

International Affairs: Vol.70: No5, 2024: Summary

“The Americans Act Like a Street Gang That Picks on Passersby Just Because They Don’t Like the Color of Their Shoes”

S. Ryabkov

Keywords: Russia, the US, Ukraine crisis, nuclear doctrine, Russian chairmanship of BRICS, Latin America

Russia welcomes attempts to contribute to a resolution [of *the Ukraine conflict*], and we have been saying this over and over since the issue regained relevance after direct negotiations between Moscow and Kiev in 2022 were disrupted due to the destructive interference of Western countries, primarily Great Britain. Since then, the countries you mentioned and their leaders have proposed a series of ideas, the latest notable one being the China-Brazil package, which has been formulated based on the changing realities on the ground.

In this context, the constructive alternative proposed by representatives of leading countries of the World Majority is certainly sought after. Each contact between our president and foreign minister with representatives of these countries, where the ongoing situation is discussed and various scenarios are considered, includes a confirmation from our side of our readiness to continue working, including taking into account the ideas put forward by these countries.

The situation that predicated the start of the Special Military Operation has been thoroughly laid out in the official statements of our leadership. This has been discussed many times, both publicly and behind closed doors.

It seems that the West, and primarily Washington, is unable to grasp that we had no other choice but to take this dramatic step. The background of the issue and years of NATO’s attempts to pressure Russia and dictate to us how to live and what to do were the root causes of what is happening.

A military escalation is taking place. It is acquiring increasingly serious forms and is fraught with the risk of direct armed confrontation between our country and the collective West, led by the US. Those setting the tone there, along with various

sycophants from capitals geographically closer to Russia, believe that the higher the tension and the greater the desire of this group to show that they are the “toughest” in the world and that everyone should obey them, the more likely it is that Russia will bend and back down.

I’m not a supporter of drawing red lines, much less discussing where these red lines lie. Not because we have no red ink left, but simply because the situation is so complex and multifaceted that setting certain boundaries of what is acceptable and potentially possible in terms of countering the anti-Russian course is hardly the right approach. Better more action and less talk, as is generally the case in relations with the historical collective West.

A compromise on the terms offered to us by the West is not a compromise. It is a dictate and an ultimatum. Naturally, it is impossible to agree on such terms. A compromise is possible only and exclusively based on a strict balance of interests, a precise consideration of each other’s approaches to a particular problem.

America is not on the brink of a crisis; it is already in crisis. The deepening polarization of American society, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the migration problem, the opioid crisis, a huge tangle of complex issues related to infrastructure that have gone unaddressed for many years, and the difficulties surrounding the deindustrialization of certain regions – all of this indicates that the country is experiencing significant internal stress despite outwardly favorable economic statistics.

Americans are very adept at extracting benefits from various situations, often following the principle of killing two or even three birds with one stone. One of these birds – or guinea pigs – is the European Union. The “proud” European powers with millennia-old histories rooted in Rome are standing on their hind legs before the hegemon who has no regard for them but tells them: “Today you must relocate high-tech production, including microelectronics, back to America. Tomorrow you must start buying liquefied natural gas, which we will ship from the Gulf of Mexico at five times the price you used to pay Russia. The day after tomorrow, you will fund our – American – policy in Ukraine out of your own pockets.

**“If Ukraine Ever Comes Back to Its Senses,
It Will Realize That It Simply Cannot Survive Without Russia and Good
Neighborhoodly Relations With Russia”**

K. Kosachev

Keywords: America, elections, Ukraine conflict, nuclear policy

With all due respect for the traditions of the American political system, I can honestly say that it is becoming obsolete. For almost any politician seeking to become leader of the nation, leader of the state, and winner of the presidential race, the primary goal is winning the election. There are either no longer any people in the US who think about future generations, as per Churchill’s quote, or they have no chance of making it to the final stage of the presidential campaign. Of course, both Trump and, before him, Biden, and now Ms. Harris, are focused exclusively on how to make it through the remaining months until November. [Their goals are] not to make a major mistake, to inflict as much damage as possible on their opponent, and ultimately, to secure victory in the swing states. Everything else is more or less predictable when it comes to securing the final victory.

If Harris is nominated as a presidential candidate and wins, she will, of course, continue the Democrats’ policies. In the Ukraine crisis, the focus will be on ensuring that Russia loses. Ukraine must win, because if Ukraine doesn’t, then the West, the US, and NATO will lose.

I don’t expect any radical changes here.

Trump, in this regard, is free from concerns about continuity. On the contrary, he is free to distance himself from Biden’s policies, and in this sense, he has great freedom of maneuver. That doesn’t mean he will fix Biden’s mistakes; rather, he will make his own mistakes in this area.

When it comes to the reconstruction of Ukraine, which will have to be addressed sooner or later, I genuinely believe that the only country in the world that will engage in it sincerely and selflessly is Russia. Today, this is already happening in the newly acquired territories.

I am confident that if Ukraine ever comes back to its senses, it will realize that it simply cannot survive without Russia and good neighborly relations with Russia. Not because Russia is threatening, but because of Ukraine's history, geographic location, demographic makeup, and economic structure. There are no limits to Russia's return to Ukraine and Ukraine's return to Russia. In some ways, we are different; in some ways, we have different interests, but we can be together.

I think it goes without saying that any doctrine is not a constant. Everything evolves and develops over time. We must keep close tabs on what our geopolitical adversaries are doing. If the threshold for the potential use of nuclear weapons – whether tactical or strategic – is lowered on their side, if they threaten us with nuclear weapons or with carriers that can potentially deliver nuclear warheads, especially in our immediate vicinity, we will undoubtedly need to respond.

We responded to such threats in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. We responded in the 1980s, when the US deployed intermediate and shorter-range missiles in Europe. And we will, of course, continue to respond in the future. Therefore, everything necessary to ensure our 100% national security – in this case, military security – must be reflected in our nuclear planning documents. That's the first point.

Second, I don't believe we should take the initiative in this regard. We should not rattle our nuclear weapons or intimidate anyone with them. And since we are a nuclear power, we will definitely use [nuclear weapons] as soon as it seems right to us. We are aware of the ongoing debates on this topic, including within Russian society and among Russian political analysts. What I find lacking in these debates is the consideration of the reactions and counteractions of the other side, or even a third or fourth party.

The Political Map of BRICS

Yu. Shafranik

Keywords: BRICS, world economy, energy crisis

There is still no international oil and gas alliance in the world that includes both the largest producers and the largest consumers of energy resources. For instance, OPEC represents the interests of producers, while the International Energy Agency represents the interests of consumers. It is worth clarifying here that we are specifically talking about the largest producers – suppliers to the global market – and the largest consumers, who import these resources from the global market. After all, America, as a consumer of energy resources, has not disappeared, but its consumption is now almost entirely met by domestic production. Incidentally, since April 2022, the US has been of a net exporter of oil and petroleum products, exporting between 1 million and 3 million barrels per day, after having been the world's largest oil importer for many decades, with import volumes of around 13 million barrels per day.

At this point in time of global turbulence and shifting political and economic coordinates, the energy specifics within which BRICS is forming, strengthening, and developing are among the main “trump cards” of the group's overall competitive advantages. The fact is that there are only three fundamental essentials for the existence of human civilization: food, water, and energy – and perhaps air, which fortunately is not yet a market resource.

We have already noted that the formation and success of the initial stage of BRICS is largely tied to the unique energy symbiosis among members of this association, which adds stability and economic feasibility to its projects, despite constant opposition from the waning “hegemon.”

The economy in general, and especially the economy of our country, which is unique in many respects, faces many pressing problems that cannot be solved in a way that generates direct market benefits. At the same time, the state understands the need to move in that direction, to incur huge expenses to achieve an important

goal without generating immediate profits or even recouping costs in the medium term.

The main mistake that Russia inherited from the USSR was not so much the estimation of profit from one [metric] ton of conventional fuel in dollars, but the underestimation of the added value from the secondary and tertiary processing of one ton of oil and one cubic meter of gas, including the production of composites.

We shouldn't turn gas infrastructure development, a good initiative, into a fetish. Why? Because we're dealing with a geographically vast empire stretching from Kamchatka and Chukotka to Kaliningrad. There can't be only one approach given such enormous scales and distances. The principle of gasification can't be the predominant theme in a country that spans 11 time zones. At the very least, we should return to Lenin's GOELRO [State Commission for Electrification of Russia] plan and recall the presumption of electrifying the entire country.

I'm confident that given the vast internal reserves of our power industry, all it takes is some good calculations and political will to establish flexible tariff regulation that would make electricity the preferred method of heating in remote and hard-to-reach areas. As I mentioned, the focus should not be on expanding gas infrastructure per se but on delivering a kilowatt of heat. Of course, in densely populated Central and Southern Russia, where gas infrastructure is well developed, gas will remain the most cost-effective source of cheap heating for a long time.

It's no coincidence that today there is so much activity around the development of international transport corridors. We have the North-South and East-West corridors, the less frequently mentioned New Silk Road, and its successor – China's Belt and Road Initiative. The balance of power on the planet is shifting. Politics is being joined by economics – new centers of production, new technological drivers, and increasingly large consumer markets. To make all this work, the creation of new logistics systems is coming to the fore. This means a powerful transportation infrastructure belt with terminals, hubs, and ports – namely, railways and highways, as well as maritime and river navigation.

New Formats and Horizons of International Relations

Yu. Sayamov

Keywords: global transformations, BRICS, conferences, information society, growth of the BRICS network, Russia-China, Global South, Business Council on BRICS

In recent years, few academic articles on international relations have avoided the now commonplace statement that the world is changing rapidly and radically. The global transformations sweeping the planet are considered by many to be unprecedented in their scale, content, and speed. Previous formats and principles of international interaction are losing their relevance, being replaced by new ones.

The Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations, which emerged after World War II and kept the world from global confrontation for more than 45 years, collapsed along with the Soviet Union, leaving behind some still-functioning components. The most important of these is the UN, but it is increasingly losing its effectiveness and is less and less in tune with contemporary realities due to the obstructionist policies of the West.

Attention is increasingly focused on the BRICS format, which today is the only global intergovernmental association outside Western control that also has global significance and influence.

In preparation for the upcoming 16th BRICS Summit, Moscow State University, at the initiative of the Faculty of Global Studies, held an International Scientific and Practical Conference titled “BRICS in the Era of Global Social Transformations” on May 24, 2024, exactly five months before the summit, with the participation of scholars from BRICS countries. The conference resolution concluded that ongoing transformations in international relations are outpacing the UN reform process.

Reflecting on BRICS’s prospects, the global expert community, in the context of the deepening crisis within the UN, believes that the changing world order will require a new paradigm of international relations and radical reform of the UN to better reflect modern realities. However, some do not rule out the possibility of a

new global governance structure emerging in the future, tentatively called the “Organization of United Civilizations,” as mentioned in the report by Academician Akayev.

The rise of BRICS will continue, as the world majority increasingly sees in its development an opportunity to make the international order more equitable, in contrast to the neocolonial world order imposed by the US- led West. However, BRICS does not intend to act through confrontation or coercion.

The tasks on BRICS’s agenda, such as changing the global financial architecture – including de-dollarization, creating an autonomous system of international settlements, and possibly a new reserve currency – are driven not by a desire to challenge the West but by necessity, caused by the West’s reckless and dangerous actions. In colloquial terms, it could be said that the West has “pushed everyone too far,” leaving no other option. A similar situation is unfolding in the political realm, where conflicts ignited by the West – whether in Ukraine, Gaza, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Iraq, or Yugoslavia – allow us to see where aggression and threats to peace and security come from. BRICS aims to counter these threats by fostering global cooperation among nations and peoples in all areas. This is globalization as it is understood by the world majority.

Days of India in Tver:
The Russian Stage of the Program “BRICS People Choosing Life” Kicks Off

L. Sekacheva, D. Kurbatov

Keywords: Days of India, Tver, Mahatma Gandhi, Afanasy Nikitin, L.N. Tolstoy, agreements, exhibitions, business track

On June 24-30, 2024, the Days of India were held in Tver, opening the Russian stage of the international and interregional sociocultural program “BRICS People Choosing Life” under the slogan “From the ecology of soul and body to the ecology of the world.”

The Tver stage of the program was dedicated to the 75th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi’s memory, the 195th anniversary of Leo Tolstoy’s birth, the 550th anniversary of Afanasy Nikitin’s memory, and the 70th anniversary of the establishment of trade relations between Russia and India.

The program is being implemented during Russia’s presidency of BRICS by the regional public organization “BRICS. World of Traditions,” the Patrice Lumumba People’s Friendship University of Russia, the International Youth Edu-Skills Foundation (Noida, India), and the company Smart Mir Services (Moscow).

The main event of the meeting was the signing of a bilateral cooperation agreement between the college and the Regional Public Organization “BRICS. World of Traditions” as part of the program and project to establish cultural and educational ties between A.N. Konyaev College and Vaze College (Mumbai, Maharashtra), with the goal of creating Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi cultural and educational centers in both locations.

The Russian stage of the international program “BRICS People Choosing Life,” held under the slogan “From the ecology of soul and body to the ecology of the world,” took place in July in Moscow Province and will continue in August in Altai Territory. The program will conclude at the end of Russia’s BRICS presidency in Samara.

Russia as a Unifying Principle for the Global East and the Global North: Obstacles and Opportunities

F. Trunov

Keywords: Russia, guarantor of international security, Global East, Global North, collective majority, non-West

Essentially, Russia cannot be categorized as belonging to either the Global West or the Global South. The former represents a community of “Western democracies” (or “liberal democracies”), where the most active powers have chosen Russia as an object of “deterrence.” The latter (Global South), defined primarily by geographical and particularly economic criteria, is much more diffuse in terms of composition. For example, several countries traditionally considered part of the Global South – primarily China and India – are world leaders in economic and industrial development.

In this context, it is logical to question the applicability of the concepts “Global East” and “Global North” when characterizing Russia’s position on the international stage.

Concept of the Russian Federation dated March 31, 2023, the “special position of Russia as a unique state-civilization and a vast Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power” was emphasized.

The deterrence of Russia and other of the most active non-Western powers not only creates challenges for these nations but also further motivates them to strengthen their cooperation. The process of consolidating centers of influence outside the West is objective in itself; however, deterrence efforts significantly accelerate and positively reinforce this process.

Russian scholars have made significant progress in searching for a term that could unite the spaces outside the West – the Global East, the Global South, and the non-Western part of the Global North. The term “non-West” is comprehensive but has a certain flaw in its very name: It derives from the term “West,” indirectly highlighting the importance of the West as a community. For this reason, the term “collective majority” seems more advantageous.

At the same time, another term needs to be found that would designate the “core” of the “collective majority” as a distinct alternative to the West – something fundamentally different in nature that can counterbalance the Western bloc. While this community is still being formed, it is growing rapidly. The core of this community is already becoming clear, including key elements such as Russia, Iran, and China, along with very friendly partners like Belarus, Syria, and North Korea. These nations represent various parts of the globe. This list is bound to expand, including countries from the Global South. In seeking a term that would unify the states of the “core” within the collective majority, it is crucial to consider the strategic link between the Global East and the Global North (specifically its non-Western part), and particularly the role of Russia as a unifying force across these vast regions.

Global Values Competition: From Post-Truth to Post-Reality

O. Dmitriyev, D. Yevstafyev

Keywords: post-truth, post-reality, global values competition

By the end of 2023, the cohesion of the coalition formed based on maintaining the stability of the “rules-based world,” which in essence aims to preserve the dominance of the collective West as the global regulator, had transformed following a series of extremely painful political and military-political conflicts. In a state of relative “calm,” the US had managed to maintain the stability of the system. But when mainstream Western media and think tanks started talking about the need for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine at the end of December 2023, the consistency of the conflict coverage by leading global media began to break down.¹

The nature of these changes still needs to be analyzed and understood. But at this stage we can assert that the management of political and geoeconomic processes relies on the widespread use of technologies of “post-truth” that is gradually morphing into “post-reality.” Emerging competing post-realities are becoming the real political-ideological basis for making medium-term significant political decisions.

Post-truth is a concept that has long been used in both Russian and foreign social philosophy and political science. In general, it can be defined as a relatively persistent phenomenon in public opinion at the national, regional, and global level consisting of evaluating facts and phenomena based not on empirically proven/verified data but on a desired, optimal, canned assessment. Post-truth could rightly be called “preferred truth,” where the emotional attitude toward a fact, event, or process takes precedence over rationality, yet develops in a space of group conformity, most characteristic of network communications.

Post-truth as a soft power tool fully aligned with the concept of America-centric globalization, presenting a technological mechanism for pursuing policy initiatives amid the relative weakening of the US’s economic influence in the world.

Post-truth was a key mechanism in the strategic reconfiguration of Russian-European political and then economic relations. Initially, the classic post-truth mechanism – ensuring the media dominance of one viewpoint – made it possible to demonize Russia as heir to the “Stalinist” USSR, equating the USSR with Nazi Germany, which was itself a deliberate falsification. The next stage questioned the political outcomes of World War II, although territorial reconfiguration issues were not touched upon. In the final stage, the mechanisms of post-truth undermined the significance of energy cooperation between Russia and the EU countries, primarily Germany.

Post-reality differs from post-truth in that it has a stable institutional foundation. Therefore, the world of late globalization was largely the world of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which were sought after not only for their ability to create sociopolitical and socioeconomic alternatives to sovereign governance but also for their ability to ensure the institutional retention of a certain worldview that is at odds with national development goals.

It cannot be said that post-reality is an attribute exclusive to our day or the current level of development of information technology. At various stages of human development, phenomena have emerged that could be called post-reality, with certain assumptions.

The main conclusion from the analysis of past post-realities, including the proto post-reality of the golden El Dorado, is that the need for such technologies of opposition and “world division” – not soft division along aesthetic or sociocultural lines but a hard division based on values – arises only during periods of comprehensive reconfiguration of the system of international relations, both politically and economically. The world is in such a period right now.

Strategic Silence

A. Ilnitsky, O. Yanovsky

Keywords: Russia, West, SMO, strategic silence

The strategic defeat of Russia is a priority for the collective West. Clearly, the issue is not even about winning on the battlefield, since at the level of doctrinal documents, a direct military confrontation between the West and Russia is still considered something they intend to avoid due to the inevitability of Russia inflicting “unacceptable damage.”

By strategic defeat, the West means the “cancellation” of Russia as an idea – the disruption of Russian civilization’s development, not only in its sovereign aspirations but also in its historical viability.

What we are witnessing today – namely, the process induced by global elites of destroying the institutions and forms of social organization that emerged during the 20th century and the formation of new rules and societal norms – points to significant changes not only in the form but also in the content of the world order. The system that emerged after World War II, which ensured the relatively tolerable and peaceful coexistence of states, is being deliberately chaoticized and destroyed, and a new system has yet to be formed.

To bring about the strategic defeat of Russia, the West is relying on the time-tested tools of “color revolutions,” infocognitive operations and mental warfare, economic pressure and sanctions, proxy conflicts, terrorist acts and sabotage, political assassinations, provocations, and blackmail.

The proxy war between the West and Russia on the Ukrainian front is an existential confrontation.

One thing is clear: Ultimately, everything will be decided based on the realities on the battlefield, and only then will diplomacy come in and impart a fixed, negotiated form. So the choice facing Russia is truly existential.

Escalation has had real efficacy. Recall the Cuban Missile Crisis, when in the West we were dealing with a political generation that was formed during the Cold

War and had participated in or remembered World War II. That generation of politicians has gone, and even the followers of the “generation that saw the abyss” are leaving government.

Meanwhile, movement up the escalation ladder is accelerating. Skipping entire rungs, the world is hurtling toward war. The Ukraine crisis has not turned into a direct military confrontation with NATO only because Russia has powerful nuclear potential, several components of which surpass the combined Western potential, and because some in the Western establishment, especially the American military, have some remaining shreds of common sense.

The collective West – the establishment, the transnational “elite horizontal” – will truly fear Russia when we stop rattling them.

Rhetoric loses its strength as soon as it becomes not a supporting argument for action but the action itself, without a basis on real events. Strength must be not declared but “radiated.” It must come from within and be inherent.

The Creation of Ukraine and the Structuring Role of Ukrainian Nationalism/Nazism

K. Shevchenko, E. Popov

Keywords: Galicia, Lvov, creator of the Ukrainian alphabet Panteleimon Kulish, Ukrainian nationalism, OUN, OPA, UNA-UNSO, Patriot of Ukraine.

Eastern Galicia, traditionally considered a bastion of Ukrainian nationalism, only fully acquired this ethnocultural identity after the genocide of Galician-Russian activists, instigated by the Austro-Hungarian authorities during World War I. Even in the first quarter of the 20th century, Ukrainian identity had not yet fully taken root among the Galician-Russian population of Galicia. Among the Galician-Russian intelligentsia, there was a widespread view that the local Ruthenians were part of the triune Russian people, stretching “from the Carpathians to Kamchatka.”

Radical Ukrainian nationalism was a new ethnocultural image in the long-suffering ancient Galicia, violently reshaped and disfigured by the bloody Austro-Hungarian terror during the Great War of 1914-1918. Centuries earlier, Galician Rus had remained the cornerstone of pan-Russian ideology, producing a great number of thinkers who justified the idea of pan-Russian unity, as well as martyrs who laid down their lives for these ideals. The aggressiveness, cruelty, primitive narrow-mindedness, and acute intellectual deficiency of Ukrainian nationalists are vivid manifestations of the well-known “neophyte complex,” recognized by psychologists.

It is newly converted neophytes who are prone to extreme, sometimes fanatical, forms of proving their loyalty to some newly adopted faith or idea. For Galician neophytes, this became the primitive and artificial dogmas of Ukrainian nationalism. As noted by American researcher John Armstrong, Ukrainian nationalism, compared to other varieties of “integral nationalisms,” is characterized by a greater degree of totalitarianism, irrational mysticism, a hypertrophied cult of violence, war, and terror, as well as a tendency toward the imaginary and the contrived.

The history of organized Ukrainian nationalism dates back to 1929, when the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) was founded. After the assassination of its leader Yevhen Konovalets by Pavel Sudoplatov, the organization split in 1940 into rival factions led by Stepan Bandera (OUN-B, or OUN-R for “Revolutionary”) and Andriy Melnyk (OUN-M).

On June 30, 1941, the day after the Red Army withdrew from Lvov, the Bandera faction proclaimed the Ukrainian State under the leadership of Yaroslav Stetsko. This proclamation included a declaration of close cooperation with Adolf Hitler’s Greater Germany. Subsequently, the first punitive action began, implementing the OUN-R’s national policy: the extermination of the Polish and Jewish population of Lvov.

After the collapse of the USSR, the ruling circles of the US facilitated the reverse export of Nazi personnel and strategies to Ukraine and ensured their integration into science and education. Simultaneously, the party organizations of the Banderites and Melnykites were reestablished.

The Tryzub platform interprets the ideal and priorities of a national state as follows: “Our highest national duty is the cultivation and realization of the Ukrainian national idea – the idea of the self- affirmation of the Ukrainian nation, the creation of a Ukrainian national state with national power and a functioning system of Ukrainian national governance.”

Ideologically, the “new right” are qualitatively different from the “old nationalists.” The social-nationalists directly appeal to the archetype of German National Socialism, not to its outdated Ukrainian epigones – the Banderites, Melnykites, etc. The intellectual “library” of these organizations also includes the achievements of contemporary Western neo-Nazis and racists. However, the social-nationalists have not severed ties with the old symbols and have incorporated the “heroes” of the OUN- UPA into their pantheon – the “nation” needs its “heroes.” But the central nerve is the emulation and development of German National Socialism, with Hitler, not Bandera, as the main hero.

Russian National Security Threatened by New Type of Hybrid Warfare

A. Alaudinov

Keywords: Russia, West, NATO, hybrid warfare, Special Military Operation, sanctions, destabilization

The events that began in 2014 (the Euromaidan, the reunification of Crimea with Russia, the war in Donbass) have shown that the threat of hybrid warfare to Russia's national security is real. Moreover, Russia is currently facing perhaps the most powerful hybrid war in history, waged by dozens of Western countries. All means are being employed except for direct military aggression, although there are some signs of the immediate involvement of NATO military personnel in combat against Russian Armed Forces units in the zone of the Special Military Operation (SMO).

Russia's new Foreign Policy Concept emphasizes that, "viewing Russia's strengthening role as a leading center of development in the modern world and its independent foreign policy as a threat to Western hegemony, the US and its satellites have used the measures taken by the Russian Federation toward Ukraine to protect its vital interests as a pretext to aggravate their long-standing anti-Russian policy and have unleashed a new type of hybrid warfare. It is aimed at comprehensively weakening Russia, including undermining its constructive civilizational role and military, economic, and technological capabilities; restricting its sovereignty in foreign and domestic policy; and violating its territorial integrity."

This crucial document clearly reflects that a new type of hybrid warfare has been unleashed against Russia that is evident in almost every aspect: from an unprecedentedly extensive and harsh psychological operations campaign to never-before-seen sanctions pressure, from the massive transfer of weapons, military equipment, and ammunition to the Kiev regime to the infiltration of thousands of mercenaries into the SMO zone. The interconnected, coherent anti-Russian actions of the West are aimed at creating a synergistic destructive impact on Russia's entire sociopolitical and economic system. The strategy of attrition chosen by the West, precisely as prominent Russian military theorist Alexander Svechin described it,

seeks to exhaust Russia's resources as a state and demoralize Russian society and its military-political leadership, activating defeatist and pseudo-pacifist sentiments aimed at making peace even at the cost of catastrophic geopolitical, military, territorial, economic, psychological, reputational, and demographic losses for Russia. All of this necessitates more detailed study of the threats to Russia arising from the new type of hybrid warfare unleashed against it by the collective West.

Wide range of interconnected measures are being utilized against Russia. The collective West will continue to use the already employed military, technical, economic, informational, and diplomatic assets and also seek to destabilize countries around Russia to create a cumulative destructive effect, if Western leadership believes that the emergence of new hotspots around Russia and their integration into a unified pressure system, along with the use of the Kiev regime, will not bring unacceptable risks to them.

The new type of hybrid warfare fully unleashed by the West following the start of the SMO clearly demonstrates the colossal threat that such an unconventional military conflict poses to Russia's national security. No state has ever faced such extensive, coordinated, resource-backed, multi-level, and multi-dimensional aggression from a coalition of dozens of countries and an even greater number of nonstate actors without crossing the threshold of traditional war with Russia or engaging in direct large-scale military confrontations. This threat can only be mitigated through a systemic response that combines military, politico-diplomatic, economic, scientific-technical, informational, and social measures.

Switzerland and NATO Amid the SMO

S. Chernyavsky

Keywords: Switzerland, NATO, SMO, cooperation, policy of “armed neutrality”

The events associated with the start of Russia’s Special Military Operation (SMO) have sparked intense domestic political debate about whether the restrictions prescribed by the classical policy of “armed neutrality” are germane to the current moment. This discourse is well established in Switzerland, but never has it been so harsh. This is due in part to external pressure from NATO.

The “modernization” of Switzerland’s approach to cooperation with NATO, along with an analysis of the arguments of its supporters and opponents, is examined in this article based on official statements by the president of the Swiss Confederation, Federal Council documents, monographs by Swiss statesmen and diplomats, and materials from Swiss think tanks.

Based on an analysis of the current status and near-term prospects for cooperation between Switzerland and NATO, the following conclusions can be drawn:

In the field of defense policy, interaction with NATO is focused on practical and technical issues. This interaction fits into the program for enhancing the Swiss Army’s operational capabilities. Thanks to the PfP, the Swiss Army has successfully worked with the armed forces of neighboring countries for decades. Additionally, it is occasionally involved in multilateral activities that also have practical interest.

The military actions that unfolded after the start of the SMO have contributed to the emergence of two new trends significant for the development of relations with NATO that Switzerland must contend with.

First, it is becoming evident that the concept of defense is taking on an expanded meaning in space and time, which requires strengthening cooperation in security and defense policy, thereby extending the limits of necessary overall coordination. Second, the political nature of security is changing. Emerging threats and challenges heighten the need for multilateralism. Evolving NATO and EU

partnership formats offer new starting points for cooperation with third countries, which also creates new challenges. These trends require Switzerland to pay closer attention to national security issues.

Under current conditions, Bern will continue to adhere to the spirit of the neutrality law, albeit a “modernized” form of it. Switzerland will not join NATO, but the operational model for expanding interaction with foreign armies will receive clearer limitations. At the same time, the importance of bilateral formats and “platform” cooperation for developing the Army’s operational capabilities is not in question. Therefore, Swiss developments are mainly geared toward creating options for cultivating and deepening defense policy cooperation with NATO or with both NATO and the EU simultaneously.

2014-2024: A Decade of Sanctions and the Strengthening of Russia's Financial Sovereignty

A. Turov

Keywords: Russian economy, sanctions, financial sovereignty, international economic relations, clearing ruble.

On January 20, 2015, in an address to Congress, then US president Barack Obama spoke about Russia being “isolated with its economy in tatters.”

So what is happening in the Russian economy almost 10 years after this, frankly, scandalous statement?

Customs data confirm that Russia's foreign trade continues to develop successfully, with Russian exports growing at a faster rate than imports, which drives the increase in the positive trade balance.

Other elements of financial sovereignty, in our view, include the use of the national currency for international settlements and the ability to make international payments to foreign partners without hindrance. Regarding the use of the ruble in international settlements, the results are evident. According to the Central Bank of Russia, its share in Russian exports rose from 14.4% to 39.1% between 2021 and 2023, and in imports from 28.2% to 29.2%.

The geography of use of the Mir payment system is expanding, although at present its cards are accepted without restrictions only in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Belarus, and with some restrictions in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Cuba, Venezuela, and Vietnam. Egypt, Mongolia, India, Sri Lanka, Iran, and Indonesia are planning to introduce the card, and negotiations are underway with 12 more countries, including China, Mexico, the UAE, and Malaysia.⁷

Given that almost all backbone Russian banks are disconnected from SWIFT, Russian and foreign participants in international settlements are showing increased interest in developing alternative systems, primarily the Russian System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS).

At the same time, we face increasing difficulties in international settlements, even with friendly countries, mainly due to fears that their financial institutions will come under secondary or tertiary Western sanctions.

The creation of an interstate system using clearing rubles could significantly simplify the entry of Russian companies into new markets and support the profound changes in the geographical orientation of Russia's foreign economic relations, which continue to develop despite the near-total economic blockade by Western countries.

Russia will soon gain even more supporters, as evidenced by the resilience the Russian economy has shown over the past decade in the face of increasing sanctions pressure, its ability to adapt and develop nationally, and the rapid reorientation of its foreign economic relations. The use of new tools, such as the digital and clearing ruble, will further strengthen financial sovereignty.

But the main outcome of the decade from 2014 to 2024 is the strengthening of the unity of the Russian people. As the great Mikhail Lomonosov wrote: "I consider the most important task to be the preservation and growth of the Russian people, upon whom the greatness, power, and wealth of the entire state depend." We need to consolidate with friendly countries, strengthen our bonds, and expand mutually beneficial cooperation.

The Market and Inflation: Patterns and Paradoxes

P. Sadykhov

Keywords: inflation, supply and demand, money supply, credit default swap, inflation targeting, quantitative easing policy, global financial crisis, market equilibrium

By analyzing the recent history of inflation and tracking its current state, we can say with some confidence that anti-inflationary measures in Western countries, while far from perfect, have nonetheless kept prices within an acceptable range of fluctuation, preventing the situation from spiraling out of control. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the anti-inflationary measures taken by Western governments often lead to either a slowdown in economic growth, where they try to “cool” it through higher borrowing costs, or, conversely, an economic boom accompanied by rising inflation due to the easing of monetary policies by financial authorities.

These measures result in increased capital migration as investors seek more profitable opportunities in currencies and instruments of countries with high interest rates and economic growth rates. This strengthens the national currencies of capital-inflow countries, thereby reducing their price competitiveness and export volumes. However, since exports from emerging market economies (China, Turkey, Vietnam, etc.) are mainly destined for industrially developed countries, rising prices for their export products lead to price increases in developed economies.

Against this backdrop, these measures typically lead to new bubbles in stock markets, which eventually burst, symbolizing shifts in economic cycles. In other words, everything unfolds according to the laws of market economics as globalization intensifies in the world economy. But then why does the market economy, which is based on the balance of supply and demand, experience inflation? After all, according to the laws of the free market and market equilibrium, an increase in demand should lead to a corresponding increase in supply, and if demand does not significantly outpace supply, prices should not rise. Yet in practice, the

opposite happens: Even developed market economies, where the law of market equilibrium should, in theory, function more effectively, are prone to inflation.

The US economy, like the economies of most Western countries, has traditionally exhibited relatively low inflation rates. There are many reasons for this, and it is difficult to explore them in depth within the scope of a single article. Nevertheless, we can name a few and briefly focus on some of them:

The US economy has exhausted its potential for accelerated growth because the large American middle class has long since purchased everything, or nearly everything, it needs within the framework of status-driven consumption, unlike in countries with catch-up

development, such as China and India. Thus, demand from this segment of the US population, like that in most industrialized countries, cannot generate significant GDP growth, and consumer demand in the US only generates the growth it is capable of.

The US dollar still retains its status as the world's reserve currency, mediating 47% of global trade, which makes it easier for financial authorities to manage its issuance, tied to the financing of the growing US national debt. The global trend toward "de-dollarization," particularly Saudi Arabia's recent decision to abandon the dollar in oil transactions, has seriously concerned US authorities, and we can expect countermeasures from US financial authorities to maintain the status quo.

The US economy, which has become a driver of the global economy, is open: When the Federal Reserve raises interest rates, foreign financial capital flows into the US, but it can just as easily leave when the key rate is lowered. Repatriation of foreign investments or profits does not necessarily mean an exit from the dollar.

Thus, there are more patterns than paradoxes of inflationary development in industrialized countries, as we have sought to track based on the example of the US. In this situation, the conclusion is clear: The problem of combating inflation and managing the growth of US sovereign debt must be as internationalized as possible, bringing it to the forefront of discussions at multilateral financial platforms, with priority given to its inclusion in the agenda of G20 meetings.

Silvio Berlusconi: A Man of His Era, or the Phenomenon of “Berlusconism”

S. Gavrilova

Keywords: Silvio Berlusconi, “Berlusconism,” Forza Italia, Italian Republic, populism, center-right politics, political parties

Silvio Berlusconi left a significant mark on modern political history. The expansion of right-wing populism to unprecedented scales as a defining feature of the European political landscape in the first quarter of the 21st century began with individual political parties and movements, one of the first of which was Italy’s Forza Italia (FI), founded by Silvio Berlusconi in 1993 and reaching the pinnacle of the country’s political Olympus just a few months after its establishment.

From his first steps in big politics, Berlusconi established himself as a flamboyant, charismatic leader of the right-wing populist movement, bringing a fundamentally new demeanor and leadership style to Italian party politics. Berlusconi effectively became one of the “founding fathers” of modern European populism, which has apparently become firmly established in the political reality of Europe.

The Italian press described Silvio Berlusconi the “founder of the new right and a new politician with liberal ambitions and populist traits who dominated the Italian stage for 20 years, even when in opposition.” With Berlusconi’s passing, Italian politics underwent, without exaggeration, radical changes. Even though FI has clearly moved to the background in both the overall Italian party landscape and the right-wing camp in particular, the party remains a significant political player, a pillar of the ruling coalition. But the distinguishing features that allowed FI to stay afloat in major politics for decades now threaten to be fatal. The personal factor of Silvio Berlusconi was a key element of the party’s image from its foundation, and without him, FI faces fragmentation and possible quick dissolution among neighboring parties in the political spectrum. This, in turn, will inevitably impact the entire party-political system of the Italian Republic, especially in light of the electorate’s disappointment in the ruling coalition.

Among Berlusconi's global political plans were changes to the Italian Constitution, transforming Italy into a presidential republic, and federalizing the country. None of these were achieved by the Cavaliere. Berlusconi will not go down in Italy's history as a great reformer and national leader, but his contribution to the transformation of the modern political system and its undeniable evolution compared to the "imperfect bipartisanship of the First Republic" is indisputable. Likewise, traits of Berlusconism will continue to be seen in the personas of populist politicians in various countries for a long time to come.

Silvio Berlusconi was one of the few Italian political leaders who managed to provide the country with relatively long periods of stability. He held the position of prime minister longer than anyone else in the history of the Italian Republic, and his influence on shaping the country's image on the international stage cannot be overstated. A key component of Berlusconi's political image is his quintessential "Italianness" – from his style of dress to his emotionality, not to mention his vivid nationalistic rhetoric. Berlusconi actively promoted themes that resonated with Italians: economic prosperity, reducing unemployment, solving migration problems (which he managed to address), and raising Italy's status on the international stage. These same issues continue to concern voters, and new Italian populists build their election campaigns on them. Similar problems concern voters in practically every other European country.

After the events of 2013, many experts predicted that the Cavaliere would leave politics for good. But Berlusconi did not leave the Italian political scene, even with his passing: His personality will continue to influence political processes in the country and the self-awareness of Italians for a long time. When assessing the "Berlusconi era" for Italy, most researchers agree that it was negative. Berlusconi is blamed for economic problems, the deterioration of the country's image abroad, the distortion of classical political principles, its "mediatization" and simplification, and, as a result, the escalation of crisis phenomena in Italy's domestic politics. That assessment is probably correct, but underestimating Silvio Berlusconi would be a mistake.

War and Peace in Lebanon:
On the 80th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

S. Vorobyov

Keywords: Consulate General of Russia in Beirut, N.V. Novikov, Gaza Strip, Najib Mikati, Hezbollah

The formal establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Lebanon dates to 1839, when in Beirut a consulate was opened that in 1843 turned into the General Consulate of the Russian Empire. However, communication with St. Petersburg was conducted through the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, since the territory of Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire during that period.

The diplomatic mission operated in the capital of modern-day Lebanon until the outbreak of World War I, after which the consulate was closed, along with all Russian diplomatic institutions in Turkey, which had entered the war on the side of the opponents of the Entente.

During the concluding phase of World War II and afterward, the USSR consistently defended the right of the newly independent states, including the Lebanese Republic, to sovereign development, facing constant opposition from Western powers. On February 16, 1946, the Soviet Union, for the first time in the history of the UN, used its veto power on the Security Council to defend the national interests of Lebanon and Syria when considering the issue of the continued presence of foreign troops on their territory.

The post-Soviet period marked a new phase in relations with Lebanon. While ideological considerations dominated foreign policy during the Soviet era, the new Russian leadership declared a shift to pragmatic approaches. Those approaches are now being pursued in accordance with Russia's Foreign Policy Concept, first made public in 1993 and subsequently revised multiple times.⁵

Since December 1991, when the Lebanese Republic was among the first to recognize the Russian Federation as the successor to the USSR, a series of high-level meetings have been held. The first meeting took place in October 2003, when Vladimir Putin met with then Lebanese prime minister Rafic Hariri during the OIC

summit in Malaysia. Incidentally, French president Jacques Chirac helped the Lebanese prime minister organize the meeting, as the Russian president's schedule in Kuala Lumpur was so packed.

In April 1997, Russia and Lebanon signed an Agreement on the establishment of an Intergovernmental Commission for Trade and Economic Cooperation. Unfortunately, its meetings are held irregularly, due to "governmental shuffles" in Moscow in the late 1990s and subsequent frequent, essentially permanent, governmental crises in the Lebanese Republic, when Beirut had a "caretaker government" lacking full powers. The Russian-Lebanese Business Council has been functioning since September 2004.

On August 14, 2006, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1701, which stipulated that control over southern Lebanon should be ensured by the Lebanese Army and the UN peacekeeping contingent (UNIFIL), and all nongovernmental armed formations in Lebanon were to be disarmed.

Russia played a big role in the reconstruction of southern Lebanon. At the request of the Lebanese side, a Russian bridge-building battalion with engineering equipment and machinery was deployed to the country. By December 2006, military builders had rebuilt all the destroyed bridges. Russian soldiers donated all their equipment to the Lebanese Army and trained about 100 local service personnel to operate it.

The start of the Russian Special Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine was also met with mixed reactions in Lebanon. The Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on February 24, 2022, condemning Moscow's actions and demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

Under these conditions, Russian-Lebanese trade and economic cooperation has also decreased. Several promising bilateral economic projects have not gotten off the ground, and according to the Russian Embassy, trade turnover in 2023 amounted to \$589 million. Ten years ago, it was approaching \$1 billion. Concerns among Lebanese about falling under secondary anti-Russian sanctions also play a role.

Legends and Truth About World War I

A. Yerusalimsky

During World War I, aggressive forces, seeking to deceive the peoples and lull them into complacency, created a legend: They declared that the war that had begun was “the last war,” after the victorious end of which nations would have the opportunity to live in peace and prosperity.

On July 28, 1914, 40 years ago, when Austria-Hungary exchanged its first cannon salvos with Serbia on its southern border, few in the world immediately understood that this was the beginning of a global war, the flames of which would scorch the entire world.

In reality, the ruling circles of each of the major imperialist powers, working behind the scenes of diplomacy, had not only established their roles in the brewing war but were actively fanning its flames. Naturally, they concealed their calculations and objectives from their future adversaries, as well as from their own people, for the time being.

There is another legend that aggressive forces are using to attempt to justify the unprecedented arms race of our time. Refusing to heed the urgent demands of the people to ban weapons of mass destruction and to implement a general reduction of armaments, and seeking to bolster their aggressive policies from a “position of strength,” the American authors of this policy claim that the “system of armed peace” that emerged at the end of the 19th century was the real reason Europe experienced nearly half a century without wars and bloodshed.

For decades, British imperialism, seeking to secure the most favorable conditions for its colonial expansion, fueled conflicts and disagreements between Germany and other continental powers, especially Russia and France. This was grandly called a “balance of power” policy. In reality, that policy drastically complicated the international situation, exacerbating relations between the powers. It not only failed to eliminate the growing danger of a military confrontation but, on the contrary, brought this danger closer, threatening even Britain itself. The traditional British policy of “splendid isolation” suffered one blow after another, and

England's ruling circles embarked on a search for alliances – a path that ultimately led to Europe being divided into two opposing military-political blocs.

After the assassination in Sarajevo, the specter of the “Slavic threat” dominated the reactionary press in both Germany and Austria-Hungary. For a time, this was the only outward sign of the secret intentions of the ruling circles of German imperialism and its Austrian ally.

At that time, no one knew that Franz Ferdinand, just two weeks before he was killed, had met with Wilhelm II and discussed with him whether the international situation was favorable enough to create a pretext for firmly establishing Austro-German imperialist dominance in the Balkans in one decisive blow. Nor did anyone know that, just a week after the assassination in Sarajevo, during Austro-German talks in Potsdam, it was decided to use the assassination as an excuse to press forward and ignite a war in the Balkans, even if such a war escalated into a pan-European conflict. Wilhelm II expressed the decision of Germany's ruling circles in three words: “Now or never!”

In the days that followed, the flames of the war that had erupted between Austria-Hungary and Serbia quickly spread to Germany, Russia, and then Belgium and France, until finally the entire continent was engulfed in flames.

On the eve of the war, the US government was not only well informed about the “behind-the-scenes political dealings on the European continent,” but it also actively worked to deepen the division in Europe and use it for its own interests. During this period, American diplomacy undertook a “grand venture” aimed at hastening the outbreak of war in Europe.

American monopolists, the true rulers of the US, were keen for the war to begin as soon as possible. They sought to use it to strengthen their financial, economic, and political positions. As a debtor nation, the US aimed to become a creditor nation.

It's Bad to Have an Anglo-Saxon as an Enemy, but Even Worse to Have Him as a Friend

On the 110th Anniversary of the Outbreak of World War I

A. Shchipkov

Keywords: World War I and its lessons

One hundred and ten years have passed since the start of World War I. This is not merely a span of time marked on a calendar.

Amid the global reset, we will inevitably have to construct a cohesive narrative of national history, and World War I is a pivotal event, a crucial part of the puzzle.

But the problem is that in our country, the war has a reputation as obscure and unpopular. This is reflected in the various names that have been given to it: the Second Patriotic War, the German War, the Great War – none of them has truly stuck.

The reasons for such an attitude are more or less understandable. It is not simply that the war ended unsuccessfully; after all, the same could be said of the Crimean War [1853-1856], yet that war remains in popular memory as an example of national unity and heroism, as evidenced by Leo Tolstoy's *Sevastopol Sketches* or Sergey Sergeyev-Tsensky's *Sevastopol Strada*. World War I, on the other hand, was lost due to politicians, not soldiers, making such defeats much more painful. That is the first reason.

The second and main reason was the loss of control over the state and the army during the turmoil. Discussing this inevitably elicits negative evaluations of the events of February-March 1917, breaking the unspoken liberal taboo on criticizing the “democratic February.”

How can we fight the enemy today while remaining captive to its ideas? This question is certainly overdue but beyond the scope of this article. It should be noted, however, that for far too long, the heroism of Russian soldiers has been

underestimated. It is impossible to keep silent on this issue, and it is only a matter of time before it returns to public discourse.

World War I has several lessons for Russia: Allies can pose a greater threat than adversaries. A liberal who becomes a “patriot” is always putting on a show; liberalism is always synonymous with betrayal. Pacifism in wartime equals a call for capitulation. Brotherhood during war is national, not international; it is a brotherhood of patriots.

The most important lesson is that the desire to erase an unpleasant historical event like World War I from collective memory is psychologically understandable but fundamentally wrong. Suppression rather than processing leads to the destruction of both individual and collective identity.

Therefore, it is crucial to reintegrate this war into our public national history and honor its heroes appropriately. Moreover, it is essential to recognize that World War I, the Great Patriotic War, the Cold War, and the current Special Military Operation (SMO) are all components of a larger European anti-Russian war in which we are fighting for our national survival.

If we can consistently perceive and feel this historical continuity, we will truly be sovereign.

Efforts of the Russian Empire to Prevent War Amid the Military-Political Crisis of 1914

On the 110th Anniversary of the Beginning of World War I

P. Multatuli

Keywords: Russian Empire, Kaiserist Germany, Austria-Hungary, World War I

In modern Russian historical scholarship, evaluations of the causes and nature of the Russian Empire's participation in World War I often remain rooted in interpretations established during the dominance of Marxist- Leninist ideology. The Great War is still considered "criminal" and "unnecessary," and Emperor Nicholas II is blamed for "entangling" Russia in this "unnecessary" war in 1914. The absurdity of such ideologically motivated assertions is evidenced by the fact that it was not Russia that declared war on Germany and Austria-Hungary but rather Germany that declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914, with Austria-Hungary following suit on August 6, 1914. Furthermore, the entire prewar policy of the German and Austrian ruling circles convincingly demonstrates their preparation for an aggressive and expansionist war against Russia.

During the Soviet era, the nature of World War I was completely distorted. While before 1917 it was called the Second Patriotic War and even the Great Patriotic War, with the Bolsheviks' rise to power the term "imperialist" was introduced. A study of the foreign policy of the Russian Empire of the late 19th and early 20th centuries completely refutes the notion of its "imperialist" ambitions. The main goal of Emperor Nicholas II's foreign policy throughout his reign was to avoid involving

Russia in a European war while maintaining its role as a leading world power. This was most evident in the prewar situation from June to August 1914. An objective analysis of sources leads to an undeniable conclusion: World War I was a war for the integrity and sovereignty of the Russian Empire against German and Ottoman aggressors – i.e., a Patriotic War like those of 1812-1814 and 1941-1945. Today's Special Military Operation is of a similar nature.

Kaiserist Germany began direct preparations for war with Russia in late 1912. On December 8, Emperor Wilhelm II declared at a war council that the best time had come to start a war against France and Russia. The Kaiser proclaimed that this war would open a new chapter in German history, emphasizing that at stake was not some consequential political problem but a racial issue that concerned the existence of the German race in Europe.

Wilhelm II fully understood that his actions toward Russia were outright aggression. His clumsy attempts at self-justification and false accusations only confirmed this. On July 20 (August 2), 1914, Emperor Wilhelm II informed all his diplomatic representatives that he had ordered mobilization “due to a sudden attack by Russian troops on German territory.” Emperor Nicholas II jotted on that message: “Yet another lie.”

In reality, German troops were the first to cross the Russian border. On August 2, the German 155th Infantry Regiment occupied the city of Kalisz. On the morning of August 3, an announcement from the German commander Maj. Hermann Preusker was posted on buildings, informing that a curfew was being imposed in the city. On August 4, German soldiers began shooting all men who had supposedly fired at them, killing over 100 civilians. Soldiers broke into homes and shops, looted, set fires, and massacred entire families – women, children, and the elderly. Several hundred people were killed or injured. Hostages were taken from among the townspeople, and an indemnity of 50,000 rubles was imposed on the city. Eighty hostages were immediately executed. To further terrorize the population, the Germans shelled residential quarters, firing 400 shots and destroying 95% of the city’s buildings. During the German occupation, the population of Kalisz fell from 70,000 to 5,000; over 250 people were killed, and the rest were forced to flee the city.

Flag, Anthem, Intelligence

S. Brilyov

Keywords: Olympics, Soviet anthem, Great Britain, Baltic countries, intelligence services

The disgraceful confusion within the International Olympic Committee regarding the playing of the Russian anthem and the displaying of the Russian flag at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris brings to mind a curious debate from the summer of 1941. Back then, a solution was found, and even the intelligence services benefited from it.

Let's start from the beginning and with the obvious (although today it may seem unbelievable): On July 12, 1941, a Soviet-British declaration was signed in Moscow in which both sides committed to provide each other assistance and support and refrain from engaging in separate negotiations with the enemy. This marked a step toward a formal alliance.

However, I am confident that even among professional diplomats, not all have checked their calendars to realize that July 12 fell on a Saturday. This is an important detail, because on the next day, Sunday, July 13, the Soviet ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky, was simply obligated to turn on the radio. When he did so can be calculated to the second. The reason is that since 1940, every Sunday at 8:45 p.m. sharp, just before the Big Ben chimes and the BBC evening news, the anthems of allied countries – Norway, Poland, France, etc. – were played. They were played that Sunday evening as well. But neither at the start nor during the entire 15 minutes allocated for the anthems of allies did the Soviet anthem play on July 13, 1941.

There is a backstory to this oddity. Not long ago, a memorandum from the British Ministry of Information, drafted five days before the start of the Great Patriotic War, was declassified. Having already concluded at that time that a German attack on the USSR was inevitable, the ministry prepared a list of questions for the leadership of His Majesty's government: "Should Maisky be admitted to the St. James Palace Group [of allied ambassadors]? Should the "Red Flag" (the Soviet

anthem – *Auth.*) be played on Sunday evenings? Should the Communist Party be recognized and admitted to the T[rade] U[nion] Congress?

It all ended unexpectedly. In public, Ambassador Maisky diplomatically stated that it was up to the BBC to decide what music to broadcast, but on August 24, the press secretary of the Soviet Embassy in London, Konstantin Zinchenko, accepted an invitation to lunch with the BBC leadership at the Garrick Club.

Apparently, this was a conciliatory meal. At its core lay a truly original (Solomonic?) decision: By that time, the BBC had changed its own rules and abandoned the practice of broadcasting the anthems of all allied countries. Thus, while “The Internationale” did not make it onto the Sunday evening broadcast, neither did the French “La Marseillaise,” the Polish “Mazurek Dąbrowskiego,” or any other anthem.

Naturally, this is not a solution for the Olympics.

Diplomatic compromises (whether concerning treaties, declarations, or the anthem) generate further compromises; moreover, in a truly depoliticized dialogue, intelligence agencies can help their governments find even greater compromises.

As for the anthem, specifically “The Internationale,” I recommend that readers take another look at familiar archival footage from 1943, when Churchill presented Stalin with a sword from King George in honor of the victory at Stalingrad. Typically, this footage is shown without sound. But if you pay close attention, you can see that at the start of the ceremony, anthems are being played. And Churchill does, in fact, salute to none other than “The Internationale.” He had no other choice.

However, to be fair, it should be noted that as soon as the USSR switched from defense to offense, the melody of relations between the intelligence agencies quickly became much more complex.

Origins of the Great Game:
The Ochakov Crisis of 1791 as an Allusion of History

V. Degoyev

Keywords: Ochakov crisis of 1791, the Great Game, William Pitt the Younger, Charles Fox, Semyon Vorontsov, Anglo-Saxon presence in Ukraine, historical analogies

NATO's creeping incursion into the Black Sea region of Ukraine began, under the pretext of showing firm resolve in defending the "democratic achievements of the Maidan" and Kiev's European choice against an authoritarian Russia armed to the teeth. All of this, along with many other existential threats to Moscow, served as the fundamental imperative behind Russia's momentous decision in February 2022 to launch the Special Military Operation. That event, along with its causes, are historically unprecedented. But does this mean we should reject the existence of some historical law of precedent and the repetition of situations?

In search of an answer to that question, let's go back to 1791. The Russo-Turkish War was coming to an end. The Ottoman Empire, as the defeated party, was forced to cede the fortress of Ochakov to Russia. Strategically, this was an important point. For Russia, it was a natural link in the defense system of the Northern Black Sea region. For Turkey, it was a natural springboard for payback in the context of the escalating eastern question.

By the end of the war, due to the successes of Russian troops, nervousness among the European powers had noticeably increased. This was reflected in diplomatic correspondence, the press, and political literature, which contained warnings about imminent Russian conquests of Istanbul, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Persia, and almost the entire East. After Prince Grigory Potemkin captured Ochakov, which opened up another access point to the Black Sea, British Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger, apparently vividly imagining a Russian landing in Istanbul, the overthrow of the Sultan, and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, decided it was time to act. He felt it necessary to strongly demand that St. Petersburg return its rightful trophy to its previous owner. He explained his position to his

fellow cabinet ministers as follows: Either we will force Russia to yield by strength, or we will discredit ourselves as guardians of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and lose our status as holders of the balance of power in Europe.

Over all these arguments loomed the idea of a “Russian threat” to Europe and the East – an idea that was assuming doctrinal and theoretical proportions with all the makings of a long-term strategy laced with irrationality and mania.

Although the Ochakov affair was peacefully resolved, it heralded the beginning of a prolonged era of sharp imperial rivalry between Russia and England across the entire Eurasian space, later known as the “Great Game.” This phenomenon did not originate in Central Asia or in the second half of the 19th century, as is commonly believed, but much earlier and further west. It was, in a sense, the British version of *Drang nach Osten*, the first manifestations of which date back to the 16th century, when English merchant-diplomats appeared in the Tsardom of Moscow, seeking to harness the “barbaric” country to serve their colonial and commercial interests.

In 1791, the Ochakov military crisis was averted, but the programmatic stance formulated by Charles Whitworth, the British ambassador to St. Petersburg, remained: “If we cannot regard the Russians as friends, then it is in our interest to weaken them as much as possible as our enemies. Russia must be pushed back to the place it deserves.” Expanding on this already clear idea, Whitworth argued that it was in England’s “immediate interest” to “halt the successes of this state” in the south, including by crushing Russia’s Black Sea trade and through war by proxy.

The world, and international relations in particular, have changed beyond recognition in the more than 230 years that have passed since the Ochakov crisis – except for one thing: the Anglo-Saxon desire for total geopolitical domination and aggressive rejection of any competition. The paradox seems to be that these entirely rational motives laid the groundwork for deeply irrational outcomes – a profound and indelible sense of hatred for Russia, fear of its strength, its weakness, and its difference from others, all of which have taken root in the Western political consciousness.

Ideological Aspects of the Success of the Soviet Project Amid Geopolitical Competition

A. Selivanov

Keywords: worldview, ideology, ideological aspects, image of the future, diplomacy, high humanitarian technologies, public diplomacy, international cooperation, geopolitical competition, collective security, development

Modern Russia, as the successor to the Soviet Union, faces a number of global challenges, the main one, in our view, being the formation of a clear image of the present and a vision for the future – a national idea comprehensible to most Russian citizens and compatriots that is based on a synthesis of key achievements from the past and an understanding of the present context. The Soviet project gave a major boost to the development of world civilization. It demonstrated the capacity to make extraordinary efforts during the years of the Great Patriotic War and impressive results in the postwar reconstruction of the country, and it launched the first satellite and the first human into space. The USSR developed and employed effective technologies of geopolitical competition that Russia can use in its foreign policy today.

From the founding of the USSR, the Soviet government viewed diplomacy as a way to bring the ideology of socialism to the global community. At the same time, the elites of the collective West struggled to understand the ideological underpinnings of Bolshevik foreign policy: Was it defined by the imperial traditions of a once-great state that had faded into oblivion, or was it guided purely by Marxist ideology? Most state officials ultimately concluded that Soviet diplomacy was dual in nature.

Collective security was viewed by the USSR as the most reliable means of preventing war, and Soviet diplomacy sought to implement this idea in various formats – from obtaining permanent membership in the League of Nations in 1934 to reaching bilateral agreements both in Europe and Asia. The USSR's entry into the League of Nations can be considered a victory for Soviet diplomacy, as it was the

Western countries that took the initiative to invite the USSR into the League, granting it permanent membership.

The Amtorg Trading Corporation, a joint-stock company established in 1924 in New York to promote Soviet-American trade during the early years of Soviet Russia, deserves particular attention. Amtorg acted as an intermediary in the export-import operations of Soviet foreign trade organizations with American companies. It was created with Soviet capital through the merger of the Soviet-controlled companies ARCOS (All-Russian Cooperative Society) and the Products Exchange Corporation.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the USSR's foreign policy efforts were built upon universal values understandable to the majority of humanity, promoting them both through official diplomatic channels and via people's diplomacy.

The USSR developed and employed unique technologies and approaches in pursuing geopolitical competition and establishing international cooperation. Among these were high humanitarian technologies for shaping and projecting the image of the Soviet Union as a land of opportunity, not only within the socialist bloc but also among the "creative class" in the collective West. The foundation of Soviet diplomatic successes lay in the appeal to basic values important to any nation – security and protection from external aggression, justice in the form of popular sovereignty and equal access to national resources, and the pursuit of development. Political scientists and practitioners increasingly speak of a shift from a clash of civilizations at the turn of the millennium to an axiomatic, highlighting the relevance for contemporary Russia of the USSR's breakthrough experience in using high humanitarian technologies to communicate its values to the external world.

Artificial Intelligence and International Security

A. Shutov

Keywords: artificial intelligence, international security, information security

As humanity approaches the second quarter of the 21st century, it has taken a step toward a new phase transition, the main attribute of which is a breakthrough in the development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology. The global community has been swept by extraordinarily zealous attempts to seize the lead in developing regulations for the development and use of AI technology. AI not only generates numerous applied opportunities applicable in various areas of society and state life but also poses global challenges threatening international security.

The Russian Federation, as a world leader in the development of breakthrough technologies, needs to build up its scientific and technological capacity to inhibit Western technological hegemony. That message is supported by the updated National Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence Until 2030, published in February 2024. In this context, the development of Russian educational science is inextricably linked to the pursuit of our national interests.

The publication of the textbook *International Security in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* by the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation makes an invaluable contribution to enriching Russian scientific discourse in the context of assessing advanced technology through the lens of theoretical and practical-political analysis. The textbook attempts to develop a symbiosis of humanitarian and technological perspectives on the impact of AI on international security, and in that sense it is a pioneer in this scientific field.

The launch event of the textbook by its coeditors M.V. Zakharova and A.I. Smirnov at the Russia Today International Information Agency on June 5, 2024, demonstrated high interest in its content amid the sharp aggravation of geopolitical tensions.

On the Economic and Sociocultural Landscape of France

V. Chernega

Keywords: economic and sociocultural situation in France

French specialists Jérôme Fourquet and Jean-Laurent Caselli are well-known in their country. In particular, Fourquet, director of a department at the Institut français d'opinion publique [French Institute of Public Opinion (IFOP)], is the author or coauthor of several monographs dedicated to the evolution of the country's economy, social structure, and electorate. Caselli, a journalist for the magazine *L'Express*, has published several works on changes in the lifestyle and social status of various segments of the French population. In the reviewed monograph, *France Before Our Eyes: Economy, Landscape, New Lifestyle*, they analyze the “radical transformation” that the country has undergone since the 1980s. It is particularly noteworthy that the authors base their conclusions on a vast array of statistical data, public survey information, and cultural works.

As can be seen from the title of the monograph, Fourquet and Caselli begin their analysis with the economy, as changes in it have led to sociocultural transformation, as well as changes in the “landscape,” which is understood as the territorial distribution of productive forces, services, and associated population masses. The authors underscore the deindustrialization of the country, which began in the 1970s and accelerated in the next decade. The monograph states that from 1985 to 2019, the share of the industrial sector in France's GDP decreased from 24% to 10%. From 2008 to 2020, 938 factories closed in the country .

However, Fourquet and Caselli do not limit their economic analysis to the decline in the number of industrial enterprises and industrial output. They also show the near-complete disappearance of the mining industry and radical changes in the agricultural and fishing sectors.

Overall, as emphasized in the monograph, during the studied period, material production was significantly displaced by “immaterial” production, primarily the service sector. This sector grew rapidly in part due to the expansion of leisure and

tourism infrastructure, an aging population and the resulting increase in hospitals and nursing homes, and the digitalization of various services, including government services.

Many small and medium-sized entrepreneurs working in the industrial sector, farmers, fishing boat owners, and small traders who were in competition with large retail chains lost their social position and moved from the middle class to the stratum that the authors call the “lower classes” (*les classes subalternes*).

The authors show that the deepening divide between the “lower classes” and the beneficiaries of change has led to increasing differences in consumption patterns. In particular, representatives of the “lower classes” are making fewer purchases in traditional shopping centers and are increasingly focusing on “discount” supermarkets.

The authors also note the intensified “Americanization” of the lifestyle in France. More and more French people are adopting fast food, country music, American films, which are increasingly watched in the original language, and American fashion, especially in everyday clothing. Americanisms fill the professional jargon of many specialists and youth slang, despite the desperate pushback by purists of the French language from the academic community.

In summary, it is worth emphasizing that various significant changes in the economy, social structure, and lifestyle in France that have occurred in recent decades and even over a longer period have been examined by other French experts. What makes the monograph by Fourquet and Caselli valuable is its comprehensive analysis, which allows these changes to be seen in their interconnection. It effectively reveals the underlying causes of France’s permanent social instability, which inevitably predetermines the political struggle in the country.

Foreign Reconnaissance-Strike Systems: Past and Future

V. Kozyulin

Keywords: reconnaissance-strike systems, AI, high-precision weapons.

THE Research Institute (of Military History) of the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation has released a monograph titled *Foreign Experience in the Development of Reconnaissance-Strike (Fire) Systems*.

The development of technology in the early 21st century is associated with the large-scale use of artificial intelligence (AI). Today, the military field is among the first to see innovations where everything that can be digitized and automated is being computerized and transformed by AI. Intelligence, data collection and processing, scenario development, decision-making, information distribution and transmission, target designation, and guidance are key areas that are currently getting the bulk of military R&D funding.

The material presented in the monograph provides not only an understanding of the examples of the combat use of HPWs and their role in performing missions but also allows us to see prospects for their further development. All this can serve as a guide for those in our country directly involved in the development and improvement of similar weapons systems and their practical application.

In summary, the reviewed monograph offers a comprehensive overview of the development, improvement, and combat use of reconnaissance-strike systems based on foreign experience. The ideas and recommendations presented in the monograph are primarily valuable for those in our country engaged in shaping the future of similar systems, their development, and their practical combat application. This monograph will also be useful to a wide range of readers interested in military development and military history.

Turn to the Dawn, Turn to the East

S. Filatov

Keywords: turn to the East, Russia's Eastern policy, China, Mongolia, South Korea, DPRK, geopolitics

The monograph *Turn to the East: Russia's East Asian Vector*, published by the Russian Academy of Sciences, is written by well-known Russian experts on the history and contemporary realities of the East: Professor Kirill Babayev, Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of China and Contemporary Asia (ICCA), and Sergey Luzyanin, Professor at the National Research University-Higher School of Economics and Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations and President of the Foundation for the Support of Oriental Studies.

Importantly, the work illustrates the continuity of historical trends, where the logic of the modern process becomes a continuation and aligns with the course of historical development in our country's policy since the times of Ancient Rus, the Tsardom of Moscow, and the Russian Empire, through the era of debates between Westernizers and Slavophiles, the period of the formation of the classical Eurasian school of Nikolay Trubetskoy and Pyotr Savitsky, and the development of Lev Gumilev's views and concepts, all the way to the modern discourse of Alexander Dugin, Sergey Karaganov, scholars of the Valdai Club, and other researchers. The authors demonstrate how for centuries, the primary vector of Russia's foreign policy has always been directed toward growth points of the global economy and civilization – previously the West but now clearly East Asia.

The monograph provides a detailed account of Russia's policy in Southeast Asia, including an analysis of regional integration projects such as Russia-ASEAN and EAEU-Vietnam, as well as bilateral relations between Russia and the 10 Southeast Asian countries. In this part of the work, the authors highlight the key countries in the region for Russia – Vietnam, Indonesia, and Myanmar – along with specific energy and military-technical projects. They also analyze the influence of China and the US on the region as a whole.

A Thousand Years of Russian Foreign Policy

S. Kiselyov

Keywords: Ancient Rus, Russian World, collapse of the USSR, SMO

The new book *Russia's Foreign Policy: History and Modernity* by Doctor of Science (Philosophy) and Professor Valery Buyanov continues and develops his thoughts, expressed in previous works, on the need to demonstrate the continuity of historical processes in academic research, overcome the nihilistic attitude toward entire epochs in Russia's history, eliminate the "rupture of the past," and restore the continuity of time.

The book consists of five sections, each dedicated to analyzing key historical periods in the life of the country. These include Ancient Rus, the State (Tsardom) of Moscow, Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation. In the concluding part of each section, events and phenomena of the respective periods in Russia's history and foreign policy are examined and evaluated from philosophical and worldview perspectives.

The author notes that, having emerged in 862 in the northwest of the Russian lands and later moving its political center to Kiev, the Ancient Russian state grew rapidly, developing on a par with major European powers, and was "seen and heard in all four corners of the earth." This period marks the flourishing of medieval Rus, the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, and the strengthening of the country's international position. It was during this time that the Russian people began to form, unified by language, religion, territory, and governance. A historical-cultural community known as the "Russian World" began to take shape, first mentioned in the 11th-century written source *Sermon on the Restoration of the Church of the Tithes*.

The book postulates that two forces – spiritual and military – contributed to the strengthening of the Ancient Russian state, symbolized by the figures of the warrior-hero and the holy elder.

The monograph devotes significant attention to the conflict in Ukraine, exploring its causes, progression, the positions of the parties involved, and the international context in which the SMO is unfolding. Kiev, fully dependent on Washington and Brussels, continues to fuel anti-Russian hysteria, declaring that “we are living in an era of Ukraine-centricity.”

Buyanov thoroughly analyzes other important topics: “smart”, “hard”, and “soft” power in Russia’s foreign policy, the nature of hybrid warfare, and the challenges of forming a new world order. The author’s proposals are justified, including those concerning the strengthening of social, political, and spiritual unity within society; the development of historical consciousness; and the promotion of the ideology of Russia as a civilization-state.

The comprehensive work of Professor Buyanov will undoubtedly become a milestone in academic literature on Russia’s historical and modern foreign policy and resonate with engaged and discriminating readers. This publication holds practical interest for scholars, experts, and politicians who are analyzing the increasingly complex contemporary international and geopolitical realities and developing forecasts based on the patterns of Russia’s historical development. It will be valuable to all those interested in the history of our great country.