegel understood by international relations.

Diplomacy as the Art of Intelligence

K. Terentyev

Keywords: diplomacy, artificial intelligence, neural networks, advanced technologies

The latest achievements of humanity which are connected with artificial intelligence (AI), will accelerate social and political changes that will affect the general paradigm of our existence.

These technologies and their development are a mixed blessing. New inventions can potentially improve human lives, yet the wider application of AI functions pushes a steadily growing number of professional human skills out of the realm of human labor and, therefore, raises social tension. The final aim of the contemporary stage of technological development is so-called “artificial general intelligence” (AGI) – a supermind that would perceive the world through human eyes, as it were. This is a truly visionary prospect.

Diplomacy requires a whole set of skills and know-how. In the future, AGI might very well be able to carry out “routine functions”; complex algorithms are already used in certain aspects of diplomatic practice. They are adjusted to dealing with specific tasks. It is expected, however, that research into constructing multimodal and multitask AI architectures will considerably widen the spectrum of possibilities.

Diplomatic activities are not limited to negotiations, yet as a multidimensional process, it is one of the most complicated aspects of the diplomatic profession. This is partly because talks are used for varied purposes. The main function is to achieve a harmony of interests of the sides involved and bring the sides to an agreement on the problem at hand.

The development of AI as a dual purpose technology increases the threat that it might be used for military purposes – e.g., carrying out reconnaissance, increasing combat efficiency, identifying targets and dangers on the battlefield, and increasing the precision and speed of counterattacks.

Diplomacy is a profession in which artificial intelligence is used as a tool and not a partner, due to the broad skill set required for the job. Humans can still formulate questions and hypotheses much more efficiently than a computer, and can switch their attention between numerous and highly varied problems much faster.

The speed with which AI processes data is its obvious advantage. It can also find and compare certain aspects of reality that so far the human mind has failed to detect or cannot detect by its methods of thinking. Therefore, those who are determined to keep up with the times should master new technologies and use them skillfully as additional tools where they can bring “added value.”

**The Question of International Law, as Well as Norms, Rules, and Principles
in the Field of ICTs in the Context of International Security:
Issues and Analyses**

Heidar Ali Balouji

Keywords: ICT, treaties, GGE, international law, legally binding document

For over two decades, discussions on ICTs in the context of international security within the United Nations have failed to reach a definitive conclusion, leaving proponents and opponents in a perpetual debate. A major challenge in this ongoing issue revolves around the development of a legally binding document in the field of ICTs in the context of international security.

This paper aims to explore the reasons and doubts raised by supporters of both perspectives while emphasizing the importance of technical considerations over political influences. By focusing on objective technical solutions, a clearer path forward can be identified.

Proponents of developing a legally binding instrument on ICTs in the context of international security argue that the world is in a legal vacuum, and while there are 28 legally binding instruments on disarmament-related issues, there is not a single document related to ICTs in the context of international security that has a legally binding nature. Such a document would provide a framework for international cooperation, ensuring a consistent approach to ICT threats. They contend that such a document would establish clear guidelines, promote information sharing, and facilitate effective responses to ICT incidents. A legally binding agreement could enhance trust among nations, deter ICT attacks, and foster a more secure digital environment.

Opponents, however, express skepticism regarding the development of a legally binding document. They raise concerns about the potential implications of enforcing such an agreement. Critics argue that the ICT space is constantly evolving, making it difficult to create a comprehensive document that reaches into the future. Additionally, they believe that noncompliance may overshadow technical solutions, leading to an ineffective and impractical framework.

To navigate this complex issue, it is crucial to prioritize technical considerations – in this context, a legal opinion – over political influences. By adopting a technical perspective, policymakers can focus on practical solutions that address the evolving nature of ICT security. Technical experts should be actively involved in shaping policies, ensuring that decisions are based on their expertise rather than political motivations. Emphasizing technical aspects allows for the creation of flexible frameworks capable of adapting to emerging threats and technological advancements.

While after more than two decades of discussions on ICT security within the United Nations a clear and definitive conclusion has remained elusive and the development of a legally binding document continues to be debated, it is crucial to base conclusions on technical considerations rather than political motivations. In this way, the world will be able to address the ever-evolving nature of ICT threats.

International Relations of Russian Federation Members in the Context of Contemporary Geopolitics

A. Lukashik

Keywords: Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, international relations and foreign economic relations of Russian Federation constituent entities, interregional forums, coordinating role of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, legislative framework of international activities of Russian regions

The complex geopolitical situation, the aggressive sanctions policy of the collective West, as well as its desire to isolate our country, demonize everything associated with it, inflict a strategic defeat on it, reverse objective trends in the international arena, prevent the establishment of a multipolar world, and dictate its terms to other states unimpeded have radically changed the foreign policy context and necessitated a profound adjustment of Russia's foreign policy in world affairs.

In the context of the fundamental changes that have taken place, Russian Federation constituent entities [aka members or subjects – *Trans.*] immediately began to work on reconfiguring the entire range of their international and foreign economic relations.

In the end, only the Federation members themselves, including their leadership, business community, and civil activists, know best about their needs for cooperation with foreign partners in order to achieve current and future objectives in manufacturing, socioeconomic, cultural and humanitarian, environmental, and other areas. They independently determine the most optimal methods and ways to achieve their goals.

The general conclusion is that the dynamics of the turn to the Global South at the level of interregional ties has become sustainable. The international activities of the regions have become an important factor in the development of bilateral relations and an integral part of multilateral cooperation. Its comparative advantages are that it is less politicized and more focused on achieving practical results, thus opening up additional trade, economic, and investment opportunities, building production

and transport and logistics chains, and harmoniously integrating into international cooperation in areas such as culture, art, science, education, youth exchanges, sports, and tourism.

In short, a very solid legal and regulatory framework has been developed to date, through which regional authorities are vested with quite broad powers to engage in international relations. At the same time, the principles of unity of foreign policy and fulfillment of international obligations of the Russian Federation are reliably ensured.

For their part, Russian trade missions abroad have a variety of tools to unlock regional foreign economic potential. Tangible results are produced by their activities, such as support for export supplies of products manufactured in the regions, aggregation of import requests by country, organization of business missions, targeted consultations and field training for regional representatives, and assistance in exhibition and forum activities.

Given the obvious intention of the collective West to continue to escalate tensions in its relations with Russia, it is safe to say that the reformatting of the regions' international activities will remain relevant for the foreseeable future. The regions will continue to use all means at their disposal to continue accelerated adaptation to the changed situation on a global scale. An indispensable condition for maintaining the current pace of the reconfiguration of international and foreign economic relations is the synergy of efforts of relevant federal and regional government bodies with a focus on searching for innovative solutions.

NATO: Waging High-Tech Warfare

Yu. Belobrov

Keywords: NATO, Emerging and Disruptive Technologies, high-tech wars, military and industrial advantage, collective cooperation

The rapid technological progress observed in the last decade throughout the world, especially in China and Russia, threatens the established sources of military and industrial dominance of the collective West on the world stage. NATO views this as an alarming trend, and in an attempt to stop it, bloc members are making a determined effort to preserve their military- technological leadership and the international order structured around their policies. To this end, they are initiating a new arms race, partially through the active incorporation into the military sphere of the latest breakthrough technologies (Emerging and Disruptive Technologies – EDT), which, they believe, can reverse the emerging multipolarity of international relations and radically change the nature of future wars.

The US, as the main sponsor of NATO militarism, demands that its allies and partners closely and expeditiously collaborate on the creation of novel weaponry utilizing these emerging technologies and dramatically increase investment in various EDT projects and adapt their armed forces to them.

Amid extensive efforts by the American hegemon to secure its military- technological dominance, the key European member states of the alliance seem to be significantly falling behind in this area. According to Western analysts, this weakness was partially due to the initial underestimation of the military advantages of disruptive technologies and the insufficient allocation of investments for their development. Recently, however, the UK, France, and Germany, which account for 85% of all West European R&D investment, have been stepping up efforts in this area to avoid being left behind in the innovation process.

According to Western analysts, the high sensitivity level of innovative technologies creates a major obstacle to establishing cooperation between allies on specific issues of the military use of disruptive technologies. Under such conditions,

they view the coordination of compatibility, standardization, and legal norms for the military use of EDT as the only promising venue for reciprocal cooperation among NATO members.

For these reasons, many Western experts are quite skeptical about the prospects and practical actions of the leading NATO countries in establishing close cooperation on military innovation. They are limited by lingering competitive differences, mutual suspicion, and reluctance to reveal the secrets of their progress in this area.

The US National Debt: Its Status Quo and Likely Future

P. Sadykhov

Keywords: global financial crisis (GFC), budget deficit, gross domestic product (GDP), Treasury bonds, Treasurys, World Bank

The sharp exacerbation of Russia's relations with the West, mainly with the US, has spurred discussions on the US national debt in Russia's media and economic literature, usually with negative forecasts. It is often even claimed that the American financial system is set to collapse, and that this may destabilize global finance and trigger a new global financial and economic crisis.

The US national debt is the sum total of dollar-denominated financial liabilities, both domestic and foreign, of the US federal government. It does not include the debts of individual US states. As of the end of September 2023 – i.e., the end of fiscal year 2022- 2023 – the American national debt stood at \$31.56 trillion, exceeding the country's gross domestic product (GDP) for that period by \$5.56 trillion.

In analyzing the US national debt, it is essential to understand its genesis and evolution. Its genesis is more or less clear: Borrowing on the domestic market has consistently been the government's chief way to finance growing federal spending. Such borrowing was comparatively modest at first but would swell during the world wars, recessions, and pandemics.

Behind the creditworthiness of the US and the reliability of the dollar is not so much its economy as the political and military might of this country that easily refinances its debts. Despite the growth of the US national debt since the mid-1980s, it was only in August 2023 that the Fitch credit rating agency downgraded the US's long-term ratings to 'AA+' from 'AAA', and that was because of the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol by Donald Trump supporters who disputed the tally of Republican votes in the 2020 presidential election. Experts still believe that Fitch's move was largely an emotional reaction to the January 6 attack that set off a domestic political crisis.

Since the US national debt is denominated solely in US dollars, the dollar's stability and reserve currency status is vital for foreign holders of the debt. There are far more dollars in circulation worldwide than all US assets put together, and the dollar is the denomination currency for many global transactions that have nothing to do with the American economy.

Today, the yuan is the only currency that would be able to obtain status of reserve currency, but this is unlikely to happen any time soon, since China has trade surpluses with an overwhelming majority of its trading partners. Nevertheless, the dollar has already begun to be abandoned in foreign trade, and Russia is not the only country that has started giving it up. A prime example is Russia's trade with China and India, and not only with respect to their hydrocarbons trade. The yuan, rupee, and ruble are replacing the dollar in trade between these three countries, which represent some of the world's largest economies. And the abandonment of the dollar will most likely continue.

A stable ratio between the US national debt and its GDP matters more than whether the debt increases or not. Between 2007 and 2022, the national debt grew much faster than GDP. In this situation, the main factor – one that so far has protected the US from slipping into a financial crisis – is that the cost of servicing the national debt is not rising, because, in the American financial system, financing a budget deficit can be the only reason for increasing the money supply.

US Disinformation Campaigns Against Russia in Latin American Countries

M. Troyansky, T. Silakova

Keywords: disinformation, Latin America, double standards, propaganda, information wars, geopolitics

The US is actively conducting disinformation campaigns against Russia in Latin American countries. This is generating considerable discussion and controversy, since it reflects the ongoing struggle for influence and geopolitical supremacy.

The purpose of disinformation campaigns is to disseminate false information or to distort facts to achieve certain political, military, and economic goals. They use mass media, social networks, and other communication channels to influence and manipulate public opinion.

In recent years, Latin America has witnessed a series of geopolitical events that have attracted the attention of military and civilian observers around the world. One of them is Russia's growing influence in the region, particularly in countries such as Nicaragua and Venezuela.

The disinformation campaigns conducted by the US against Russia are aimed at weakening its position as a political and economic partner of Latin American countries. They include the dissemination of negative information about Russia, the falsification of its activities, and therefore the manipulation of public opinion in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Such campaigns are also designed to persuade the countries of the region to abandon cooperation with Russia and go along with the US.

However, it is worth noting that these disinformation campaigns have a number of negative consequences: They mislead the public and undermine trust in the media, which could ultimately destabilize society.

It turns out that the current staffing levels of US diplomatic missions in Latin America and the Caribbean countries, which are several times higher than those of Russian missions, are insufficient to counter Russian diplomacy in this region. It is

becoming increasingly obvious that Washington's anti-Russian policy is getting no support in Latin America, and increased staffing levels are unlikely to help the US in this situation.

The collective West has long been building its policy on double standards. The purpose of this strategy is to contain the advancement of several countries, including Russia, in Latin America. Washington sees that advancement as a threat.

No doubt, addressing this problem requires joint efforts and countermeasures by Russia and friendly Latin American countries. There is a pressing need to develop effective communication channels, enhance media awareness, and increase the transparency of information sources. Furthermore, there is a need for every participant to have a well-founded and well-substantiated position in order to promote dialogue, exchange views, and foster cooperation based on mutual respect and mutual benefit. Disinformation campaigns by the US against Russia in Latin America have far-reaching geopolitical consequences that should not be underestimated. It is necessary to give a sweeping response to the Western disinformation campaign in order to ensure stable development and cooperation between Latin American countries and Russia.

Hybridization of the French National Rally Party

A. Badayeva

Keywords: National Rally, National Front, Marine Le Pen, Jean-Marie Le Pen, Jordan Bardella, nationalism, right-wing populism, French 2022 presidential election

For more than half a century, representatives of the Le Pen family have held on to their leading positions in France's far-right National Rally party and, despite numerous political obstacles, they continue their confident march toward power. The majoritarian electoral system, the cooperation of the elite and its reluctance to cede power, along with the tenacity demonstrated by National Rally's leadership have led to a gradual transformation and hybridization of the French far-right, its ideological drift toward the center, and the softening of its previously radical image.

National Rally is one of the oldest far-right parties in Europe, largely due to its strictly hierarchical and family-based system of governance. The history of its creation, series of splits, and method of transformation closely mirror those of its West European political counterparts. The roots of all these parties can be traced back to postwar neo-fascist organizations and intellectual far-right movements.

The far-right National Rally, like many related West European parties, has demonstrated extreme ideological flexibility in recent years. Xenophobic rhetoric is losing its relevance, and its electoral significance is falling. The French far-right is actively testing the waters for a possible alliance with the center-right represented by the critically weakened Republicans. The National Rally has noticeably strengthened its political positions, creating its own large faction in the National Assembly, where it successfully maneuvers between mainstream coalitions that do not have an absolute majority. Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French far-right, is actively preparing for her fourth presidential campaign in 2027, doing everything possible to finally "normalize" the image of her party, hybridizing its political rhetoric and giving momentum to a shift toward the political center.

The Principle of Harmony Among the Orthodox Churches and Its Disruption

Hegumen Dionysius

Keywords: Orthodox Churches, the principle of harmony, the West and the East, Russian Orthodox Church, the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court, schism and Church unity

Today, the Orthodox Church is trying to remedy the repercussions of the schism caused by the unilateral actions of representatives of the Constantinople Patriarchate. According to Orthodox ecclesiology, however, the Church remains united even if one of its parts detaches from it; it never loses its oneness.

Unity and *sobornost* (catholicity) are two key features of the Church; the Church can be also defined by the term *harmonia*. Harmonia presupposes that “constituents” of a single whole exist as one whole in full agreement among themselves. They can be different, but they cannot live in contradiction; they cannot disagree, let alone quarrel with one another. The parts of harmony should follow the principles of complementarity, mutual assistance, and mutual agreement.

There was a certain harmony in relations between the Western (Roman) and Eastern (Patriarchate of Constantinople and other patriarchates) Churches. In the first millennium, the Roman Church in the West and the Constantinople Church in the East (starting in the fourth century) had certain advantages that did not hinder their unity and even facilitated it in the form of mutual enrichment, despite certain problems.

According to the principle of harmony, the Roman and Constantinople Churches formed the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.” Due to its primacy of honor, Rome had to maintain harmonious relationships with Constantinople as the capital of Byzantium. The Roman popes could view themselves as keepers of the faith, but they should be honest and acknowledge that the main religious tradition was formulated not so much in the West as in the East.

In 1054, the secession of the Western Church from the Eastern Church caused a spiritual disaster. Seen through the lens of Eastern Christians, Western Christians

found themselves submerged not only in schism but also heresy, since they professed the so-called Filioque teaching (about the Holy Spirit proceeding not only from the Father but also from the Son) resolutely rejected by Orthodox ecclesiology and accepted certain ritual practices (e.g., communion with unleavened bread) firmly rejected as an unacceptable distortion of the faith.¹⁵ The Eastern Orthodox Churches relied on the principle of harmony in their relations; they reserved the first place in diptychs for the Church of Rome as a prize for its redemption.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 meant that there was no empire and, therefore, no [political] support [for the Church]. We can say that the year 1453 meant the end of state or imperial Christianity in Byzantium and, in fact, of Byzantium itself.

In 1872, the Church of Constantinople, supported by other Eastern Churches, condemned the Bulgarian Exarchate, founded two years earlier, for phyletism (preference for private national interests over common church interests). This condemnation stressed the inherent one-sidedness of the Eastern Church on the same phyletic basis – in this case Greek.

Thus, the Orthodox local churches have lost their symphony and harmony. Moreover, due to unilateral acts of the Constantinople Patriarchate, the primacy of honor has shifted to the primacy of power beyond all permissible bounds. The absolute conviction of the obviously wrong side that it was in the right consolidated supporters of the theory of the primacy of honor and power of the Constantinople Patriarchate without any attempt at formulating a serious scholarly theological or church-historical justification of what could not be justified in principle. The shared ideology of those who support the theory of the primacy of honor and power of the Constantinople Patriarchate, with the support of tools of West European and American science, continues to be presented with an aura of apparent plausibility.

There is only one path to reconciliation: The Patriarch of Constantinople must abandon his extraterritorial measures and their repercussions, which hardly seems likely given his rhetoric and subsequent steps. The history of the Church abounds in schisms and other heresies that were finally overcome.

Saudi Arabia and Russia's Eastward Reorientation

A. Baklanov

Keywords: Akhmad-Hajji Kadyrov, president, Chechnya, Chechen Republic, Russia, Saudi Arabia, relations

As one of the priorities in its increasingly distinct eastward foreign policy reorientation, Russia is seeking to bolster relations with Arab and Muslim countries on the basis of confidence, mutual benefit, and partnership principles.

Our relations with Saudi Arabia, financially and economically the most powerful nation in the Middle East and an “energy superpower” with tremendous investment potential, play a special, largely symbolic role in this respect.

Admittedly, the path to rapprochement between the two countries was not easy. There have been difficulties and periods of minimal bilateral relations.

The biggest crisis broke out in December 1994 over differing approaches to the conflict in Chechnya and Riyadh's aiding mercenaries from Middle Eastern countries who were fighting the Russian Army on the side of the separatists.

At that time, Saudi Arabia's leadership was influenced by Western propaganda and interpretations by Islamist extremist groups. Saudi officials sharply criticized Moscow from many international rostrums, including the UN and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In explaining the postwar situation, we emphasized that there existed a sound basis for national conciliation in Chechnya and fruitful joint efforts by the Chechen administration and the federal government to meet the vital needs of the Chechen population.

At the same time, we gave the Saudis detailed explanations about who was fanning separatist trends in Russia.

In 2002, the Russian-Saudi Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation held its first session after thorough preparations.

In September 2003, Moscow welcomed Crown Prince Abdullah, the highest-ranking Saudi leader to visit Russia.

After negotiations in 2004 we finally convinced the Saudis to cooperate with us in all areas, including counterterrorism.

The Saudis supported Russia's application to join the OIC as an observer. Moreover, they organized a high-level OIC conference in Jeddah that passed a resolution backing the Russian bid. On July 30, 2005, Russia received official observer status at the OIC.

All forms of support for separatist groups in Chechnya and the North Caucasus in general were ended. Expert-level consultations were held on counterterrorism. In February 2005, Saudi Arabia hosted a key international conference on counterterrorism in Riyadh in close collaboration with Russia. The forum approved formulas endorsed by Russia.

Today, when we have an excellent relationship with Saudi Arabia, we should be very grateful for the contribution made to this by the first president of the Chechen Republic, Akhmad-Hajji Kadyrov.

Environmental Protection as an Area of Russia's Cooperation With Central Asian Countries

K. Muratshina

Keywords: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, cooperation, environmental protection

One area where countries of Central Asia and Russia collaborated was environmental protection or conservation.

Legally, environmental protection may be a separate field of relations between nations, but agreements between Russia and Central Asian states put it in general sections on noneconomic relations, which is logical, since environmental protection involves not only technical but also scientific, educational, and informational activities.

Kazakhstan is Russia's main Central Asian partner on conservation issues.

In a nature conservation agreement signed back in 2004, Russia and Kazakhstan pledged to develop regulatory and methodological documents; regularly exchange information and experts; conduct research; organize conferences, exhibitions, and courses; and carry out environmental inspections in border regions. The agreement lays the basis for a wide range of activities, including measures to counter all forms of pollution.

Biodiversity conservation is yet another important environmental objective in Russian-Kazakh relations. In 2011, the two countries established a unique area – the Altay Transboundary Biosphere Reserve, comprising the Katunsky Biosphere Reserve in Russia and the Katon-Karagay National Park in Kazakhstan.

Scientific, educational, and cultural projects are an important part of Russian-Kazakh environmental activities.

Russia's collaboration with Kyrgyzstan is based on the 2014 Memorandum on Cooperation in Environmental Protection, in which the two countries pledged to seek to improve environmental oversight, improve natural resources management, prevent air and water pollution, make rational use of marshlands, restore populations of rare and endangered animal species, and further develop their systems of nature

reserves. Biodiversity conservation is currently the most fruitful field of Russian-Kyrgyz cooperation.

The two countries are also increasing scientific and educational contacts.

An environmental protection agreement with Tajikistan signed by Russia in 2017 is similar to the aforementioned Russian-Kazakh accord, but unlike the latter, it does not contain a section on territorial inspection and requires setting up a working group rather than an intergovernmental commission.

Joint biodiversity conservation activities and scientific and educational exchanges are among plans that have been put into practice.

Uzbekistan is another partner of Russia in environmental efforts. Russia has an environmental agreement with that country that practically replicates the Russian-Tajik accord, except that it enshrines no commitments to carry out research, exchange expert evaluations, or develop ecotourism.

Russia is cooperating with Turkmenistan, too. A security agreement between them, signed back in 2003 but put into force in 2020, includes a section on environmental protection.

Biodiversity conservation is so far the only field where Russia and Turkmenistan are cooperating in practical terms in a bilateral format.

Russia and Central Asian countries also cooperate in multilateral formats. One example is a Russian-Kazakh-Uzbek-Turkmen saiga antelope conservation project.

To sum up, although Russia's cooperation in conservation activities with some Central Asian countries has been more intensive than with others, there have been significant achievements benefiting all countries involved – exchanges of best practices, effective depollution, and biodiversity conservation measures. Collaboration takes both bilateral and multilateral forms, with diverse methods and formats. Russia practically always takes the initiative and contributes the most resources. Russia's policies are a substantial contribution to addressing the environmental problems of the whole region. Russia has also taken on the role of coordinator of conservation efforts for the entire post-Soviet space.

CSTO: Unchanged Priorities in a Changing World Order

I. Tasmagambetov

Keywords: CSTO, conflicts, collective security, priorities, polycentricity, world order

The formation of a polycentric world order, whose development trends are set forth in the strategic planning documents of many modern states, determines not only the nature of contemporary threats and challenges to international and national security, but also ambiguously affects the possibilities of resolving the long-standing differences that emerged in past eras. During the Cold War, the rivalry between the two poles of power was often projected onto peripheral regions – in other words, the two superpowers influenced the parties to the conflict in one way or another, and the course of the latter was determined by tacit agreements between Moscow and Washington.

These factors determined the unique trajectory of the formation of the collective security system in post-Soviet Eurasia and its significant future transformations (transition from the Collective Security Treaty to the Collective Security Treaty Organization, change in the number of participants, emergence of additional formats of cooperation within the Organization, etc.).

The space that we habitually call post-Soviet is still rife with conflicts, most of which are long-standing. A significant number of them are also in the CSTO area of responsibility.

The CSTO already has successful experience in resolving situations related to territorial disputes – for instance, the ongoing process of resolving disputes between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, accelerated thanks to the efforts of the leaders of these two countries.

The year 2023 proved extremely eventful, which highlighted the need to bring the CSTO's functionality into line with the requirements of the times.

Discussing the security situation in the CSTO area of responsibility, it should be stressed that it is changing rapidly, which forces the organization, while

remaining committed to its principles and priorities, to look several years ahead in order to be prepared to meet new challenges and threats.

The CSTO prioritizes further strengthening the force component of its activities and improving the training and command and control systems of the Collective Forces. Key tasks include equipping troops with modern weapons, and military and special equipment in accordance with decisions adopted by the Organization's Collective Security Council. The interim results of this work are being successfully tested during joint combat training activities conducted on a regular basis.

The most important tasks for 2024 include equipping troops with modern weapons, and military and special equipment. An extensive program of joint combat training activities has been prepared for 2024.

The organization's interaction with the CIS is a significant factor in ensuring regional security in Eurasia. The organization demonstrates its firm intention to continue to enhance systematic work with the SCO.

The main job of the CSTO for the foreseeable future is to strengthen the role and significance of the organization in the changing system of international relations, while maintaining adherence to the established principles and priorities and at the same time conforming to the current context of regional and global security.

The CSTO and the Problem of Hybrid Warfare

N. Kharitonova

Keywords: CSTO, hybrid warfare, collective security

Given that collective security systems remain the most sought-after effective tools for maintaining stability at the regional level, these structures are receiving increased attention in the context of countering hybrid threats. Post-Soviet Eurasia is increasingly becoming an arena of hybrid confrontation; it is one of the key theaters of military operations in the context of the geopolitical confrontation between the West and Russia. And the Collective Security Treaty Organization undoubtedly has a special role to play here.

This article is an invitation to a discussion, given that the term “hybrid warfare” is still on its way to full inclusion in scientific discourse, and the presence of this term in the strategic planning documents of modern states is limited. At the same time, experience shows that the gap between practice and theory in critical situations can have extremely negative consequences, especially when it comes to such a sensitive area as international security.

In recent years, international relations specialists increasingly see the obsolescence of classical treaty formats and the need to search for new formats of interaction among the agents of world politics. This is caused primarily by numerous and already systematic instances of noncompliance with the norms of international law in general and increasingly frequent events related to the violation of multilateral and bilateral interstate treaties. The problem is that international law is increasingly violated by international actors who in the eyes of the world majority continue to be associated with the bulwark of democracy and legality.

If we consider hybrid warfare an attribute of global changes in the modern system of international relations and a means for the established center of power (the US) to counteract new and emerging centers of power (China, Russia, Brazil, India, etc.) and their integration projects in order to preserve and maintain dominance (the unipolar structure of the world order), then it should be stated that in the coming

decades, hybrid pressure on Eurasian states will increase.

According to Russian experts, hybrid warfare methods include political pressure in the international arena; economic sanctions; information warfare; cyber warfare; intelligence activities in the enemy's territory; sponsorship of the opposition, separatists, and terrorist organizations; and actions aimed at increasing the crime level.

Many of the aforementioned methods of hybrid warfare, which can perhaps already be defined as quite traditional, have been the subject of attention of the CSTO. The ongoing transformations of many hybrid threats are monitored by the organization's analysts, and means of neutralizing them are proposed. The organization's political and diplomatic tools, a priority, are being fully implemented, and the system of military cooperation is being strengthened with a focus on responding to crisis situations and countering challenges and threats.

Virtually all of the above trends can be observed in the CSTO's area of responsibility. The experience, described by experts, of using hybrid warfare methods and technologies in the post-Soviet Eurasian space allows us to consider this space a theater of military operations in the hybrid war of the collective West against Russia and to declare the emergence of threats to regional security in the CSTO area of responsibility.

Moreover, the organization itself is becoming a target of hybrid aggression, which requires a flexible and appropriate response. The CSTO is currently facing the need to develop fundamentally new effective mechanisms for preventing and neutralizing hybrid threats. A theoretical study of the set of problems related to hybrid impact implies the subsequent reflection of specific formulas and concepts in strategic documents of both the CSTO and its member states. This will facilitate the development of common approaches to countering hybrid threats and strengthening regional security.

The Development of Industrial Cooperation Among EAEU Member States

A. Donchenko

Keywords: EAEU economy, industrial cooperation, technological sovereignty

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is an illustrative example of an international organization of regional economic integration. As the architecture of the global technological system is changing, the EAEU is facing the task of deepening cooperation. Import substitution has received a new impetus, due not only to the sanctions pressure, but also to the significant impact of parallel imports on many sectors of the Union's economy. Also on the agenda is the issue of reducing the level of import dependence with respect to a number of finished products, primarily in the electronic component base and machine tool industry (this indicator is estimated to be no less than 60%). Resolution of these issues is closely linked with the involvement of the scientific research base: the Eurasian technological platforms whose work is aimed at consolidating, among other things, the scientific potential of the EAEU countries pursuing technological sovereignty.

According to available expert estimates, the greatest efficiency of technological import substitution (at least 70% in the volume of fixed assets) is achieved through the implementation of bilateral or multilateral cooperation projects. It is quite obvious that a unified long-term import substitution policy in the EAEU is possible with a unified approach of the authorities and the business community toward counter-sanction internal and external economic measures.

The EAEU attracts partners through its digital and climate agenda and related technological transformation; financial and settlement ecosystem; energy and food security programs; etc. Within the Union, work is under way to develop mechanisms for cooperative ties, conditions for import substitution, localization of production, and acceleration of industrial integration.

The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategic Directions for Developing Eurasian Economic Integration Until 2025 includes mechanisms that will help create conditions for industrial cooperation. These include, for example,

measures to reduce cross-border barriers, implement cooperation projects with an integration component, etc.

Over the past decade, Eurasian integration has proven its economic validity. Since 2015, mutual trade within the Union has grown by 87%, and foreign trade turnover – by 59%.

The Union has every opportunity to become a self-sufficient pole of the emerging new architecture of international economic relations and a center of attraction for all independent states sharing Eurasian values and seeking cooperation with the EAEU.

Can BRICS Provide a Format for Cooperation on Water Issues?

S. Lavrov

Keywords: BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), water as an economic good, multilateral cooperation

Control of and access to freshwater resources are an increasing focal point of world politics. It is an objective reality that, due either to the work of blind fortune or as an act of providence, some of the countries possessing the largest renewable freshwater resources belong to international alliances that are very important for Russia: BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). These countries are Brazil, Russia, India, and China. All four are members of BRICS, and Russia, China, and India are also members of the SCO. Brazil, Russia, and China are among the world's top five holders of freshwater resources, and India is one of the top 10. Although different sources compile different rankings due to differences in evaluation methods, statistics from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) provide reliable guidelines, and no one disputes the leadership of Brazil and Russia, with a big gap between them and the rest of the world.

Serious analysts have noted for a long time that natural resources are an object of increasingly intense global fights, and water is nowhere near the bottom of the list of targets. Back in 2012, the World Water Council said in a report of its strategy for 2010-2012 that unlimited access to water was a thing of the past. Some experts estimate that by 2050 there will be just three or four countries in the world, including Russia, experiencing no water shortages.

Experts forecast that freshwater resources will soon be a global development factor as significant as hydrocarbons and other energy. Safe drinking water is becoming a valuable commodity. Sales of bottled drinking water are one of the world's fastest-developing industries. Every year, more than 100 billion liters of water is sold, most of it bottled.

BRICS and the SCO can and should assert a role for themselves in creating

reasonable and fair international rules on water management and on a responsible attitude toward water. Moreover, one expects that the sustainable development priorities of BRICS countries will stimulate them to take initiative: Giving the population easier access to clean drinking water is an imperative even in Brazil, with its superabundant water resources, not to mention China, India, Egypt, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran, or Ethiopia. The problem also exists in some Russian regions. Water conservation is an acute problem, too.

A framework international water management convention could very well be developed under the oversight of BRICS and be based on BRICS concepts. Such an agreement should be open to any country supporting its principles, primarily nations from among our partners in the SCO and BRICS Plus, a group close to the SCO in spirit.

Unfortunately, water issues still have not become a priority for BRICS. The Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025 contains only one line on the subject, saying, without going into specifics, that the member countries have pledged to “develop cooperation in preservation and rational use of water resources.” There is no separate water management or water trade format among BRICS’s more than 60 cooperation formats. But more concrete discussions of water issues will require a specialized format. That could take various forms – for instance, an intergovernmental working or expert group or associations of water industry companies or producers of water purification and conservation equipment and technologies.

Freshwater resources are the source of a wide range of problems, some of which are very sensitive for many countries and have national and regional characteristics and nuances. The above suggestions reflect a belief that these problems should be handled on a collective basis, though no other views should be disregarded by any means.

At any rate, it would seem appropriate for BRICS to put this set of problems on its agenda today in view of Russia’s chairmanship of the organization in 2024.

Russian Phase of the Multilateral Social and Cultural Program
“BRICS People Choosing Life” Kicks Off

L. Sekacheva

Keywords: BRICS People Choosing Life, BRICS. World of Traditions regional public organization

The program “BRICS People Choosing Life” The program consists of multilateral projects designed to foster the unity of the BRICS countries, give people spiritual and moral support, imbue children and teenagers with ideas based on the moral legacies of outstanding thinkers who lived in what are now the BRICS countries, to improve people’s physical health, to conserve and popularize the cultural and historical heritage of the BRICS nations, and to boost trade and economic relations among them.

The first phase of the program took place in India in December 2022. The Russian phase was launched on December 21, 2023, at an event that involved presentations of projects and an exhibition titled “Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi: A Unique Legacy” and the display of famous correspondence between the two.

The second phase of the program will take place in 2024, the year Russia is holding the rotating chairmanship of BRICS. The Russian phase will comprise 12 cultural and business projects. The chief projects are “BRICS Great Teachers”; the opening of branches of the Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi Centre at secondary schools in some Russian regions; “Open Your Heart to Kindness,” a cultural and moral project; “About Good, in a Good Way, for Good,” an art competition for children and teenagers; “Youth for Cybersecurity,” a social IT project; “BRICS Youth Anthem,” a project to write the anthem for the member countries’ young people; “The Boxing Ring as a Platform for the Moral Self-Improvement of BRICS Youth,” a project to promote moral ideals and healthy ways of life; “Afanasy Nikitin: Trading Route to India,” a project to erect a monument in India to the merchant and famous traveler from the Russian city of Tver; and “BRICS Trading House AURA,” a project to promote trade and economic relations among BRICS member countries.

Report on the Kuban CyberSecurity Conference **(CSC 2023)**

A. Vikhlyayev

Keywords: ICT, countering crime, cybercrime

Widespread integration of information and Communications Technologies (ICT) has created a heightened interest in information infrastructure on the part of criminals as well. They see ICT not merely as targets for potential criminal violations, but as new tools to carry out their illegal actions.

Therefore, along with its useful attributes and novel opportunities, the development of ICT also brings new risks, new threats, and new challenges. A particular danger is presented by the use of ICT for terrorist aims. Terrorist organizations employ these technologies as tools to spread terrorist propaganda, to attract new proponents, to carry out terrorist attacks, as well as to support their activities: organizing and planning terrorist acts, fundraising, communicating with perpetrators, etc.

ICT is also being actively used to commit common crimes. Criminals have acquired the ability to commit crimes remotely, even from other countries, using ICT.

The effectiveness of measures taken to combat crime in large part depends on how expeditiously the appropriate bodies interact, including in the exchange of information.

The process of searching for, storing, duplicating, and transferring such information for law-enforcement purposes also has a number of specific features that had not been previously regulated.

Such data may be useful to law-enforcement agencies in preventing, detecting and suppressing crimes; finding the perpetrators who plan them; and providing law enforcement with the necessary evidence to bring criminals to account.

Throughout the world, national and international legal mechanisms to regulate this field are also in need of constant improvement. An important avenue of such

work is the creation of [favorable] conditions for law enforcement to employ modern technologies and resources, including ICT itself. The development and application of international legal mechanisms that correspond to modern realities will facilitate the improvement of existing forms of international cooperation among relevant authorities and the creation of new ones, thereby helping them fight cyber threats more effectively.

Uncovering Facts: The Truth about the Great Patriotic War
in the English-Language Press of 1941 to 1945

N. Narochnitskaya

Keywords: USSR's role in defeating Nazi Germany, falsifications, Great Patriotic War, world press, *Stalingrad: The City of Steel, 1942-1943*, interview, US ambassador to the USSR

Over the past few decades, Western countries have systematically sought to “cancel” the historic role of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany. Behind this is a plot by transatlantic liberal ideologists to undermine the prestige of modern Russia as the legal successor to the USSR symbolizing the fight against attempts to establish a lasting unipolar, hegemonistic world order. European Parliament Resolution 2019/2819 of September 19, 2019, “on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe,” is a good example.

That resolution, citing the 1939 Soviet-German Treaty of Non- Aggression, holds the Soviet Union equally if not more responsible than Nazi Germany for unleashing World War II. It is not that the authors of the document did not know history, but they deliberately glossed over the fact that, before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact came into being, all leading European nations had signed non-aggression or joint defense treaties with Nazi Germany, that the peoples of all countries in continental Europe supported the Nazis to a greater or lesser extent during World War II, and that this war was actually triggered by the Munich Agreement of 1938.

This resolution and nine similar documents penned by EU officials suggest that Western political elites have been hit hard by the “cancel culture” virus: They are “canceling” anything that does not fit into the Western liberal agenda, primarily Russia and its role in 20th-century history.

Journalists posted to the Soviet Union during World War II belonged to the elite of the world press. They included a number of high-profile writers.

Members of this pen fraternity were tied to the Soviet Union for a long time, and our country was subsequently a theme of their work for the rest of their lives.

They were motivated by more than just respect for the heroism and selflessness of the Soviet people: A red thread running through everything they wrote was a desire to explore the secret of the strong Russian spirit and comprehend the emerging historical role of the Soviet Union as the successor to the multiethnic Russian Empire.

Uncompromising anti-fascism was the main political principle of war correspondents posted to the Soviet Union. In their articles, they expressed empathy for the tragedy of our people, admired the heroism of Russian soldiers and the daily self-sacrifices of women workers on the home front, and wrote a lot about Soviet military leaders. Most importantly, they were objective.

Therefore, testimony from foreign journalists posted to the USSR during the Great Patriotic War is very valuable in today's information wars amid unceasing aggressive Western efforts to falsify one of the most important pages in the history of our country.

The Military, Political, and Psychological Significance of the Battle of Leningrad (1941-1944)

M. Myagkov

Keywords: siege of Leningrad, genocide, Leningrad Symphony No. 7 by Dmitry Shostakovich, Nevsky Pyatachok, heroism and courage, Soviet people

Before the war, Leningrad was a major industrial and cultural center. All these factors made the seizure of what was often labeled “the northern capital” one of Hitler’s priorities.

By September 8, 1941, the Germans had cut off all roads connecting Leningrad to the rest of the USSR, putting Leningrad in a critical position.

Food in Leningrad had been rationed since July 1941, but the city still had usual wartime food reserves. But the rations dwindled quickly after the city came under siege.

Almost daily, Leningraders endured the horrors of artillery and aerial bombardment. The Germans dropped several thousand incendiary bombs on the city to start massive fires.

When Hitler realized that Leningrad could not be easily captured, the German Navy chief of staff issued a directive officially announcing a plan to blockade and destroy Leningrad.

According to statistics cited at the Nuremberg trials, the siege claimed a total of 632,000 lives. This, of course, is an incomplete number. Historians estimate the total siege-period fatalities at between 800,000 and 1.5 million.

The city did not surrender, and its population and administration did everything possible to withstand the hardships of the blockade.

The Road of Life, a road laid on the ice of frozen Lake Ladoga, became a lifeline for Leningrad. Put in service on November 21, 1941, it was used to transport food and ammunition to the city and evacuate civilians, mainly women and children. By the end of August 1941, 489,000 people, including 219,691 children, had been evacuated from Leningrad; 659,000 people left the city along the Road of Life by the end of April, and another 403,000 did between May and October. Altogether,

about 1.7 million people were evacuated during the siege. Never before had so many people been rescued from a besieged city.

The severity of the war changed the Soviet government's attitude toward religion, and Leningrad was no exception. Three churches opened in the city during the siege. Cultural and intellectual life continued in Leningrad despite the siege.

Leningrad's historic buildings and monuments were severely damaged. The damage might have been worse had effective measures not been taken to disguise them.

Leningraders' unparalleled self-sacrifice showed the world the limits of the strength of Nazi Germany and its allies. The city was not alone in its fight. The entire USSR and all freedom-loving people of the planet had their attention fixed on its heroic defense.

It was only in January 1943, after the Germans pulled their main forces to Stalingrad, that the Red Army made a small opening in the siege through Operation Iskra (Spark), seizing a strip between eight and 11 kilometers wide on the southern bank of Lake Ladoga that linked Leningrad to the rest of the country. In the next 17 days, a rail line and motor road were laid through it. Thus, January 1943 became a turning point in the battle of Leningrad.

In the strategic Leningrad-Novgorod Operation, the Red Army went on the offensive on January 14, 1944, and on January 20, it liberated Novgorod. The next day, the Germans started leaving the Mga-Tosno area, where they had cut off the Leningrad-Moscow railroad. On January 27 of this year Leningrad was completely liberated.

A State From the German Inkstand: How Lithuanian Independence Was Proclaimed (1917-1918)

A. Dyukov

Keywords: Lithuanian lands of the Russian Empire, proclamation of Lithuanian independence

In the second decade of the 20th century the world was puzzled by the appearance of one new national state after another on the map of Eastern Europe. Poland was merely one of them, and not unexpected. But while Europe had been aware of Poles as a European people, Lithuanians remained an object of study of prominent linguists and ethnographers. In 1918, even this tiny ethnicity suddenly acquired its statehood as the Lithuanian Republic.

Regrettably, in historiography, the events related to the proclamation of its independence are presented as a smooth process very much in line with the narrative offered by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry back in the 1920s. It is equally regrettable that the key documents accessible to the Russian reader in the collection of documents sanctified, so to speak, by the Joint Russian-Lithuanian Commission of Historians are falsified. This article, drawing on documents from the Political Archive of the [German] Federal Foreign Office (Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts), attempts to rectify somewhat this regrettable state of affairs.

The proclamation of Lithuanian “independence” was initially the idea of the German authorities, who wanted to give a semblance of legitimacy to the seizure of Lithuanian lands from the Russian Empire and their integration into Germany. In the summer of 1917, Lithuanian collaborators led by Basanavičius and Smetona were prepared to ensure the annexation of Lithuanian lands in exchange for the formal status of an independent state and national and cultural autonomy. The German Foreign Ministry, which opposed this move, in the hope of disrupting the declaration of “independence,” consistently encouraged their Lithuanian interlocutors to raise the stakes by formulating new demands.

The long squabble between German diplomats and the German military, in which members of the Lithuanian *Landesrat* were merely tools, led to a situation in

which Berlin's recognition of Lithuanian independence involved much greater concessions than planned. But even after it was officially recognized, the Lithuanian "state from an inkstand" existed only on paper, while the real power lay with the German occupation authorities. The "founding fathers" acquired real power only when Germany lost the world war and German occupation troops were gradually withdrawn from Lithuania.

Personalities in the History of Russia's Diplomatic Presence in Jerusalem
(1858-1880)

F. Georgi

Keywords: Russian Empire, Middle East, the Holy Land, Jerusalem, Israel, National Library of Israel, consulate, digital diplomacy, online exhibition

The Russian Imperial Consulate operated in Jerusalem for nearly 60 years in the latter half of the 19th and early 20th centuries (1858-1914). In 1891, it was upgraded to a consulate general. Its history is rife with glorious achievements of Russian diplomats who added many glorious pages to the chronicle of Russia's presence in the Holy Land. An album of photographs of officers of the consulate of the Russian Empire in Jerusalem kept in the National Library of Israel is a unique artifact. It contains photos of all consuls and most of their colleagues and family members from 1858 to 1914, many of them named and dated in Russian.

A new online exhibition organized by the Embassy of Russia to Israel "Russian Imperial Consulate General in Jerusalem in Faces: The 165th anniversary of Foundation" is dedicated to our predecessors, the constellation of paladins of the Russian Empire in the Holy Land. It contains digitized photos from the album and detailed comments, archival documents, and even poetry written by diplomats. It is intended for a wide audience, primarily diplomats, scholars, and anyone interested in the history of Russia.

An important and valuable contribution to our online exhibition was made by the Department of History and Records of the Russian Foreign Ministry that provided the embassy with digitized documents kept in the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Empire (AVPRI) related to the consulate. The Museum of the History of Religion and the Council of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society in the State of Israel also made equally valuable contributions.

This memento offers us a unique chance to learn more about our colleagues who selflessly defended the interests of their Fatherland in faraway Palestine, their families, their comrades-in-arms, their everyday life, and their milieu. While plenty of photographs have been preserved of Russian Palestine in the late 19th and early

20th centuries, very few photos related to consular activities and the life of consular officers have found their way to the pages of Russian publications. Eighty photographs from the album will fill the gap and open the door to a brilliant era of Russian Orientalists and dragomans (interpreters) in the diplomatic service who were completely devoted to the tsar and the Fatherland. This is an inalienable yet poorly studied part of the great history of a great country.

In fact, the photographs of members of Russian Palestine show us how Russian diplomats spent their leisure time. The new source used here for the first time offers a new lens through which to view the history of the Russian consulate in Jerusalem in the context of political processes unfolding in the Ottoman Empire in the latter half of the 19th century and reveals hitherto unknown pages of its internal chronicle.

Anatomy of the Ukraine Crisis

M. Zakharova

Keywords: Ukraine crisis, events in the Balkans, NATO expansion, “color revolutions,” the return of Crimea, Donbass, Novorossiya

The book titled *Anatomy of the Ukraine Crisis* by Oleg Karpovich, vice-rector for research, and Mikhail Troyansky, vice-rector for advanced training and professional development of the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs consists of a collection of selected articles and includes materials published in the Russian and foreign press. They explain in detail various aspects of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the context of the Ukraine crisis, the beginning of the Special Military Operation, the general turbulence of the system of international relations, the emergence of new centers of power, and the intensification of Russia’s interaction with the Global South in the interests of forming a polycentric world order based on the principles of equality and mutual respect of all participants in international communication.

The West has almost completely destroyed the mechanisms of collective security, formed in the postwar period, in favor of its opportunistic geopolitical aspirations and is pursuing a destructive policy to contain Russia and China as strategic competitors. A full-scale “hybrid war” has been unleashed against our country. Through the fault of Washington and its NATO allies, the situation is teetering on the brink of a direct armed conflict between nuclear powers, which is fraught with catastrophic consequences.

The works included in this collection are of particular importance in the context of the misleading information, fake news, and outright lies disseminated by the West. I am convinced that this publication will be useful both to experienced professionals and to anyone interested in world politics and international security and development.

In this book by Karpovich and Troyansky, the inquisitive reader will find unconventional assessments of events that have unfolded before our eyes over the

past two years. But the main conclusion of the authors, which is worth pondering, is that, by and large, the most important changes are only just starting. Having managed to withstand the blow of the collective West, Russia, together with its allies and associates, has moved from defense to offense. The future of world geopolitics will not be determined by apologists of the diktat of hegemonic ideology; it will be calmly and consistently built by supporters of democratic and fair principles of interaction between sovereign states. And analyzing the lessons of the Ukraine crisis will play a significant role in this process.

The US: Its Presidents Change, Its Strategy Does Not

S. Filatov

Keywords: monograph, US's six military strategies, deterrence strategies

In the new monograph *U.S. Basic Military Strategies: Their Analysis and Practical Employment on military-political problems*, Vladimir Kozin, a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences, analyzes six main military strategies of the US. There are three factors that make this study unique.

First, the monograph provides a comprehensive analysis of six key US federal-level, national military-strategic objectives: national security, national defense, nuclear, missile-defense and space strategies, as well as US cybersecurity strategy.

Second, the new edition does a comparative analysis of the aforementioned six strategies during two presidential administrations – the previous, Donald Trump, administration and the current, Joe Biden, administration.

Third, the study provides well-documented research into the military-technical and financial resources that have been used during both the Republican and Democratic presidencies up until the November 2024 presidential election.

The author concludes that there are only slight military-political and editorial differences in each of the two US administration's key military strategies under consideration. But overall, they retain their aggressive, offensive character and are mainly projected against China and Russia. Kozin believes that regardless of who wins the upcoming US presidential election in November 2024, the orientation of all six main strategies will remain unchanged. In the author's opinion, the monograph could be used by governmental and nongovernmental experts on arms control, as well as by any who take an interest in near-term Russian-US military-political relations and related issues.

On the Three-Volume Monograph Russia and Moldova: Between Past Heritage and Future Horizons

O. Karpovich

Keywords: three-volume monograph *Rossia i Moldova* [Russia and Moldova]

The book by Farit Mukhametshin and Vyacheslav Stepanov *Russia and Moldova: Between Past Heritage and Future Horizons: Essays of Post-Soviet Times (1991-2020)* is about many pressing issues of post-Soviet realities of Moldova.

The authors analyze the Russian cultural component in the everyday life of Moldovan society of the period of independence (even if the Moldovan state can hardly be defined as independent). They peer into the past to help readers grasp the meaning of the current political processes unfolding in the Republic of Moldova. Many of them are rooted in the language-related opposition amply confirmed by a short yet bloody civilian conflict between [opposite] banks of the Dnestr River largely caused by efforts to remove the Russian language from the republic's everyday and political life.

The authors seek to divide the two decades under discussion into certain periods related to events on the right and left banks of the Dnestr – a far from ordinary attempt.

The next book by the same authors – *Russia and Moldova: Between Past Heritage and Future Horizons: Essays of the Russian Time in Bessarabia of the Late 18th-Early 20th Century* – is a highly informative work about existential events in the life of the polyethnic population of Bessarabia. Analyzing the process that gradually created a qualitatively new population of Bessarabia, the authors conclude that by the early 20th century, the phenomenon of Bessarabian identity (*Bessarabism*) had already taken shape, which, incidentally, remained an axiological paradigm within regional identity frames.

The authors analyze how Moldovan self-awareness developed under Russian cultural influence. They highlight the considerable gap between the national Moldovan intelligentsia that, on many occasions, did not distinguish between the Moldovans living beyond the Prut River and in Bessarabia, “and the illiterate mainly

village Moldovan population that lived under the strong influence of Russian laws and the word of God.” This historiographic approach to the analysis of those who lived in Russian polyethnic Bessarabia in the works of Russian authors of the 19th and early 20th centuries makes the book especially interesting.

One more book in this series deals with the constant Russian-Moldovan contacts from the 14th to the 18th centuries: F.M. Mukhametshin, V.P. Stepanov, V.V. Damyan, *Russia and Moldova: Between Past Heritage and Future Horizons: Essays on Historical, Cultural, and Dynastic Ties of the 14th-18th Centuries*. The authors cover the longest chronological period in the history of Russian-Moldovan relations, which varied over that time period. Even before the Moldavian Principality appeared in the 14th century, Eastern Romans and Eastern Slavs had maintained certain contacts. The authors offer various opinions, analyze different facts, plunge readers into a historical laboratory, and draw them into an exciting quest for truth. The authors offer evidence while remaining open to dialogue.

This multivolume work will be read with great attention by politicians, researchers, students, and all those who want to know more about Russian-Moldovan ties and their history in the past and today.