

National Identity and Political Choice: The Experience of Russia and China

D. Medvedev

Keywords: “divide and rule,” incitement of interethnic conflicts, national identity, separatism, China, Little Russia-Ukraine, Ukrainians

The party-state visit to the People’s Republic of China on December 11-12, 2024, at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, once again demonstrated the unprecedentedly high level of bilateral relations between Russia and China.

The reason for such a trusting dialogue is evident. The Russian and Chinese peoples are united by friendship and good-neighborly relations based on deep historical traditions.

Russia and China continue to bear responsibility for the present and future of humanity. We will continue to fulfill this challenging mission together while addressing unresolved issues inherited from the past

The classic principle of “divide and rule,” long employed by Western colonial powers, has brought untold suffering and calamities to the world. It serves as a source of numerous ethnic and sociocultural conflicts, as well as pervasive economic inequality. This was true in the past, and it continues to be the case today.

The modern strategy of inciting interethnic or interracial hostility often involves constructing a pseudo-national identity for a particular ethnic group to separate it from the state-forming people. This is precisely the approach Washington and its satellites employ against Russia, China, and other nations. Taiwan is an organic and inseparable part of the greater Chinese space – a mere administrative unit of the People’s Republic of China. Attempts instigated from overseas to fabricate a Taiwanese statehood, nation, or language are artificial and, as a result, unsustainable.

Ukraine today faces a fundamental choice: to be with Russia or to disappear entirely from the map of the world. Ukrainians are not required to sacrifice “body and soul” for their freedom. Instead, Ukrainians should temper their pride in their “otherness,” abandon their opposition to the pan-Russian project, and cast out the demons of political Ukrainianism.

Our task is to help the residents of Little Russia and Novorossiia build a Ukraine free from the delusions of “Ukrainianism.” It is essential to firmly establish in public consciousness that Russia is indispensable to Ukraine – culturally, linguistically, and politically.

If, however, so-called Ukraine persists in following an aggressive Russophobic course, it will vanish from the map of the world, just as the puppet state of Manchukuo, artificially created by militarist Japan as a proxy force on Chinese territory, once disappeared.

A Look Back at 2024 in an Attempt to Peer Into the Future

Yu. Sayamov

Keywords: interview with Tucker Carlson, speeches by Vladimir Putin at the Valdai Forum in 2022 and 2024, strengthening Russia's ties with China and India, strategic partnership

Reflecting on 2024, it is worth noting that the year initially aroused certain apprehensions. The comprehensive aggression launched by the West against Russia – manifested as a proxy war launched from the Ukrainian bridgehead, unprecedented economic sanctions, informational and civilizational assaults, and technological restrictions – was met by the country with an immense exertion of effort.

The conflict in Europe, where Russia found itself effectively confronting several dozen countries drawn into a military venture by the US, was compounded by an equally perilous conflict in the Middle East. The latter conflict saw the ruthless destruction of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians by Israeli military forces and terrorist attacks targeting

The year was a difficult one for Russia. Driven by pathological envy and hatred, the West crossed previously unthinkable boundaries, leaving no alternative but a forceful response.

Meanwhile, Russia, strengthening its ties with China and India, jointly offered the world a positive agenda. This vision of globalization as an objective process of building global partnerships and fostering cooperation among nations to address shared challenges and existential threats gained traction.

Thus, contrary to the global isolation that the West unsuccessfully sought to impose on Russia, a vast framework of comprehensive strategic partnerships emerged and solidified in the Asian region in 2024. The US, which had declared the Indo-Pacific region a priority of its foreign policy, sought to disrupt this development but clearly failed to do so.

First Global Cybercrime Treaty: From Geopolitical Confrontation to Professional Compromise

P. Litvishko

Keywords: UN Convention against Cybercrime, legal support and law-enforcement assistance in criminal cases, harmonization of language versions

In august 2024, the Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes. This convention aims to strengthen international cooperation in combating specific crimes committed using information and communications systems and in the exchange of electronic evidence related to serious crimes (hereinafter referred to as the Convention, UN Convention). Work on the treaty spanned four years, with meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee and intersessional consultations held at UN headquarters in New York and Vienna.

All international treaties, particularly multilateral ones, are to some extent the product of compromise. In the case of the Convention against Cybercrime, it represents a delicate balance – a compromise squared – which is inherently incapable of yielding anything too groundbreaking. Nonetheless, despite all odds, a robust, practice-driven text was developed that incorporates the best elements of the Palermo and Budapest Conventions. The analogy of a child is fitting for any international agreement (not just a bilateral one, which is natural in this sense), and especially for the Convention. This long-awaited firstborn was carried to term in a toxic environment, far removed from the spirit of the UN, and was born amid pain, despite the intentions and negotiating positions of its irreconcilable “parents.” Yet, regardless of the challenges, the Convention is our offspring. Its healthy development and success are, to a significant extent, in our own hands.

We all must continue and improve our professional, demanding, and painstaking work to counter cybercrime within the framework of the multipolar architecture of the modern world order, which includes a bloc of “unfriendly” states. Now, however, we have a new universal instrument at our disposal, whose effectiveness will depend primarily on us.

International Information Security: Russia at the UN – Ahead of the 25th Anniversary of the Russian Initiative (2023)

S. Boiko

Keywords: international information security, UN, OEWG, Program of Action, ICTs

The adoption in July 2022 of the first annual interim report by the Open-ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communication technologies 2021-2025 (hereinafter referred to as the OEWG or the Group), along with informal consultations held in December of the same year, were marked by debates revealing significant disagreements among states on key aspects of the Group's mandate.

Despite these challenging conditions, the Russian side hoped to maintain a constructive, depoliticized dialogue on the OEWG platform, aimed at achieving tangible, practical results. Russia carried this optimism into 2023, the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the first resolution, A/RES/53/70, titled Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, which was initiated by Russia and adopted on December 4, 1998, during the 53rd session of the UN General Assembly. This resolution marked a new era in the discussion of international information security at the UN.

That said, the growing polarization of approaches among OEWG member states to addressing critical issues within the Group's competence and deepening disagreements over the future of regular dialogue at the UN and the structure of the international information security system pointed to a difficult negotiation process ahead.

Despite significant differences in the approaches of various countries to the issues discussed during the fifth session, the delegates managed to bridge gaps and adopt the final report. As noted by the Australian delegation, the report reflects the persistence of the chair, the importance all governments attach to this matter, and the collective commitment of each delegation to maintaining momentum in the discussions.

The outcomes of the fourth and fifth OEWG sessions in 2023, held in the lead-up to the 25th anniversary of the December 5, 1998, adoption of Russia's first specialized resolution, A/RES/53/70, Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security, bore witness to the continuation of intense debates within the Group and to the delegations' uncompromising advocacy for their national approaches to shaping a system for international information security.

The Search for an Alternative to the Dollar as the World Reserve Currency

P. Sadykhov

Keywords: colonial-type economy, colonial power, global financial market, world financial architecture, Bretton Woods Conference, SWIFT international settlement system, gold and foreign exchange reserves

Discussions about replacing the US dollar as the global reserve currency¹ and primary settlement currency have persisted for years. However, for a long time, these debates yielded no tangible progress. The first substantive steps toward the so-called “de-dollarization” of international settlements were undertaken by Russia, China, and India, which have now transitioned entirely to national currencies in their mutual trade. Other stakeholders in the debate, despite holding significant dollar-denominated assets in their foreign exchange reserves (FX reserves), refrained from taking concrete actions, even as consensus grew on the need for change.

In conclusion, it is worth discussing the prospects of the yuan as a new global settlement and reserve currency. Apart from the yuan, there are currently no other contenders, and the somewhat understated “debut” of the Chinese currency is already underway. The yuan’s starting position is quite strong compared to the initial positions of the pound and the dollar. The yuan is the currency of the world’s largest economy by purchasing power parity – an economy that produces almost everything, from nails to spacecraft.

No matter how much the expert community debates the slowing pace of China’s economic growth, even a 1% annual growth in the Chinese economy translates to an additional \$180 billion for its GDP. What’s more, current growth rates of the Chinese economy are estimated at 4.5% to 5%. The yuan is the currency of the world’s most populous country and is supported by the largest gold reserves globally. In other words, the list of “superlatives” associated with the Chinese currency could go on. This raises the question: What is the yuan lacking, and what prevents it from becoming the world’s primary reserve and settlement currency, replacing the US dollar in this role? This is not a rhetorical question but a very specific one, and we will endeavor to provide an equally specific answer.

As for the external value of the yuan, it is relatively stable. However, inflation is a more complex issue. A consistently growing economy, like China's for the past 40 years, is inherently inflationary, whereas low inflation in the US, for example, is primarily a result of the slow growth rate of the American economy. Another factor hindering the yuan's rise as a global reserve currency is China's large positive trade balance with most countries. This leads to a lack of yuan accumulation among China's trading partners, which could otherwise facilitate the currency's use in international transactions.

In this regard, the US dollar continues to dominate as the world's leading reserve currency, largely due to the US's trade deficit with its trading partners. Additionally, institutional obstacles stand in the way of the yuan becoming a leading reserve currency, the foremost being China's strict monetary and financial regulations. These regulations prevent speculative activities that destabilize financial markets by enabling uncontrolled entry and exit from Chinese assets. Maintaining financial stability has been a cornerstone of China's economic prosperity over the past two decades since 2002, when China joined the WTO.

The evolution of the ruble toward greater "reserve currency" status has been supported by the shift to national currency settlements among several BRICS countries, as well as President Vladimir Putin's proposal at the BRICS summit in Kazan to create a unified BRICS settlement currency. However, for now, the "reserve status" of any currency remains directly correlated with three indicators: the country's GDP, its share of global trade, and its "creditor" status – i.e., its share of the global volume of sovereign loans issued. At present, the ruble's main claim to fame lies in its role as the denomination for significant volumes of state financial and export credits.

World Oil Markets and Europe

A. Bazhan, E. Fazelyanov

Keywords: world economy, recession, inflation, oil market, oil price, Europe

Significant geopolitical and macroeconomic uncertainty persists in the global economy over the future behavior of the oil market in Europe. Prices in this market are largely determined by the global cost of oil and the specifics of its supply to the region from global production centers. Broadly speaking, its price depends on the balance of supply and demand. These two factors also determine oil consumption trends.

The unexpected production cut by OPEC in early April 2023 reduced the supply of liquid hydrocarbons by approximately 2.2 million barrels per day. This significant reduction, in the context of the global market balance, boosted rising oil prices, which subsequently stabilized at a relatively high level. The decrease in supply also opens the markets of China, India, and other Asia-Pacific countries for Russian fuel exports, helping mitigate Western sanctions against Russian oil exports and thus giving it political significance.

An important indicator of the success of Russia's energy diplomacy is the continuation of constructive dialogue with OPEC. This dispelled Western "optimistic" expectations that OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, would abandon its key partner.

Under the EU's anti-Russian sanctions policy, any improvement in the European oil market or the overall European economy is unlikely. The worsening economic situation is resulting in reduced real income, prompting social protests and unrest. At the same time, the EU embargo and associated import restrictions are segmenting the oil market. This trade fragmentation could potentially lead to a new Cold War.

The energy imbalance in the European region necessitated the search for new suppliers and incurred additional financial costs to ensure energy security. As a result, Europe's losses amounted to approximately \$300 billion.

This study highlights the importance for Russia of intensifying its energy dialogue with leading OPEC exporters to avoid fierce competition with Middle Eastern oil. Such an approach offers the potential for favorable market conditions amid stable or growing demand, enabling Russia to sell oil at higher prices. It would be prudent to explore the establishment of a permanent mechanism for the regular discussion of political, economic, climatic, environmental, and energy issues between Russia and OPEC countries. A particularly significant aspect of this partnership could involve expanding cooperation in oil energy with Saudi Arabia – a key Arab country. This could occur at governmental and legislative levels, with the participation of businesses, academic institutions, and expert communities from both countries.

Oil market challenges of mutual interest to Russia and OPEC countries should also become the subject of scientific and diplomatic collaboration, which could logically include investment projects with substantial technological components. This prospect opens a window of opportunity, as such cooperation could position Russia's oil-producing regions as investment and technological hubs, promoting the interests of both Russia and Gulf countries on the global energy market. The key challenge lies in swiftly communicating such initiatives to potential partners in order to fulfill this role, which is sought after in the Arab East. Given the unprecedented pace of current changes, any significant delay in action could result in missed opportunities.

Political and Legal Foundations of Russia's Strategic Planning in the Field of Nuclear Weapons

T. Kashirina

Keywords: international relations, international security, foreign policy, national security, strategic planning, nuclear deterrence

Russia's official position on nuclear deterrence is outlined in several strategic planning documents concerning national security and defense.

The deterioration of the international situation, worsening Russian- American and Russian-European relations, and the escalation of the Russia-Ukraine crisis in 2013-2014 prompted Moscow to revise its Military Doctrine in 2014. This document places significant emphasis on the increased activity of military forces unfriendly to Russia and foreign nations operating in territories adjacent to the Russian Federation and its allies.

Among the key external military dangers are threats to global stability (which is primarily based on the possession of nuclear weapons) and regional stability through the development and deployment of strategic missile defense systems that disrupt the established balance of power in the nuclear missile domain. Other threats include the implementation of the "global strike" concept, intentions to deploy weapons in space, the proliferation of high-precision nonnuclear strategic systems, and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, missiles, and missile technologies.

Key military threats also include interference with the operation of Russian state and military command systems, the disruption of its strategic nuclear forces, missile attack warning systems, space monitoring infrastructure, and facilities for storing nuclear warheads.

Maintaining global and regional stability and nuclear deterrence capabilities at a sufficient level is one way Russia seeks to deter and prevent military conflicts.

The Military Doctrine clearly outlines the circumstances and conditions for the use of nuclear weapons. They may be used in response to the use of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction against Russia and/or its allies, or in the event of

aggression against the Russian Federation using conventional weapons, if such aggression threatens the very existence of the state.

A landmark event occurred in 2020 when the Russian president approved the strategic planning document Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence. For the first time in the history of the USSR and Russia as its successor, such a high-level document was made public. This marked the first instance in Russia's history as a nuclear power where the country published its vision of the role and place of nuclear weapons within its overall national security framework.

Like the Military Doctrine, the document focuses particular attention on territories bordering Russia and adjacent maritime zones in the event that nuclear delivery systems are deployed there.

The document establishes the principles of nuclear deterrence, including compliance with international arms control obligations, continuous assurance of nuclear deterrence, and maintaining the constant combat readiness of designated nuclear deterrence forces and assets.

At present, the nuclear triad remains the cornerstone of ensuring the security of the Russian state and its citizens, as well as a tool for maintaining strategic parity and the global balance of power. However, Russia must account for dynamic changes, especially destructive ones, in the contemporary military-political landscape, including the emergence of new sources of military threats and risks to our state and its allies. It is crucial to forecast developments and adapt strategic planning documents accordingly to reflect current realities.

Hermeneutics and Psychology of Russia's Nuclear Deterrence

V. Belozyorov

Keywords: Russia, nuclear deterrence, intimidation, perception, hermeneutics, psychology of nuclear deterrence, international political communication

Recent developments surrounding Russia's nuclear deterrence policy have sparked widespread reactions in Russia and abroad, ranging from belligerent and aggressive to eschatological and apocalyptic. On November 19, 2024, official guidelines were unveiled in the updated document titled Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence (hereinafter referred to as the Fundamentals).

Several factors compelled Russia to revise its approaches to nuclear deterrence policy: the erosion of strategic stability, provocations and nuclear blackmail by Ukraine, and Western encouragement of the latter's irresponsible and reckless leadership. The increasingly adversarial nature of global relations has brought the international system to the brink of large-scale war. The release of this new doctrinal policy provides a critical opportunity to analyze various aspects of Russia's nuclear deterrence strategy.

In post-soviet Russia, a practice has emerged of codifying state policy guidelines in strategic planning documents, which include the Fundamentals. These documents provide official assessments and are declarative. However, Russia's stance on strategic stability and nuclear deterrence is articulated not only in the Fundamentals but also in other key policy documents.

The document identifies strategic stability and mutually beneficial international cooperation as national priorities. These priorities shape Russia's foreign policy goals and objectives.

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, adopted on March 31, 2023, prioritizes strengthening international peace and security. It focuses on ensuring strategic stability, eliminating the preconditions for a global war, mitigating the risks of the use of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and shaping a renewed international security architecture.

The Fundamentals can be seen as an integral part of Russia's overall military doctrine, providing detailed policy guidance in the critical yet specific domain of nuclear deterrence. The Military Doctrine, adopted in December 2014, includes references to nuclear deterrence in a limited scope. It defines nonnuclear deterrence and acknowledges that "nuclear weapons will remain an important factor in preventing nuclear conflicts and military conflicts with the use of conventional weapons (large-scale or regional wars)."

Russian strategic planning documents serve a declarative purpose, aiming to communicate the country's official positions to both domestic and international audiences. While intended for the general public, their primary foreign target audience comprises individuals involved in policy formulation, decision-making, and strategy implementation.

Russia's nuclear deterrence, as correctly outlined in the Fundamentals, is aimed at ensuring that the adversary comprehends the inevitability of retaliation. This formulation explicitly underscores the necessity of shaping the intended perception within a specific target audience. Thus, deterrence is fundamentally a political-psychological phenomenon.

Over time, Russia's approach to nuclear deterrence has undergone changes, including periods of disarmament and relinquishment of hard-won positions. Today, defending national values and interests through deterrence demands professionalism and competence, and involves clearly communicating precise meanings to international actors, especially potential adversaries – a task that requires a robust scientific foundation.

Russia as a Security Provider for the West: An Alternative to Operation Unthinkable?

F. Trunov

Keywords: Russia, West, international security, stability

In the spring and summer of 1945, at the initiative of Winston Churchill, the US and Great Britain developed Operation Unthinkable – a plan for war against the Soviet Union. In its mortal struggle with Nazi Germany and the Axis powers, the Soviet Union proved itself not merely as an exceptionally reliable ally to the Anglo-Saxon powers but also as the decisive contributor to the defeat of the aggressor bloc. This, in effect, secured the defense and very existence of the “Western democracies” led by the US and the UK.

However, the US and the UK refrained from recognizing the Soviet Union as a guarantor of their security. Instead, they rapidly transitioned to a policy of “containment” and “rollback” of the USSR. The leading Western democracies sought to provide a de jure rationale for this policy, presenting it as a restoration of the strategic balance of power. One of the first major projects along these lines was the development of Operation Unthinkable, which included the possible use of Wehrmacht units recently captured in the West against the Soviet Union. This plan became a prelude to the Cold War: The Anglo-Saxon powers embarked on long-term opposition to the USSR, including through the remilitarization of West Germany.

Since 2014, the community of “liberal democracies” has once again focused on the containment and rollback of Russia, this time with a fully developed military component. The evolution of NATO formations, as the key multilateral bearer of the collective West’s military power, demonstrated that by 2022, the alliance had prepared for a significant quantitative and qualitative intensification of its confrontation with Russia. Consequently, Russia’s forced Special Military Operation (SMO) became primarily a pretext, rather than the cause, for the implementation of large-scale strategic anti-Russian measures.

Russia, having been chosen as the target of intense containment and rollback efforts by the Western democracies, in practice serves as a key guarantor of their

security and stability. Encouraging these actors toward prudence – abandoning the pursuit of a global utopia – represents a critical pathway to preventing a third world war. Of particular importance in this regard is the SMO, which, though compelled by circumstances, is simultaneously proactive in its implications for the future of international security. Through its efforts to resolve armed conflicts and combat terrorism in the Middle East and in Africa north of the equator, Russia is also shielding the West from numerous instability threats that could otherwise spread there. Together, these actions by Russia work to rectify the imbalance characteristic of the emerging world order.

In the current geopolitical context, this morally significant role played by Russia remains unacknowledged by the elites of NATO and EU member states. However, this alternative mission “Unthinkable” must eventually manifest itself, albeit gradually and initially unnoticed, by laying the groundwork for a truly equitable dialogue between Russia and the Western democracies in the future. The inevitability of such a dialogue was emphasized by Russian President Putin during his address to the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on June 14, 2024.

US and Chinese Approaches to Hybrid Warfare

A. Alaudinov

Keywords: hybrid warfare, US, China, information warfare, cyberwarfare, trade wars

The use of hybrid warfare methods and technologies has taken on global proportions. Virtually all militarily developed states actively engage in hybrid warfare, employing corresponding tools.

In this study, we define hybrid warfare as forms of military conflict that do not rely on the large-scale use of armed forces conducting kinetic operations. Instead, the emphasis in hybrid warfare is placed on psychological operations; cyberattacks; sanctions; terrorist acts and sabotage; and the use of nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations, mercenaries (private military companies, PMCs) and networked groups such as protest movements, terrorist, insurgent, or criminal networks. The large-scale use of armed forces in the form of kinetic operations as the primary tool for achieving military-political objectives is, in our view, a defining feature of traditional wars.

We also proceed from the assumption that hybrid warfare can take two primary forms, distinguished by the presence or absence of kinetic impact (physical violence). Using this criterion, we divide hybrid warfare into two main categories: non-kinetic and kinetic. Non-kinetic forms of hybrid warfare include information (including psychological) wars, cyberwars, and trade wars. Kinetic hybrid wars, on the other hand, are those whose core involves irregular paramilitary formations or “color revolutions” (which we define as a form of coup d’état, the techniques used to implement it, and external management of a country’s political situation under artificially created instability, where pressure on the government takes the form of political blackmail, using youth protest movements as a tool).

As The US and China develop their approaches to hybrid warfare, they aim to employ virtually all available means to achieve their goals. This is particularly evident in the approach of the US and its allied satellite states, which not only utilize

all their resources but also deliberately disregard humanitarian considerations, treating the casualties of their military and political activities as “collateral damage.”

The methods of the US and China share similarities, such as their engagement in cyber operations and psychological campaigns. However, a key distinction lies in the use of color revolution techniques, which are employed exclusively by the US. Moreover, in Syria, terrorists were directly used against the Syrian government with Washington’s active involvement, further differentiating its approach from that of Beijing. Another difference is that the US has developed and implemented technologies for modern multi-stage strategic psychological operations, such as the Skripal Case.

As strategic thinking and technologies continue to evolve, hybrid warfare will arguably assume increasing significance in international relations due to the weakening of international institutions, which are becoming progressively less capable of preventing or stopping military conflicts. Furthermore, hybrid wars cannot be prevented or halted under the existing international security architecture. As the world transitions toward multipolarity, addressing this issue will be critical, as its resolution will largely determine both national and global security. Russia must be prepared for these challenges.

Imagology as a Means of Social Construction: The Ukrainian Aspect of Turning the Other Into the Enemy

O. Moskalenko, A. Irkhin, N. Demeshko

Keywords: imagology, Ukraine, Alien, Enemy, propaganda, identity, stereotype

The theoretical and conceptual foundations of imagology, a discipline studying the representations of other peoples, began to garner significant attention among Russian scholars in the early 21st century. However, the number of studies emphasizing the role of imagological analysis in social and political practices remains limited.

In practice, imagology quickly transcended the boundaries of literary comparative studies, focusing on how one culture forms and develops representations of other cultures. This shift marked a transition from describing individual images of the Alien to examining each case through the lens of the overarching issue of the Alien's image.

This article aims to demonstrate the methodological potential of imagology as a tool for constructing images of the Other, the Alien, and the Enemy, and to identify the primary techniques of such construction using Ukraine as a case study. The object of this research is the imagological methodology of social construction. The subject is the methods used to construct the image of the Enemy in Ukraine's political space.

A key tenet of imagology is the understanding that an image – whether a self-image, hetero-image, or the image of the Self or the Other – is not a bearer of objective information but a distinct product of a specific political and cultural-historical context. In its application to political science, the subject matter of imagology is the socio-ideological function of the Other in constructing the sociocultural and national identity of both one's own country and that of its antagonist.

At present, imagological research has a pronounced applied character and significant relevance to international relations. Stereotypical representations of the Other, their emergence, construction, reconstruction, evolution, and functions, are

largely shaped by political factors and the nature of interstate interactions in a given era. The Other acquires positive traits in favorable relationships between countries, but as soon as the competing state begins to dominate economically, politically, or strategically – or even simply strengthens – manipulative potentials inherent in the image of the Other intensify. Differences are accentuated, leading to the transformation of the Other into the Alien and, eventually, the Enemy.

In the case of independent Ukraine, several techniques for influencing public opinion and shaping national identity align with imagological categories, particularly through the manipulation of historical information. However, the scientific focus lies not on the facts themselves, which may be distorted, omitted, or grouped selectively, but on the outcomes of these actions. Imagology becomes a geopolitical tool by embedding the images of Self, Other, Alien, and Enemy with necessary meanings.

This approach not only facilitates the manipulation of Ukrainian public consciousness but also simplifies the implementation of geopolitical projects by major external players, traditionally justified under the guise of a civilizational or democratic mission. For Ukraine, this mission centers on liberation from the “barbaric” forces of Russia, the Alien, and integration with the West, identified as the Self.

Discourses of national character are brought to the fore for several reasons. The idealistic rationale is longstanding: Creating an image of the Other helps to better understand oneself. However, there are also distinctly practical purposes. Hetero-images serve political objectives: They can become part of a foreign policy influence strategy and a means of implementing necessary domestic policy decisions. The image of the Enemy becomes a powerful tool in propaganda, but it does not arise out of nowhere. It is preceded by the image of the Alien, formed from negative (ethno-) stereotypes that emerge and intensify under specific international political conditions.

The Emergence of Network Diplomacy in Russia (1996-2013)

V. Bulva

Keywords: network diplomacy, G8, G20, BRICS, dialogue partnerships, APEC, RIC

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist bloc brought significant changes to the architecture of modern international relations. One such change was the departure from the bloc-based approach that underpinned the international system during the era of bipolar confrontation. Alongside the dissolution of one of the two military- political blocs of the Cold War era (the Warsaw Pact), the 1990s saw an intensification of challenges and threats associated with new global issues. Additionally, globalization trends gained momentum, resulting in increased interconnectedness and interdependence within the global community across various domains – economic, scientific-technological, informational, and security.

In tandem with classical state-to-state interactions, the role of nonstate actors in global politics – such as businesses, the scientific community, and civil society – grew significantly. Against this backdrop, there emerged an imperative to seek new mechanisms and tools for diplomatic practice that accounted for both the diversification of international cooperation actors and the new demands of global diplomacy.

In the early 1990s, the Russian Federation sought to establish relations with foreign partners – primarily Western and post-Soviet states – through traditional high-level diplomacy, which focused on strengthening bilateral contacts and participating in intergovernmental international organizations. By the mid-1990s, tools of network diplomacy began to gradually enter Russian practice. These tools were utilized within regional frameworks (conflict resolution platforms, economic forums, and dialogue partnerships) and at the global level – e.g., integration into the Group of Seven (G7).

Key phases in the development of network diplomacy in Russia include:

1996-2008: During this period, various forms of network interaction became prevalent in Russian diplomatic practice, primarily in the fields of economics and security.

2008-2013: This phase saw the conceptual consolidation of network diplomacy and a new stage of Russian engagement with global network diplomacy institutions, including the Group of Twenty (G20) and BRICS.

After 2014: The modern phase began with Russia's suspension from the Group of Eight (G8) and a subsequent pivot toward inclusive institutions involving developing countries, such as the G20 and BRICS.

Russia's conceptual approaches to the role of network diplomacy in its foreign policy evolved, particularly in relation to global institutions. These changes were shaped by external crises and shocks such as the Asian financial crisis (1997-1998), the global economic crisis (2008-2010), and the Ukraine conflict (2014), as well as strategic foreign policy priorities: selective partnership with the West and support for the development of a multipolar world order. Throughout these stages, other forms of network diplomacy remained in demand – e.g., regional conflict resolution and crisis management platforms; working groups for addressing specific issues, often related to new challenges and threats; and regional economic and multi-sectoral institutions.

Foreign Investments in Kazakhstan's Energy Sector

K. Onufriyenko

Keywords: foreign investments, international energy cooperation, Kazakhstan, Russia, Singapore, Japan, UAE, EAEU, BRICS, legal guarantees, indirect expropriation, green finance

A comparison of Kazakhstan's bilateral investment agreements over the last decade reveals that the agreements with Japan and Singapore define investment assets as broadly as possible, including not only those owned but also those controlled by the investor. Income derived from such investments is also defined as an investment under those agreements. By contrast, the agreement with the UAE does not include income in its definition of investment.

Additionally, the agreements with Japan and the UAE stipulate that a change in the form of invested assets does not affect their classification as investments. Both the UAE and Singapore agreements emphasize the entrepreneurial purpose of such investments as a defining characteristic.

Comparing bilateral investment agreements between Kazakhstan and Japan, the UAE, Singapore, and Russia, as well as relevant provisions of the EAEU Treaty, it becomes clear that the agreements with Japan and Singapore are the most progressive in stipulating that income derived from investments also qualifies as investments.

Regarding the definition of an investor, the agreement with Japan offers the most advanced provisions concerning the timing of investment activities. The agreements with Russia and the UAE add unique aspects: For Russia, individuals permanently residing in the territory of a party are included. For the UAE, government bodies are explicitly recognized as investors.

Green finance is currently a priority investment area in Kazakhstan's energy sector, and fostering a sustainable investment climate in this field is a key factor driving this trend. According to Energy Minister Almassadam Satkaliyev, Kazakhstan plans to commission five major renewable energy projects by 2030. This attests to the country's commitment to improving its existing energy infrastructure.

Russia is actively involved in several regional initiatives aimed at economic integration and deepening economic cooperation, including the Union State [of Belarus and Russia], the EAEU, the CIS, the SCO, BRICS, ASEAN, and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

A closer examination of existing bilateral investment agreements between Russia and BRICS+ countries reveals key observations: None of the agreements contains provisions defining “measures equivalent in effect to expropriation or nationalization.”

Comparing Russia’s agreements with the above BRICS+ countries to the three bilateral agreements concluded by Kazakhstan over the past decade with the UAE, Singapore, and Japan, one can observe a higher level of legal guarantees in Kazakhstan’s agreement with Singapore,

ratified on February 7, 2024. This agreement reflects elements like those found in the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), offering more robust protections than earlier agreements concluded by the countries under consideration.

The readiness of Kazakhstan’s regulatory field to establish and further refine the legal foundations for mutually beneficial investment cooperation in international energy relations is noteworthy, given the trend toward providing protection for investment income and protection from indirect expropriation in certain agreements. At the same time, several areas still require improved international legal regulation to create a more favorable environment for bilateral and multilateral international investment cooperation, particularly on investments in renewable energy projects in Kazakhstan.

Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria: Results and Prospects

C. Minchev

Keywords: Bulgaria, parliamentary elections, EU, NATO, eurozone, Schengen Area

On October 27, 2024, Bulgaria held its seventh early parliamentary election in the past three years. Alongside presidential elections to European bodies, as well as local elections, this campaign prompted society and voters to reflect on autocracy and the potential transformation of the political system. The election campaign was marked not only by concerns that the results might fail to resolve the ongoing political crisis but also by hopes for a new, more stable parliamentary majority and, consequently, a regular government.

The long-dominant center-right, pro-European, and Euro-Atlantic party GERB, led by Mr. Boyko Borissov, convincingly won again, securing 26.39% of the vote and 69 seats.

Second place went to the liberal-conservative, anti-corruption, Euro- Atlantic coalition We Continue the Change – Democratic Bulgaria (PP- DB), which garnered 14.20% of the vote and 37 seats.

In third place, with 13.36% of the vote and 35 seats, was the Revival party, whose platform is patriotic and populist, with a decisively pro- Russian foreign policy orientation. It is led by Mr. Kostadin Kostadinov.

The political landscape remains fragmented, with no resolution in sight. Key features include the emergence of numerous new political entities with populist and nationalist orientations, as well as the continued fragmentation of political forces that dominated during the transition period: on the right (SDS), the left (BSP), and within the ethnic DPS.

The causes of such crises are often linked to conflicts of economic interests and the development of political relations based on the pursuit of converting power into money. On this matter, the president of the republic, Mr. Rumen Radev, stated: “The announcement of the official election results, instead of calming society, has caused tension and casts doubt on the fairness of the vote. Democracy cannot be

bought or imposed. If we accept this as the norm, it means we have abandoned the very idea of popular sovereignty.”

In addition to these factors, a primary cause is significant and deepening class stratification, which leads to differences and antagonisms that transform the structure of society, its relationships, and interests.

Despite the economic progress achieved through EU membership and trends toward convergence with the EU's standard of living, there has been an alarming increase in inequality between the richest and poorest segments of society.⁴ A significant indicator of this is that nearly half the population lives on incomes close to or below the officially established minimum.

The only correct approach is to seek unity and agreement on issues of national importance and those strategically significant for the country's future.

More than 70% of Bulgaria's GDP comes from industrial ties and trade relations with EU countries. Investments by companies from these countries in the Bulgarian economy amount to hundreds of billions of leva and continue to grow. Half of the country's working-age population has worked or currently works in various member states of these unions.

Bulgaria's national interest lies in expanding and deepening these relationships. To achieve this, the Bulgarian political elite must focus on finding approaches, forms, methods, and solutions to address these issues.

At the same time, Bulgaria must critically evaluate EU measures, decisions, and actions that for various reasons impose unacceptable restrictions on its connections with the rest of the world. Defending national interests within these organizations requires overcoming the habit of uncritically and diligently following imposed decisions that are not in Bulgaria's interests and that, in essence, utilize EU mechanisms to advance the goals and interests of leading EU and NATO countries.

In this context, the Bulgarian political elite must demonstrate the will and determination for independence, independent thinking, and the defense of its own right to opinions and actions.

Human Rights Integration:
On the Anniversary of the Launch of the CIS Human Rights Commission

T. Moskalkova

Keywords: supremacy of human rights, rights of migrants, migration processes, digital environment, rights of young people

On November 29, 2023, the first meeting of the CIS Human Rights Commission was held at the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Minsk. The activities of this advisory body are described in Article 33 of the CIS Charter and are regulated by decisions of the Council of CIS Heads of State, which on October 14, 2022, in Astana, approved a new version of the Commission's Statute, effectively initiating the work of this statutory human rights body.

Launched a year ago, the Commission promptly adopted the organizational and legal documents necessary for its operations, as well as a work plan for the next two years. Thanks to the rich and diverse agenda proposed by its participants and their engaged, substantive discussions, the Commission has become a genuinely impactful platform for integration among neighboring states in the field of human rights, moving beyond mere declarations.

Representatives of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participate in the Commission to discuss the promotion and protection of human rights and freedoms, including those of young people and vulnerable population groups, such as migrants. Together we delve into the most pressing and acute human rights issues in modern society and strive to maintain a human-centered approach to human rights activities, even under challenging conditions, including those influenced by geopolitical factors.

It is evident that the Commission members share a common aspiration to approach the human rights situation in our countries without political bias and to prioritize principles of justice and internationally recognized norms of law. Human rights commissioners and ombudspersons are primarily defenders of individuals; their legal knowledge and administrative and other competencies are geared toward

helping people. By expanding our interaction on this new integrative platform, we see this goal as central to our work.

During the Commission's first two years, my colleagues entrusted me, as the Russian human rights commissioner, with chairing this body. Notably, the Commission's inaugural year, 2024, coincided with Russia's chairmanship of the CIS. The CIS's authority as an integrative association was strengthened, and interaction among our countries was broadened across a wide range of areas, including cultural and humanitarian ties. Human rights protection became a distinct and notable facet of these integration processes.

The CIS has declared 2025 the Year of Peace and Unity in the Fight Against Nazism. This anniversary year marks the 80th anniversary of the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War – our shared victory of all the peoples of the USSR over fascism. In the evolving geopolitical conditions, combating neo-Nazism and promoting peace are critical areas of human rights work. Without exaggeration, the future of the planet depends on our persistence and principled stance in opposing radical nationalism, xenophobia, religious hatred, and neo-Nazism.

The Role and Place of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the Post-Soviet Space

O. Semyonova

Keywords: GOC, Ilia II, Constitution of Georgia, GOC in post-Soviet countries, ROC

This article is an attempt at a sociocultural analysis of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) in the modern era.

The GOC is an autocephalous Christian Orthodox church and one of the oldest Christian churches. The GOC enjoys exceptionally high respect and influence in modern Georgia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the position of the GOC strengthened significantly in society and the state. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Georgian national democrats, striving for Georgian independence, used religious appeals to mobilize the population. This helped unify society around the idea of restoring statehood and preserving national traditions. Currently, concordat relations exist between the Georgian state and the Georgian Orthodox Church, regulated by the Georgian Constitution and the 2002 Constitutional Agreement [between the Georgian State and the GOC].

Current State of Affairs. The GOC maintains international contacts at the highest level, forging alliances, signing agreements, undertaking visits, and addressing complex issues.

However, the GOC faces significant challenges internally. It is currently not homogeneous, with some clergy advocating extreme measures, such as breaking ties with the ROC. Scandals over allegations of immoral behavior among clergy have not subsided. Periodically, issues arise related to financial matters, including church construction, restoration, and charitable activities. As we can see, the GOC is a dynamic and evolving institution. As a sociocultural entity, it experiences complexities and challenges.

It is important to note that in the modern Georgian state, the church serves as the backbone that provides citizens with faith in the present and hope for the future.

The church attracts people aesthetically and spiritually, acting as a bastion of traditional values. Emotionally, it offers believers a space to share their problems. The church engages in charitable activities, which are vital and often the only source of support for socially vulnerable individuals.

The GOC has managed to maintain political and diplomatic balance and establish contacts with its neighbors in the post-Soviet space. Church architecture, education, painting, music, and singing continue to develop.

The church is a significant and authoritative force capable of influencing political processes in Georgia. However, it does not do so openly or actively (at least, not under the current Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II). Any political force in Georgia will inevitably have to take the GOC into account and heed its opinion.

The diplomatic channel between the GOC and the ROC is one of the most interesting and promising. However, it is unlikely to be used as an intergovernmental or official channel, especially since Georgia and Russia currently do not interact on an official level.

Russia's Interaction With the WHO Regional Office for Europe in Central Asia

O. Sonin, E. Salakhov

Keywords: international development assistance, health architecture, World Health Organization, WHO Regional Office for Europe, Central Asia.

Given the importance of maintaining ties between Russia and Eurasian countries based on historical and cultural unity, including in the health care sector, it is necessary to seek new mechanisms for cooperation under changing conditions, including involving international organizations, primarily the World Health Organization (WHO).

Multilateral cooperation tools inherently offer several advantages for supporting international cooperation, such as utilizing the existing collective potential and resource base with consideration of the interests and needs of a group of countries, a region, or even on a global scale.

In health care, the WHO is undoubtedly such a tool. Collaboration with this organization is a convenient mechanism for implementing international development assistance, as the WHO has become not only a technical partner to Russia, assisting in the accreditation of Russian approaches to medical care in line with the organization's high standards, but also a partner in replicating Russian experience, including in the Central Asian republics, where it is both in demand and historically relevant. The WHO structural subdivision for the European region, which comprises 53 countries in Western and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, is the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe).

Russia's interaction with WHO/Europe has been positive. The legal foundation for the interaction between Russia (as a donor country) and WHO/Europe since 2014 has been the Country Cooperation Strategy, which is a two-way partnership program: the role of WHO in the interests of Russia and the role of Russia in the interests of WHO (i.e., in the interests of regional and global health).

One of the most in-demand forms of cooperation between the Russian Federation and WHO/Europe is the implementation of health care assistance projects

for foreign states. Notably, projects implemented through WHO/Europe have uniquely leveraged the proven effectiveness of Russian expertise, primarily for the benefit of the countries of Central Asia.

Another example of effective cooperation is a joint project between Russia and WHO to strengthen health systems to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), implemented since 2014 at the global and regional levels.

In describing WHO/Europe's engagement with Central Asian countries, it is essential to highlight the high level of trust from the leadership of these states due to the organization's efficiency in developing turnkey solutions for assigned tasks, supporting national health initiatives, its active involvement in health system transformation, and its facilitation of foreign investment.

When considering WHO/Europe as a partner assisting in health care support for Central Asian republics, it is imperative to consider a promising yet untapped area for potential expanded interaction: the WHO Roadmap on Health and Well-being in Central Asia for 2022-2025. This subregional strategy for health and well-being was endorsed by the health ministers of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan on the sidelines of the 72nd session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe.

Guided by the objectives set by the president of the Russian Federation to establish a framework for mutually beneficial and equitable cooperation and development across the Eurasian continent, it is advisable to consider implementing a combined model of cooperation: developing bilateral interaction channels with Central Asian countries while simultaneously intensifying collaboration with WHO/Europe. This WHO office holds several competitive advantages over other international organizations in the region for achieving these goals. Such an approach would enable Russia to leverage its accumulated potential for cooperation and establish a comprehensive tool kit for supporting the development of Central Asian republics.

“BRICS Peoples Choosing Life” Under the Nicholas Roerich Banner of Peace: Altai Stage of the Program

L. Sekacheva, K. Grishina

Keywords: “BRICS. World of Traditions,” Altai State University, Sancta Maria school, Indian Cup presentation

The Altai stage of the international and interregional sociocultural program “BRICS Peoples Choosing Life,” implemented since 2022 in the BRICS countries by the regional public organization “BRICS. World of Traditions” under the motto “From the ecology of soul and body to the ecology of the world,” took place August 22-24, 2024. The program, which included humanitarian and business tracks, was dedicated to the 195th anniversary of the birth of Lev Tolstoy, the 75th anniversary of the death of Mahatma Gandhi, the 150th anniversary of the birth of Nicholas Roerich, the 100th anniversary of the Roerichs’ Central Asian Expedition, the 15th anniversary of the Nicholas Roerich monument in Biryuzovaya Katun, and the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Russian-Indian trade relations.

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

To the Organizers and Participants of the 15th Yalta International Conference

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

The 15th annual Yalta International Conference “Contemporary Integration Processes in the Post-Soviet Space,” organized by the journal *International Affairs* with support from the Russian Foreign Ministry, took place September 23-28, 2024, in Yalta, Republic of Crimea. Key topics for discussion included the most pressing issues in interactions among the former Soviet republics and broader international concerns, such as contemporary international relations amid the Ukraine crisis; bilateral and multilateral cooperation formats among post-Soviet states; and shared historical memory and the formation of a new historical and cultural identity in these countries.

Continuing a well-established tradition, the conference featured an offsite roundtable at the V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University. The roundtable focused on “Challenges in Cooperation Among Black Sea Region States in the Context of the Special Military Operation.”

The conference was moderated by Armen Oganessian, Editor-in-Chief of the journal *International Affairs*.

The event brought together politicians, scholars, commentators, and analysts from nine countries. Since 2014, experts from Crimea, the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR), and the Lugansk People’s Republic (LPR) – territories that have rejoined Russia – have attended the conference. This year, colleagues from Kherson and Zaporozhye also participated. The second part of the conference review will be published in *International Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (2025).

Foreign Ministers During the Reign of Emperor Nicholas II (1894-1917)

P. Multatuli

Keywords: Nicholas II, Russian Empire, MFA, foreign Minister

In the Russian Empire, from its proclamation in 1721 to the February Revolution of 1917, executive, legislative, and judicial powers were concentrated in the person of the head of state – the autocratic Emperor of All Russia.

Article 12 of the Fundamental State Laws of the Russian Empire, as amended in 1906, established: “The Sovereign Emperor is the supreme director of all foreign relations of the Russian State with foreign powers. He determines the direction of the international policy of the Russian State.”

During the reign of Emperor Nicholas II, nine individuals held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs: Nikolay Girs (1894-1895), Prince Alexey Lobanov-Rostovsky (1895-1896), Nikolay Shishkin (1896- 1897), Count Mikhail Muravyov (1897-1900), Count Vladimir Lamsdorf (1900-1906), Alexander Izvolsky (1906-1910), Sergey Sazonov (1910- 1916), Boris Shturmer (July-November 1916), and Nikolay Pokrovsky (November 1916-March 2, 1917). The relatively high turnover of individuals occupying this key ministerial position under the last Emperor was due to both objective and subjective reasons.

Even though Russia’s foreign policy continued to be defined and directed by the Emperor, he was forced, under new historical conditions, to take into account the emerging representative institutions (the State Duma and the State Council), as well as the reformed Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Under these circumstances, a need arose to “modernize” the old system of dynastic diplomacy, which had long served as the guiding force in Russia’s foreign policy: Decisions made by the Emperors could no longer fully influence global affairs. Consequently, the role of the head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs increased. The foreign minister remained directly subordinate to the sovereign, who could now allow him to take the initiative in addressing secondary diplomatic matters. The

minister was required to attend the weekly meetings of the Council of Ministers on foreign policy issues.

In the latter half of Emperor Nicholas II's reign, the professional caliber of foreign ministers changed significantly. While the first ministers during his reign were experienced diplomats of the old school, Alexander Izvolsky, Sergey Sazonov, Boris Shturmer, and Nikolay Pokrovsky proved to be insufficiently experienced in high-level diplomacy and international relations, if not entirely unqualified. For instance, Shturmer and Pokrovsky were appointed to ministerial positions without any diplomatic experience. This was largely due to the increasing politicization of the appointment process for key ministers, a factor that Nicholas II had to take into account.

On the 200th Birth Anniversary of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire Prince Alexey Lobanov-Rostovsky (Part 2)

V. Kruzhkov

Keywords: Lobanov-Rostovsky, Bulgaria, Orthodoxy, Turkey, China, Korea, Austria-Hungary, Galicia, Armenia, Africa, France, Great Britain

In December 1894, Emperor Nicholas II, who had just ascended to the throne, appointed Alexey Lobanov-Rostovsky as ambassador to Berlin.

In February 1895, Nicholas II decided to appoint Lobanov as minister. The prince did not have time to reach Berlin; the news of his reassignment reached him in Vienna.

As the new head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lobanov had to tackle a complex array of new and challenging tasks. By the time Nicholas II ascended the throne, Russia's relations with France, including in the area of military security, had reached a new level. The French sought to secure Russia's support in the event of another conflict with Germany.

Lobanov-Rostovsky was deeply involved in addressing issues in the Far East, particularly in managing the relations of China and Korea with an expansionist and militaristic Japan, which at the time was already being referred to as "Asian Britain." It can be said that under Lobanov's leadership, Russia made a "pivot to the East," though without compromising its presence in Europe and other regions.

Under Lobanov-Rostovsky's leadership, momentum was generated for freeing Korea from Japanese domination. From St. Petersburg, consistent signals were sent to Tokyo urging the cessation of Japan's occupation of the Korean Peninsula and respect for Korea's independence. Lobanov-Rostovsky instructed the new chargé d'affaires in Seoul, Alexey Speyer, that "the complete withdrawal of Japanese forces from the country will sooner or later become the subject of our demands based on Korea's independence." The emphasis was placed on "soft power" and diplomacy.

During Lobanov-Rostovsky's tenure as foreign minister, the Armenian question in the Ottoman Empire remained a pressing issue. Under the terms of the

Berlin Congress (1878), the Turkish government had committed to implementing reforms in regions populated by Christians under the supervision of the European powers. However, Sultan Abdul Hamid II's government delayed these reforms, seeking to maintain strict control over the diverse national and religious populations. Turkish forces brutally suppressed Armenian uprisings in 1894-1895 in Erzurum, Trebizond, Bitlis, and other cities.

Under Lobanov-Rostovsky, efforts were made to ease Britain's colonial grip on Egypt and establish the Suez Canal as a neutral zone. Unsurprisingly, this irritated the British. In the spring of 1896, Queen Mother Victoria wrote a personal letter to Nicholas II, complaining about the new minister: "It was much easier to deal with the kind Nikolay Karlovich [Girs]." Upon reading the letter, Lobanov reportedly took the queen's grumbling as a compliment.

On the return journey from Vienna to St. Petersburg, the imperial train made a stop on August 18 (August 30, N.S.) 1896 for a walk near a picturesque grove at the Shepetovka Station (modern-day Khmelnytsky Province). Lobanov-Rostovsky, who had been reading Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *With Fire and Sword* on the train, also went out for a walk but began to feel unwell and sat down on the grass. The weakened prince was carried back onto the train, where he soon passed away. Doctors confirmed the cause of death as a "heart rupture." In his diary entry for August 18, 1896, Nicholas II wrote: "Poor Lobanov passed away suddenly in the carriage. His death has shocked us all terribly; for me, it is an almost irreplaceable loss."

All for All: The Evacuation of Diplomats in Summer 1941

A. Rudnitsky

Keywords: Vladimir Dekanozov, Schulenburg, Sommer, Svilengrad, diplomatic exchange, evacuation

At 9 a.m. on July 2, 1941, the Anhalter Bahnhof train station in Berlin was bathed in sunlight. The weather was excellent – a rare occurrence in the German capital. But despite the clear sky, green trees, and the chirping of birds, the mood of those stepping out of the arriving buses was somber. They were met by SS soldiers who had cordoned off the station square and platform. The newcomers were watched closely to ensure that they walked directly to the train awaiting them. Straying or purchasing newspapers, coffee, tea, or any other goods was strictly forbidden.

These were Soviet diplomats, employees of foreign missions, and ordinary citizens who had been working in Germany and in countries allied with the Third Reich or occupied by the Nazis. Moscow and Berlin had agreed to exchange them for German citizens and personnel interned in the USSR. Thus began a mass evacuation of diplomats unparalleled in history.

No official statements were made, and the Soviet press remained silent. Amid the fierce struggle against the invaders committing monstrous crimes, the country's leadership deemed it unacceptable to inform the public about the agreement with the aggressor state. Later, the figure of Vladimir Dekanozov became a source of discomfort. From December 1940 to June 1941, he had served as the Soviet ambassador to Germany, was a member of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and also a deputy head of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (NKID). He was also a close associate of Lavrenty Beria and would later share his fate.

The first mentions of the diplomatic evacuation appeared only in the late 1960s. Today, the event is studied by scholars, journalists, and bloggers. However, not all archival materials have been made available, and it is worth once again recalling this event.

Before working out the details of the diplomatic exchange, intermediaries had to be arranged – since the foreign ministries of the USSR and Germany could not communicate directly during wartime.

Once the number of evacuees had been agreed upon, the next crucial issue was determining the exchange location. On June 28, the Bulgarian mission conveyed a German proposal to conduct the exchange via Turkey or Iran, and the NKID chose Turkey. While Ankara and Tehran officially maintained neutrality, Germany was actively trying to sway them; both countries were teeming with German agents. However, the Shah's regime leaned more toward the Third Reich, whereas Turkey pursued a relatively balanced policy.

On July 2, Soviet citizens left Berlin. The diplomats traveled in relatively decent conditions, though the food was dreadful. The embassy paid for everything, but the supplies provided were spoiled – moldy bread, rancid butter, and sour jam. Cases of gastrointestinal illness increased.

Those traveling on the trade mission train endured far worse conditions. They were not allowed to take personal belongings, and many were brought to the station directly from concentration camps. Diplomats attempted to “collect some of their personal baggage” – at first, this was permitted, but then “Gestapo authorities” revoked the decision “without explanation.” Staff from the general consulates in Königsberg and Paris were promised that their baggage would arrive in Berlin “by the day of their departure to the USSR,” but that never happened.

The exchange was initially scheduled for July 5, but by that date, only the diplomatic train from Berlin had reached Svilengrad. The trade mission train was traveling more slowly and did not arrive until July 10. The Germans, including Schulenburg, also reached Leninakan on the 10th, so the exchange was postponed to the 13th.

The diplomatic evacuation of the summer of 1941 marked the end of Soviet relations with Nazi Germany. But the final chapter came in May 1945, with the signing of the Act of Unconditional Surrender of the Third Reich.

In the Shadow of the Big Three

M. Kravchenko

Keywords: Yalta Conference, preparation for the Big Three meeting, organizational issues, eyewitness accounts

In February 2025, the Yalta Conference will mark its 80th anniversary – an event of truly geopolitical significance. It determined the fate of the world for decades to come and demonstrated the possibility of effective cooperation between states with different political and economic systems, as well as mutually exclusive strategic interests.

By the time the leaders of the three Allied powers met, the outcome of the war was already clear. Military operations against Hitler's Germany had entered their final phase: The Red Army was advancing rapidly, sweeping away enemy defenses on all fronts, while the Americans and British had opened the Second Front. It was necessary not only to decide how to deliver the final blow to the common enemy but also how to build a new world and move forward.

Despite major differences between the USSR on one side and the US and Great Britain on the other, the "Big Three" managed to reach agreements on virtually all key issues: the future of Germany, reparations, the liberation of Europe, the creation of the United Nations, borders, the Polish and Yugoslav questions, the Far East, and more. "[T]here was at Yalta, perhaps even more than at the earlier conferences, a sense of tremendous and encompassing responsibility which was on those three pairs of shoulders. There were differences, on all levels; there were differences even within the various delegations themselves – Father, for example was not prepared to trust implicitly all his advisers. But all these differences were submerged in the face of the awesome task of building a sure, strong peace," wrote Elliott Roosevelt, son of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his memoirs.

Much has been written and said over these 80 years about the effectiveness and subsequent fate of the Yalta agreements. To this day, historians and political scientists continue to debate the wisdom of certain decisions. Some view the conference as a triumph of political realism, others as a sign of Western weakness,

while still others argue that its significance has been overstated. However, they all acknowledge one indisputable fact: The Yalta meeting was an undeniable triumph of Soviet diplomacy.

But this article is not about foreign policy victories. Instead, It focuses on the event from a different angle: intriguing, little-explored aspects of the conference's preparation, interesting protocol details, participants who remained behind the scenes or entirely in the shadows of the world's most powerful figures. And not least, a truly astonishing feat: how, in a devastated and war-weary country that had suffered colossal losses and was still fighting and working tirelessly under the principle of "everything for the front," they managed to organize an event of such scale – and in a city only recently liberated from the occupiers.

From the Life of a Soviet Diplomat: On the 100th Birth Anniversary of Boris Kolokolov

Ye. Podolko

Keywords: 100th anniversary of Soviet and Russian diplomat Boris Kolokolov's birth

By the decision of the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, commemorative events are being held in honor of the 100th anniversary of the outstanding Soviet and Russian diplomat Boris Leonidovich Kolokolov, who served as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the USSR to Tunisia, deputy minister of foreign affairs of the RSFSR, and later of the Russian Federation, dedicating more than 40 years of his life to diplomatic service.

After graduating with honors from the Institute of International Relations in 1956, Boris Kolokolov was assigned to work at the UN. Thus began his long-term posting to the Secretariat of the UN European Office in Geneva, where he worked in the Russian Translation Section.

In May 1965, B. L. Kolokolov was appointed deputy head of the Protocol Department of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in 1969, he became head of the department.

In 1973, Boris Kolokolov was appointed ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the USSR to the Republic of Tunisia.

Upon his return to Moscow in 1981, Kolokolov was offered the position of deputy minister of foreign affairs of the RSFSR. He held this position, and later that of deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Federation, until 1996. In March 1996, at the age of 72, he was appointed foreign policy consultant at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a role he held until July 15, 2010.

On October 5, 2013, Boris Kolokolov passed away. He was laid to rest at Kuntsevo Cemetery beside his wife, who had passed away a few years earlier.