

We Are Beginning to Slowly Inch Forward – Hopefully, Toward Normalcy

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Keywords: Russia, US, Europe, foreign policy, Ukraine crisis, US President Donald Trump, sanctions, cooperation in space

UNDERLYING the current developments is the desire of President Trump and his team to “Make America Great Again.” It is clear that the vaunted MAGA slogan has become worn out and been repeatedly attacked by opponents of the current administration, both within the US and around the world. But the fact remains: President Trump holds deep convictions and is determined to implement the doctrine of American supremacy using the means he sees fit.

President Trump would indeed like to reach some kind of agreement on Ukraine, to free himself and his America from the political and even material burden associated with continuing the previous course – a course that is ultimately destructive, very dangerous, and fraught with a slide into a third world war.

Talking about our relations, then today, in addition to the dialogue on the Ukraine crisis and its related aspects, such as the Black Sea initiative, we have a separate and dynamically developing track dealing with bilateral “irritants.” Immediately after the Trump administration resumed the focused dialogue with Moscow at the political level, which had been interrupted under Biden, we began working through these issues. We are beginning to slowly inch forward – hopefully, toward normalcy.

More broadly, we are, of course, interested in seeing some movement in the economic realm as well. It’s no coincidence that appropriate signals have been sent from our side at the highest level, including during subsequent contacts with representatives of the American administration.

It is unlikely for US to withdrawl from NATO. There is a certain amount of bravado in therhetoric, vocabulary, and language used by the current administration.

There's probably also an element here of the verbal stick – a way to prod the “NATO horse.”

We have not heard any signal from Trump to Kiev to end the war – far from it. What exists today is merely an attempt to find a framework that would initially lead to a ceasefire, as envisioned by the Americans, and then transition to other models and arrangements. However, to the extent that can be judged at present, our core demand – the imperative to resolve the root causes of the conflict – does not really fit into these arrangements. This is entirely absent, and it's a situation we will need to change.

We noted and remembered that, when Washington's rhetoric did not achieve quick desired results, it could shift completely – and, following the rhetoric, practical steps could be the exact opposite of what was initially said. In this situation, the only way for us to act is to maintain consistency, patience, and to explain our approach clearly, lucidly, and with sound reasoning – all, of course, while keeping in step with developments “on the ground.”

We regret that the first Trump administration, in 2018, made a unilateral decision to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Has the time for the JCPOA passed? That's a matter for debate. Some say it's time to move on and look for other solutions. We believe everything depends on the political will present in the relevant capitals. Is it strong enough? We are open to it. We are not dogmatic about this. We oppose the use of force, aggression, and strikes. The consequences of such actions, especially if the strikes target nuclear infrastructure, could be catastrophic for the entire region.

Imperatives for Creating Legal Barriers to the Use of Unilateral Restrictive Measures

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Keywords: individual and collective restrictive measures, international economic law, anti-law, GATT/WTO rules

MORE than 60 states face various types of restrictive measures imposed by the US, the European Union, their allies, and countries dependent on them. The arbitrariness of sanctions has become routine. Western powers compete with one another to devise and push through ever more sophisticated restrictive measures – to invent new ways of inflicting maximum economic and existential damage on anyone they choose to label as adversaries, competitors, or simply political regimes they disapprove of. The sanctions wars fueled by the US and the EU have become part of a new normality that should rightly be called “abnormality.”

This course of events must be challenged. It is essential to prevent sanctions wars and the arbitrary labeling of independent states that pursue sovereign domestic and foreign policies from turning into a constant of interstate relations.

It is incredibly difficult to counter this inhumane trend that has gained such momentum. A great deal of time has been lost. The focus has shifted from devising restrictions to monitoring compliance. It is therefore even more pressing to unite the efforts of the World Majority to launch a countertrend that would step by step shift perceptions in the international community so that unilateral restrictive measures are deemed unacceptable. The article examines possible steps to combat this trend.

The first step should be to provide a clear and unequivocal answer to the question of whether international law permits or prohibits restrictive measures.

It is logical to assume that the second step should be to assess the extent to which the rules of GATT/WTO, international human rights law, and multilateral and bilateral treaties create frameworks that states are obliged to respect when resorting to unilateral restrictive measures.

The third step is to acknowledge that through inaction, acquiescence, and appeasement – motivated by a desire to avoid escalating tensions with the collective

West and without fully calculating the consequences – Russia, China, and the World Majority have, to some extent unconsciously, facilitated the transition to the current sanctions frenzy.

The fourth step would be to jog historical memory and recall how often and how persistently Western powers have turned to restrictive measures as a tool for achieving foreign policy goals, even in the more distant past.

The fifth step could be to correctly understand the essence and purpose of unilateral restrictive measures and to recognize how harmful, dangerous, and toxic they truly are.

The sixth step must be to understand that the extraterritoriality of sanctions, including secondary sanctions, is by no means a recent invention; extraterritoriality has been practiced by the EU and the US for decades.

The seventh step should be to classify the West's actions in the realm of sanctions policy as the creation of "antilaw," which undermines the foundations of morality, ethics, and basic notions of the mission of law in society.

As the eighth step, the focus should not be merely on general formulations – which are also necessary and useful – but on a comprehensive definition of the full set of adopted and planned unilateral restrictive measures and their explicit prohibition.

The ninth step will be the codification of national, regional (integrational), transregional, and international law – initially in the form of soft law and eventually as binding law – declaring Western unilateral restrictive measures to be illegal.

The ongoing work on a body of normative provisions that reject and prohibit unilateral restrictive measures points to the kind of new regulatory architecture that Russia could propose. The construction of this framework should be the 10th step.

Finally, the 11th step will be the most important: the struggle for the full and consistent implementation of the new regulatory framework.

The Right of Nations to Self-Determination: The Experience of the French Revolution

I. Kochenkov

Keywords: right of nations to self-determination, French Revolution

THE right of nations to self-determination is one of the most important principles of international law. Before being enshrined in the UN Charter and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it underwent a long process of development. Modern scholars typically link the evolution of this principle to the appearance of the 1789 Declaration of, the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which established that sovereignty resides in the nation.

In reality, two events during the French Revolution indirectly influenced the establishment of the right of nations to self-determination. The first, of course, was the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

The second one accession of Alsace region by France is thoroughly examined in this article.

Under the 1697 peace treaty, the emperor recognized France's sovereignty over all of Alsace, including Strasbourg, and acknowledged the legitimacy of the assemblies held by the Sovereign Council of Alsace.

The Alsace question became a matter of broad public interest and was considered by a specially created Feudal Committee, chaired by Philippe-Antoine Merlin de Douai.

Merlin was able to prove that the territory of Alsace was annexed to France not on the basis of peace treaties, but by the will of its inhabitants, who agreed to become part of the French nation and of France. "Like the people of Corsica, the people of Alsace clearly expressed, last year, their desire to be one with France. Like the Corsicans, the Alsatians, by their will, legally and freely expressed, have shed what until now was unjust and unlawful – the rule of our kings, who owed it only to conquests and treaties. Like the Corsicans, the Alsatians became French because they chose to be so," Merlin declared in the National Assembly.

The very fact that 24 deputies from Alsace were sent to the Estates-General, including representatives of the nobility, Catholics and Protestants, and the Third Estate, allowed the jurist to consider this the expressed consent of Alsace to become part of the French nation. Accordingly, all claims by the German princes, in Merlin's interpretation, became illegitimate, since from the moment those delegates were sent, the territory of Alsace no longer had any relation to Germany.

Today, Merlin de Douai's formulation of self-determination can be interpreted as an expression of the people's will to overthrow the feudal system and transition to a new formation. Moreover, in transitional France, "the people" was understood as a class alliance of the working classes and the bourgeoisie against the nobility. In a broader sense, Merlin's formulation can be understood as follows: A people that has recognized itself as part of a state has exercised its right to self-determination.

Sovereignty Versus Hegemony

A. Ilnitsky

Keywords: Trumpism, sovereignty, hegemony, grand bargain, deep state, defense industry reform, ideology, American dynamism, mental warfare, elites, strategy, Pentagon, CIA, intelligence services

THE maintenance of US hegemony in the world is a constant in American political strategy and practice. It is invariant with respect to the administration occupying the White House.

Trump's version of "Manifest Destiny" is the reconstruction of American greatness on new principles – from now on not globalism, but exceptionalism; not governance, but leadership.

The political platform of Trump's MAGA imperialists, while acknowledging the current state of the US as an empire losing its greatness, offers a plan for "bringing it back on track." The plan to restore America's competitive technological and military leadership in the world is primarily through dual-use startups, especially those focused on the development and production of weapons, financed mainly through venture capital.

The Trumpists have written and are promoting strategic concepts for a financial, technological, and managerial revolution in the White House and the Pentagon. In the fall of 2024, a programmatic military-economic text titled "The Defense Reformation" was published. Its author is Shyam Sankar, executive vice president of Palantir.

The Trumpists' outlined reboot of the real economy and especially the defense sector; the rearmament and reequipping of the Pentagon and intelligence services based on the latest technologies; total control over the global information space and the humanitarian sphere to ensure info-cognitive and mental dominance based on AI; the strengthening of the country's resource potential through the accumulation over three to five years of superior economic and military-economic power and technological supremacy, cemented by right-wing conservative ideology – this is the

technological and conceptual platform for global leadership and the NWO envisioned by Trump and Vance under the motto “Peace Through Strength.”

In essence, such a forceful restructuring of the world is an organized and supreme form of violence against the world; it is hybrid warfare. A war for hegemony – regardless of whatever verbal camouflage is used to mask it.

Challenging years lie ahead for us – difficult and challenging decades. However, it is important to keep one obvious truth in mind: When everything is going well for us, we tend to relax and often miss our opportunities. Difficulties mobilize and unify us, and Russia once again is concentrating.

To achieve victory in the existential confrontation with the West, Russia must concentrate and mobilize all resources – military, economic, and spiritual.

Gray Zones and Wild Fields as Geopolitical Phenomena Amid the Crisis of Globalization

D. Yevstafyev

Keywords: geopolitical gray zone, global transformations, wild field, neo-global world, power-based geoeconomics, Eurasia, soft power

THE current stage of transformation in global politics and economics is characterized by the emergence of new contours of regional division. Geoeconomic regionalization, which had stalled, is regaining relevance, albeit in revised formats that rely on the primacy of geopolitics and even military force, rather than geoeconomics, for spatial integration. Moreover, contrary to earlier assessments, these contours will be formed based not on geoeconomic factors (geoeconomic regionalization) but on military- political and geographic factors. A key tool of such structuring includes natural geographic elements that ensure the security of the territories being developed – in short, the security factor of territories under development and use. This reveals a fundamental difference between the current stage in the development of the system of international economic and political relations and the period of late globalization: The changes, including those in the capabilities of the major global players, are beginning to flatten out.

The emergence of gray zones and wild fields is the result of the inability of the US and the “Western world” more broadly to dismantle geoeconomic US-centricity in a managed and geoeconomically painless manner.

The expansion in the number of spaces that can be classified as gray zones – some of which have the potential to evolve into wild fields – reflects the weakening of the mechanisms of American soft power, which had served as the key integrator within the US-centric globalization system. We are already within a period of active geopolitical and geoeconomic regionalization, the most significant manifestation of which was the BRICS summit in Kazan in October 2024.

From the perspective of the topic under consideration, another aspect is equally important: The processes of geoeconomic regionalization also reflect the crisis of the previous system of geoeconomic interdependence. In turn, even the

weakening of global geoeconomic interdependence – let alone its partial collapse at the level of established transregional technological chains – inevitably leads to a revision of its technological foundation: the system of the deliberately excessive global division of labor. The exclusion of individual spaces from global technological chains creates a fertile socioeconomic environment for the emergence, at the very least, of gray zones.

Russia now faces a critical choice – more geoeconomic than geopolitical: either to attempt to preserve the remnants of the old globalization by scaling back its soft power, or to accelerate the transition to new models for organizing the architecture of the world economy and, in the longer term, the political world order. However, this must be done with due consideration of the new spatial phenomena – the gray zone and the wild field. This, in turn, implies acknowledging the inadequacy of the classical formats of interstate interaction and spatial governance under international law as it took shape during the Cold War.

In relation to the issue of gray zones and wild fields, a return to the concept of the “mandate territory” in international regulatory practices suggests itself – a view expressed by Russian experts. Of course, this would require adjustment for the new realities that have taken shape in recent years – not only geopolitical and geoeconomic, but also in terms of the mechanisms for managing large-scale systems. Ultimately, the neo-global world now taking shape will clearly be a world of not only interstate, but intersystem interaction and competition.

Humanitarian Aspects of the UN Security Council's Activities

A. Shatalov

Keywords: UN, UN Security Council, humanitarian aid, humanitarian assistance, sanctions, humanitarian exemptions

IN ACCORDANCE with the UN Charter, the UN operates based on a clear “division of labor” among its principal organs, organizations, and agencies. For instance, the UN Security Council (UNSC) bears “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”¹ Its scope of activity includes crisis response, matters of war and peace, and so on.

Issues of socioeconomic development, humanitarian aid, etc., fall under the purview of the UN General Assembly, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and specialized agencies and funds of the UN system. The inclusion of topics not inherent to a given organ and the “merging” of traditionally distinct areas of activity overseen by different UN entities contribute to the expansion of the Organization’s bureaucratic apparatus and reduce its efficiency.

Issues related to the provision of humanitarian assistance do not fall directly within the competence of the UN Security Council. The Council may consider them only if they are linked to conflict – for example, as potential causes thereof. As a result, discussions on humanitarian matters within the Security Council are quite limited in scope.

The humanitarian issues addressed by the Council can be divided into two groups. The first comprises general humanitarian topics – protection of civilians in conflict, ensuring food security in conflict situations, and so on. What unites them is their close connection to compliance with international humanitarian law: These issues are examined through the lens of IHL. Two groups of delegations emerge during such discussions: those adhering to a conservative approach and those advocating an expansive interpretation. At present, differences between them, along with debates about the need not to dilute the original mandates of the UN system’s organizations, bodies, and specialized agencies, prevent the Security Council from adopting binding resolutions on these matters. An additional obstacle is the

politicization of the humanitarian situation in certain countries, most notably Syria and Palestine.

The second group concerns Security Council sanctions regimes. Today, one can speak of the emergence of a body of agreed-upon thematic language – “humanitarian language” in sanctions resolutions – that appears both in specific country-related documents and in Resolution 2664 (2022), which addresses the architecture of UN sanctions regimes as a whole. It appears that the issue of humanitarian exemptions from UN Security Council sanctions represents the intersection of the Council’s mandate and the mandates of the UN system’s humanitarian agencies, and thus constitutes a realistic area in which the Security Council can positively impact the humanitarian situation in sanctioned countries.

The Antarctic Treaty System: A Model of a Multipolar World

V. Lukin

Keywords: unipolar and multipolar world order, civilization, economic status, military power, Antarctic Treaty System, Consultative Parties, consensus

THE end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR marked the establishment of a unipolar world order dominated by the US in key aspects of international relations. However, in the early 21st century, signs of crisis began to appear within this system. In the global economic arena, the US encountered serious competitors in the form of China and India. The leading position of the G7 countries was challenged by the emergence of a new interstate alliance – BRICS. The halt in Russian hydrocarbon supplies to the Western market had a serious impact on the industrial sector of the EU and intensified inflationary processes in the US, where a major inter-party conflict erupted ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

In various regional interstate armed conflicts, countries located thousands of kilometers away from the theaters of military operations are increasingly participating in the hostilities. New types of combat systems are spreading in global arms markets – remotely controlled unmanned aerial and maritime vehicles, hypersonic high-precision missile systems, and so on. Numerous sanctions imposed by the US, the European Union, and their satellites against countries that reject American hegemony, primarily Russia, have extended beyond politics and economics into science, education, culture, sports, tourism, and religion, affecting a large portion of humanity and destroying long-established interstate connections.

The ideological framing of the free movement of capital, the forces and means of production, information, and Western humanitarian values around the globe – referred to as market globalization – has, in practice, become a new model of colonization for many developing countries. The UN and its Security Council, created in the aftermath of World War II, are losing their organizational role and legal authority. This international organization, now functioning within a unipolar world order, has lost its relevance and, according to American politicians, should be

reformed into a League of Democracies. All of this is happening amid intense Russophobia actively promoted by Western propagandists.

The existing unipolar world order is in a state of high turbulence, where any misstep by US leaders could lead to the emergence of “managed chaos” in international relations.

Only the ideologists of such a concept can provide the necessary guarantees that this process will be controlled, although in practice this is difficult to achieve.

Under these conditions, an increasing number of experts are contemplating a new form of world order to replace the unipolar model.

International Drug Control: Contemporary Challenges

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Keywords: international drug control regime, global drug threat, anti-drug cooperation

THE international drug control regime is currently going through a difficult period. The legalization of drugs by certain states in violation of their obligations under UN conventions, populist interpretations of the conventions' goals favoring the liberalization of attitudes toward both drug use and illicit trafficking, and the politicization of anti-drug cooperation are all undermining international efforts to combat the global drug threat and eroding trust among states.

The drug-related threats facing Russia require not only close law-enforcement cooperation with neighboring countries to block drug trafficking routes but also the strengthening of international cooperation based on a shared understanding of objectives and good-faith compliance with international legal obligations. This is especially relevant in light of the growing illegal production of dangerous synthetic substances, which are cheap to manufacture, do not rely on the cultivation of drug crops, and are therefore produced in close proximity to major urban markets of sale and consumption.

Given the global nature of this new challenge, it is important for Russia to continue prioritizing coordination with like-minded countries of the Global South, to seek mutually beneficial cooperation with liberal-leaning states in Latin America, to resist efforts to weaken the existing international drug control regime, and to provide the necessary technical assistance to build anti-drug capacities through relevant international organizations. Ultimately, foreign policy measures are intended to reinforce the work of competent national agencies in protecting the country's territory and population from illicit drugs and in building a healthy society.

Current Status and Prospects for International Legal Restrictions on the West's Information Warfare Against Russia

V. Kozyulin

Keywords: information warfare, cognitive warfare, propaganda, information ecosystem, psychological operations, noopolitik

IN THE context of global information dominance, the Pentagon is expanding its units tasked with conducting information operations against Russia and reinforcing proxy units within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The 2023 Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment, published in July 2023, speaks of the need to create special “information forces” to “gain and sustain information advantages for successful operations in the information space.” Information warfare is assuming new, sophisticated forms, aimed in particular at the cognitive perception of both individuals and entire nations.

The conceptual framework in the field of information counteraction is still taking shape, and a variety of concepts and even terminological confusion can be observed: information, cognitive, psychological, hybrid, memetic, cyber war, and influence operations.

In the Western understanding, the term “information warfare” is associated with military operations. Information warfare is directed at the enemy’s military and intelligence communities.

Preserving Russia’s national information ecosystem is becoming a top priority of the state. The country must learn to counteract foreign destructive information operations and prepare civilian and military experts equipped with skills to resist foreign information influence.

“Information weapons” could be defined as a separate category in international law, referring to information systems capable of causing direct harm. This approach should be based on Russia’s fundamental stance in international forums – not to accept ICTs as weapons and to use them solely for peaceful purposes.

On Security Guarantees

V. Bodelan

Keywords: Russia, US, Ukraine, security guarantees

The US has ceased to recognize Russia as the party responsible for this war, and this fundamentally changes not only America's perspective on the current problem but also reveals the true instigators of the bloody conflict.

According to official statements, everyone wants peace. But in reality, destructive forces of influence are eager for the war to continue; they cannot accept their own defeat, nor can they abandon their ambitions concerning not only Russia but also Ukraine.

Ukraine has always been a coveted prize for the West, and that desire has not gone away – it has become even more evident in the current war. It is absolutely clear that, while using Ukraine as a tool to weaken Russia, the West has not abandoned its own claims over Ukraine.

French, Germans, Romanians, and representatives of many other European countries have repeatedly set foot on Ukrainian soil. And each time, their presence has been accompanied by looting, the murder of thousands, and territorial encroachment. They have never wanted a strong and independent Ukraine – and they do not want one now.

Zelensky believes that NATO membership can provide Ukraine with security guarantees. He is mistaken. NATO is a guarantee of the possible outbreak of a third world war that would see Ukraine simply destroyed. Ukraine's primary task now is to preserve the country – even if with reduced territory – but to preserve it for future existence and prosperity.

There is only one way to do this: renounce Russophobic policies and conclude a long-term peace agreement with Russia, establish mutually beneficial cooperation, and build good-neighborly relations. Only Russia can provide such guarantees, as proven by its relations with many of the former republics of the Soviet Union.

The Long Road to De-Escalation

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Keywords: Russian-American relations, crisis, Ukraine project, Special Military Operation, NATO expansion, options for peaceful coexistence

RUSSIAN-AMERICAN relations are in a turbulent period marked by unpredictable turns. After three years of brinkmanship in hybrid warfare mode, the first signals have emerged that suggest that our countries may be able to at least partially overcome the severe crisis that began more than a decade ago and peaked under the Joe Biden administration. Of course, comprehensive long-term efforts are needed to stabilize this dialogue and steer it in a positive direction – and what we are witnessing now is only the start of this process. Moreover, this involves more than just resolving the crisis in Ukraine, although this conflict – during which many thousands of Russians have become victims of NATO-supplied munitions delivered to Ukraine – will long remain a painful reminder not only of the illusory nature of any “resets” with Washington but also of a broader range of issues.

The previous US administration’s focus on inflicting a “strategic defeat” on our country, its attempts to destabilize Russia from within, and to severely weaken it with sanctions and psychological warfare (possibly for decades to come) have deprived Russian citizens of faith in the potential for dialogue with the West – particularly since there remain many questions that neither the Trump administration nor, especially, its NATO partners have been able to answer clearly.

Moreover, the American establishment still contains numerous advocates of a hard-line anti-Russian stance. These individuals can be found on Capitol Hill, in various government agencies, and, of course, in the media and NGOs. Just as in the second half of the 2010s, they will do all they can to disrupt any groundwork for restoring dialogue between the two countries.

In today’s environment, where employees of our embassy have for years been constrained by various discriminatory measures, and where any interaction with them has been rendered toxic by anti-Russian forces, a swift breakthrough is unlikely. And without real, practical changes – not just words – Washington should

not expect any gratuitous goodwill gestures regarding American diplomats in Moscow.

Expert-level interaction may be difficult and fraught with setbacks and disappointments, but it is necessary – at least to partially restore conditions that would allow Moscow and Washington to return to constructive dialogue. Just as in the 1960s, this work will, in many ways, need to start from scratch. But it is our duty – including in honor of our distinguished predecessors who believed in the creative potential of bilateral cooperation – not to stand still but to seek out options for the safe and peaceful coexistence of the two superpowers.

The Inevitability of Trump

A. Fomenko

Keywords: US, Donald Trump, US domestic developments, foreign policy

THE first steps of the current US administration have often been perceived by outside observers as some oddity – an inexplicable departure from the understanding of American policy goals and objectives that had become familiar and widely accepted by practically the whole world, especially during the 1990s and 2000s.

However, the political news coming out of Washington today reflects long-standing domestic developments in the US and the implementation of pre-formulated, thoroughly prepared plans. These plans align with the goals and objectives of a particular school of American political thought – one that is largely unfamiliar to Russia's political class but is now associated with the name of President Trump.

In the 1990s, during the Clinton era, these people called themselves “America Firsters.” They did not oppose the outside world per se, but rather set themselves against American and, more broadly, Anglo-Saxon internationalists whose interests had been represented primarily by Democratic administrations in recent decades.

Everything is different now: The second Trump administration is conducting exclusively offensive operations; moreover, it has warned its opponent in advance about the main directions of its strikes against the deeply entrenched system that makes crucial political decisions and operates above official bureaucratic barriers and divisions – a system that has come to be known as the “deep state.”

In today's world, everyone must be prepared for anything – for any unconventional decisions. And in order to proactively formulate the goals and objectives of the next phase of our national and global development we must clearly recognize the deep-rooted causes of the tectonic shifts that have occurred and are still unfolding in the US, and consequently across the entire collective West and the world at large.

Forced Acceptance of the Inevitable in the US Conflict Resolution Strategy: From Vietnam and Afghanistan to Ukraine

F. Trunov

Keywords: US, conflict management, conflict resolution, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Ukraine, strategy, tactics, negotiations, Donald Trump, national interests, Russia

LATE winter and spring 2025 are rich in anniversaries marking the conclusion of US involvement in some of the most significant military and armed conflicts of the latter half of the 20th and early decades of the 21st centuries. Fifty years ago, on April 30, 1975, the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam captured Saigon. This marked the end of the Indochina wars and the complete collapse of the US's military- strategic positions, which had been established between 1965 and 1972 through the large-scale deployment of US Armed Forces (AF).

Five years ago, on February 29, 2020, the White House signed a “deal” on Afghanistan with the Taliban movement. The key condition of the agreement was the withdrawal of US and coalition troops from the country (by July 2021). For nearly two decades (since late 2001), the Afghan operation remained the largest outside NATO's area of responsibility in terms of US and NATO force deployments.

These anniversaries once again prompt reflection on when, and with what concrete outcomes, efforts to resolve the complex Ukraine issue might conclude. Like the earlier conflicts in Vietnam and Afghanistan, it has remained unresolved for a long time. Ten years have passed since the Minsk-2 agreement (February 12, 2015) involving Russia and Ukraine, with Germany and France acting as guarantors. Contrary to initial expectations, Minsk-2 did not become a “roadmap” for resolving the armed conflict in what was then eastern Ukraine.

Russia must bring the resolution process to a stage where the US is forced to accept the inevitable, although de jure certain appearances may be maintained that the process is in an earlier bargaining phase. Such signs could include the preservation of parts of the former Ukraine (primarily its western regions) as a Westernized actor, retaining its orientation toward the Euro-Atlantic community and its potential accession to the EU (but not NATO).

Considering the experiences of resolving the Vietnam and Afghan issues, Russia is better served by relatively dynamic – but not rushed – negotiations in order to defend its position. This is due to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the issues most important to Russia: “gathering lands” (with formal legal recognition), defeating and discrediting neo- Nazism, and countering the military support invested in [this movement] by the Western democracies.

At the same time, there is a trend toward fast-tracking negotiations. Whereas the negotiations on Vietnam essentially lasted 35 months or nearly three years (starting in February 1970), negotiations on Afghanistan took 15 months – less than a year and a half.

The de-radicalization of Ukraine, combined with the West’s abandonment of the unnatural strategy of excluding Russia from processes in the post-Soviet space, would lead to a significant increase in the threshold (conditions) for the use of force and a more balanced representation of the interests of the states of the World Majority. Defending such positions in a negotiation marathon with the US is both easier and more meaningful in the year of the most important anniversary – the 80th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War.

Donald Trump and the Korean Nuclear Issue: Prospects and Challenges **(2025-2029)**

R. Kalinin

Keywords: South Korea, US, Korean Peninsula nuclear issue (KPNI), denuclearization, NPT, idea of Korean unification, hypersonic missiles, Donald Trump

THE Korean Peninsula nuclear issue (KPNI) is one of the main threats to contemporary international security. It consists of two aspects: first, the nuclear aspect, expressed in the DPRK's efforts to develop nuclear deterrent forces in response to the threat posed by the nuclear US and its allies; and second, the political aspect, which includes relations among the states of the Korean Peninsula and external actors whose security is threatened by the presence of nuclear weapons on the peninsula.

The structural changes currently taking place in the world order are manifesting themselves as a growing crisis in the Northeast Asia region and are impacting the dynamics of the KPNI. Asia is referred to as the center of military gravity, where nuclear capabilities are being rapidly developed. The current political state of the international system is often described as a new Cold War, which can be understood either as a bipolar confrontation between the US and China or more broadly as a struggle between an America-centric and a multipolar world. Within this paradigm, the KPNI is part of the geopolitical rivalry between the blocs of Western and non-Western countries.

At present, the Korean Peninsula is not only the epicenter of a lingering conflict stemming from the Cold War between the US and the USSR, but also a source of threats that are eroding international law and exacerbating the political crisis surrounding the KPNI. In alliance with Japan and South Korea, the US is building a bloc-based deterrence system aimed at China and is developing plans to eliminate the North Korean regime, as outlined in the Camp David Declaration of 2023.

Under current conditions, the Trump administration has limited room to maneuver along the escalation/peaceful resolution axis. Trump's threats toward Kim Jong-un, including those made from the podium of the UN General Assembly, and large-scale military exercises by the US and its allies near the DPRK's borders, could lead to uncontrolled escalation and unintentional conflict. Experts are already warning Trump that the "madman theory" will not work. Given the DPRK's nuclear weapons and its alliance ties, a "small victorious war" would yield no dividends for the US and risks escalating into a global catastrophe.

The new Trump team includes both open hawks and individuals capable of breaking the deadlock on the Korean front. Trump's deputy national security adviser will be Hudson Institute Senior Fellow Alex Wong. He is known for having assisted Trump in organizing the summits with DPRK leader Kim Jong-un. Thus, the chances of a return to diplomacy with the DPRK are considered fairly high. Experts also believe that a "mega-deal" with Russia may be possible during Trump's second term. For instance, the US might demand that Russia revise its relations with the DPRK as part of negotiations on the Ukraine issue.

The Franco-German Tandem: Past and Future

Y. Rubinsky, A. Sindeyev

Keywords: France, Germany, Franco-German tandem, de Gaulle, Adenauer

THE formation of the Franco-German tandem was a complex and protracted process, driven by Charles de Gaulle's objective desire to elevate the role of France and Western Europe in the world, to strengthen control over the political and economic potential of the Federal Republic of Germany, to challenge the US and the USSR, to maintain France's economic growth and ensure the modernization of its armed forces, and to restore interstate and interregional balances in international relations.

The concept of a tandem as a possible platform for pursuing de Gaulle's goals did not emerge immediately. The general reflected on the narrowness of the Atlantic system, the prospects of integrating the European Economic Community with the US through a free trade zone, the idea of an organized union of all European peoples from Iceland to Istanbul and from Gibraltar to the Urals, a strengthened partnership within the Washington-Paris- London triangle, drawing Rome in through expanded foreign policy cooperation, and using the Soviet-American antagonism as a means of rallying around France the peoples bordering it and creating "alliances without dependencies."

The effectiveness of the Franco-German tandem contained certain limitations. The main one has always been the significant asymmetry in each partner's relationship with the US and NATO. For the ruling circles of the FRG, American guarantees within the alliance (the nuclear umbrella) were and remain the determining element of the security system in the face of the USSR, and later post-Soviet Russia. European guarantees could supplement but in no way replace them.

The paradox lies in the fact that the conditions for choice have changed, but the options remain the same, like those of the era of de Gaulle and Adenauer.

Both countries may once again choose to limit their cooperation to integration issues. In that case, to succeed they would need to present a common development

strategy for the EU, provoke conflict with some of its members and supranational institutions, transition to multi-speed (multi-level) integration with those willing to support them, counteract centrifugal tendencies through financial injections (in essence, through joint EU debt programs), and come to terms with the prolonged and compromise-laden nature of the decisions adopted, whose shortcomings could only be masked by maintaining a tense atmosphere in Europe.

France and Germany could also, without accelerating EU reform programs, put forward targeted proposals and initiate tandem cooperation “in those areas not touched by integration” and unrelated to NATO – in other words, take responsibility for [fostering] parallel tandem organizations outside the EU and NATO, assuming a joint role, and “working together on certain very significant issues.”

Other avenues of practical cooperation for the tandem are, for now, illusory. Bringing additional countries into the tandem without first making a strategic choice about the future course would only perpetuate sluggish and problematic development, ultimately necessitating a radical decision later, under more difficult circumstances and with less predictable consequences.

For Russia, forecasting political cooperation with France and Germany makes no sense until the members of the tandem have determined their future path.

CIS Human Rights Commissioners: Reconciling Positions, Getting Better Acquainted

T. Moskalkova

Keywords: CIS, model law, ombudsman status

IN THE CIS member states, the legal framework regulating the activities of national human rights institutions is actively developing. Laws adopted in the 1990s and early 2000s are being updated.

In November, Law No. ZRU-1002 (November 15, 2024) on the Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights (Ombudsman) entered into force. During the 2025 spring session, the Parliament of Azerbaijan is considering a bill to amend the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The new draft Constitutional Law on the Akyikatchy (Ombudsman) of the Kyrgyz Republic has passed through the stage of public discussion.

The legislative bodies of the Commonwealth states, together with national human rights institutions, are working to ensure that the legal framework complies with high international standards for NHR. It and responds to the contemporary realities in which ombudsmen defend human rights and freedoms.

Model law-making in the CIS could provide significant support in this common process of updating and improving the legal foundations of ombudsman activities.

The legal frameworks of the Commonwealth countries share similarities and conceptual closeness in many areas, including human rights protection. Building on this foundation, the national human rights institutions of the CIS are developing cooperation and multifaceted collaboration, jointly addressing issues of model law-making. This brings us closer together, contributes to further integration in the human rights field, and, through the exchange of best practices, opens up new opportunities to assist people.

Civil Society in the West: **Current State and Development Prospects**

V. Yegorov, M. Zinoviev

Keywords: civil society, Western civilization, levels of civil consolidation, national political agenda

ISSUES related to civil society are becoming much less prominent in Western academic discourse due to the following factors:

- First, in societies long considered among the most democratic and exemplary in terms of citizen participation in governance, a persistent trend has emerged toward the erosion of their social foundation – the middle class.

- Second, civil society organizations [CSOs] in the West are being increasingly manipulated by elites and losing their ability to perform their role as initiators of the socialization of power, thereby earning the designation “illegitimate.”

- Third, under pressure from elites, civil society in Western countries is playing a diminishing role in political decision-making and therefore is regarded by some Western political scientists as antidemocratic.

The focus of contemporary political science research on the institution of civil society, considered within the broader context of liberal democracy, is shifting away from the institutional aspect toward functional and even applied aspects.

Overall, Western governments, beholden to large corporations and at times driven by corrupt financial flows, protect oligarchic interests, respond to civil protests with repression, and even pass legislative acts banning such demonstrations (for instance, despite protests, the UK government issued over 100 new licenses for oil and gas drilling, and several Australian states in 2023 adopted antiprotest laws that include criminal liability).

The economic initiatives of civil society are among the few that are truly acquiring a global character, thanks to the achievements of the information and communication revolution.

Thus, the phenomenon of civil society possesses a theoretical content with a universal conceptual meaning. “Civil society” as an abstraction devoid of historical and cultural conditionality is practically identical to academic reflection. Most political scientists understand civil society as the politically active segment of the population capable of cooperating to achieve socially significant goals.

Technology and Elections: **The Experience of Foreign Countries**

Ye. Leonov

Keywords: artificial intelligence, neural networks, elections, disinformation, fake content, deepfakes

THE first signs of the systematic digitalization of electoral processes were observed during the 2008 US presidential election, which spurred further developments in the application of information and computer technologies in elections and secured Barack Obama the reputation of the first social media president. From then on, Internet technologies became the primary channel for communicating and interacting with voters. The quintessence of technological progress became the 2024 US election – the first in global practice to take place amid the widespread use of artificial intelligence (AI) and neural networks.

AI use in elections is usually broken down according to purpose – organizational-technical and informational – but it can also be classified by period: preelection, election day, and postelection.

Serious risks are associated with the proliferation of technology for generating deepfakes, especially as powerful graphics processors become more accessible. One of the most popular deepfake formats are fabricated video confessions of a rival admitting to corruption or breaking the law.

Another type of disinformation involves robocalls based on AI voice-cloning technology. For example, robocalls featuring Joe Biden's voice were made in the US to dissuade voters from voting.

Yet another disinformation mechanism is the use of generative AI to manipulate traffic and simplify the programming of bots that promote hashtags, photos, and videos on social media platforms.

This call, however, appears to have gone unheeded. The AI race between the global leaders in this field – the US and China, both of which are investing heavily in scientific research – suggests that a pause in AI development is highly unlikely.

Current Trends in the Immunity of the Premises of Diplomatic Missions

A. Nagiyeva

Keywords: diplomatic mission, inviolability of diplomatic mission premises, premises of a consular post, diplomatic immunities and privileges, sending state, receiving state

SINCE ancient times, it has been an unfailing principle that the ambassador's residence enjoys absolute inviolability. In Ancient Greece and Rome, this inviolability extended to the private residences of proxeni and praetors.

In the Middle Ages, inviolability was extended not only to the private residence of the ambassador but also to entire quarters designated for the accommodation of ambassadors and other envoys of foreign states. These so-called embassy quarters were completely removed from the jurisdiction of the receiving state. In practice, however, abuse of the inviolability status of embassy quarters occurred, particularly in the form of granting asylum to individuals prosecuted under criminal law. This led to the abandonment of this institution. The last embassy quarters were abolished in Rome and Madrid in the 17th century.

Despite the abandonment of the practice of exempting entire quarters from the jurisdiction of the receiving state, the principle of the inviolability of the premises of diplomatic missions, consular posts, and other foreign external relations bodies has gained broad recognition in diplomatic practice and has been enshrined in numerous international treaties.

The institution of diplomatic immunities and privileges constitutes the foundation of the legal protection of diplomatic missions and other foreign relations bodies and is aimed at ensuring the unhindered functioning of these bodies abroad. Despite the extensive legal regulation of these immunities and privileges in international law, bilateral agreements, and national legal systems, there is a certain inconsistency in the observance of specific immunities and privileges. States, disregarding their international legal obligations, impose unilateral restrictions and introduce new requirements concerning diplomatic privileges and immunities.

Undoubtedly, such actions undermine the effectiveness of the activities of foreign external relations bodies and pose a serious threat to them.

As illustrated in this article, one of the most vulnerable norms remains the inviolability of premises used for diplomatic missions and other external relations bodies.

Numerous violations of the immunity and inviolability of premises, as discussed in the article, indicate a persistent trend among some states to disregard international legal obligations arising from both general international law and bilateral agreements on diplomatic and consular law.

Such unlawful actions by individual states point to a certain tacit Western trend toward the curtailment of diplomatic immunities and privileges in favor of national interests. In response, it is necessary to enhance security measures for Russian foreign external relations bodies in certain countries where they are most vulnerable, and to review treaty obligations with specific states with the aim of establishing responsibility for the contracting parties in cases of violations of diplomatic and consular immunities and privileges.

The Global Internet – or What Is the Angle of Reflection?

N. Babekina

Keywords: Internet, ICT technologies, spiritual and moral values

THERE was a time when heated debates raged about the harms and benefits of electricity, means of communication, and all sorts of other “novelties” and inventions.

The more commonplace the Internet becomes, the less we pay attention to its side effects. Its apparent efficiency seems so impressive that we want to simply turn a blind eye to its negative manifestations and pretend they don’t exist. But the problem does not disappear simply because we’ve stopped viewing it as a problem.

Analyzing the current online environment, we can attempt to sketch the portrait of a person from the digital future. What emerges is an individual living in moments and fragments. This person has lost the ability to appreciate and understand the world in its unity. The future itself depends on which of these we support and which we resist, what kind of future we want (and do not want) for ourselves and for future generations.

Threats and risks to traditional values include but are not limited to the actions and activities of extremist and terrorist organizations and certain mass media and mass communication outlets; actions of the US and other unfriendly foreign states; and ideological and psychological influence on citizens, leading to the imposition of a system of ideas and values alien to the Russian people and destructive to Russian society.

Our common goal is to ensure the functioning of a basic law: that the angle of reflection meaningfully mirrors the angle of incidence. As unsightly and disfigured as our current collective portrait may be we must strive to correct it in the future. We must make its face truly dignified, beautiful, and noble. To achieve this, everyone must work long and diligently, including in the reconsideration of the global informational agenda, in cooperation with friendly nations.

From Russia to Brazil:
Unbroken Traditions of Kindness and Humanitarian Values

M. Savchenkova, D. Karaseva

Keywords: BRICS, “BRICS People Choosing Life”

THE Russian stage of the international and interregional sociocultural and business program “BRICS People Choosing Life,” implemented by the regional public organization “BRICS. World of Traditions” in the member countries since 2022 under the slogan “From the ecology of soul and body to the ecology of the world,” has successfully concluded.

Focused on strengthening interstate and intercultural interaction within BRICS, the program brings together large-scale educational, cultural-humanitarian, and business initiatives. In 2024, during Russia’s chairmanship of the group, major events were held in Moscow, Tver Province, Moscow Province, Altai Territory, and the Republic of Tatarstan.

Such projects not only complement official diplomatic efforts but also create space for informal interaction, helping to strengthen mutual understanding and expand cooperation.

The program has acquired particular significance in the lead-up to the Brazilian stage, which will take place in October 2025 in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. As part of the business track in São Paulo, plans are in place to launch the social and business project “BRICS Trading House ‘AURA’ ”; conduct a business mission; hold B2B negotiations among Russian, Indian, and Brazilian companies; as well as organize trade fairs.

The program “BRICS People Choosing Life” has reinforced its status as a flagship project of public diplomacy, having demonstrated in practice that rapprochement among nations is possible only through the joint implementation of cultural, educational, and socioeconomic initiatives. The completed Russian stage laid a strong foundation for the further development of the project in Brazil and other BRICS countries.

The 500 Largest African Companies and Russian Business

V. Baikov

Keywords: big business in Africa, companies of South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, direct state control, Russian business strategy in Africa

IN LATE February 2025, the research service of the pan-African magazine Jeune Afrique published its traditional annual review dedicated to the 500 largest business entities in African countries.

The 2025 review of the 500 largest companies is based on 2023 data. These results were negatively affected by factors such as declining commodity prices, sharp fluctuations and weakening of national currencies, and high inflation in leading economies, particularly South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria. Nevertheless, many companies from the top500 list managed to hold their ground and adapt to these negative trends.

In 2023, companies from South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria accounted for 53% of the total revenue of Africa's 500 largest companies. South Africa remains the, although in 2021 it accounted for nearly half of the revenue and 159 out of 500 companies. The list includes 45 companies from Egypt and 34 from Nigeria.

The analysis of the structure of Africa's 500 largest companies allows for certain generalizations regarding Russia's business strategy on the African continent. The relatively small scale of large African businesses by Russian standards does not in principle preclude the possibility of Russian investors acquiring significant, including controlling, stakes in such companies. Naturally, such deals can only be carried out with political support from the top leadership of the host country. At the same time, one must not overlook the weakness of local large businesses and their vulnerability to macroeconomic fluctuations and shocks. This factor creates significant – primarily financial – risks for potential Russian investors. In this regard, the development of independent Russian businesses in sectors of the African economy where the state is not present and market competition exists appears more promising. In the first instance, this concerns the sectors of

telecommunications, information and communication technologies, financial, and transport services.

80 Years of Diplomatic Relations Between Venezuela and Russia: A Timeless Historic Alliance

Yván Gil Pinto

Keywords: Venezuela, Russia, 80 years of diplomatic relations.

MARCH 14, 2025, marks 80 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Venezuela and Russia – an event that not only signifies the strategic alliance between the two countries but also reflects the profound historical, cultural, and political bond that dates back to the early stages of Venezuela's struggle for independence.

This anniversary coincides with another event of immense historical significance – the 80th anniversary of the Red Army's triumph over Nazi Germany, a victory that not only liberated Europe from the scourge of fascism but also reshaped the course of world history.

Over time, ties between the two countries have grown and strengthened, moving beyond purely diplomatic channels to encompass strategic areas such as energy, military cooperation, and integration within a multipolar world. From the 19th-century recognition to the present day, Venezuela and Russia have built a relationship based on mutual respect, complementarity, and the defense of a more equitable international order.

This historical bond reminds us that the struggle for sovereignty and peace is not an isolated episode in time, but a continuous process fueled by alliances, shared resistance, and the conviction that only through unity can we build a better future for our peoples.

Now, on the 80th anniversary of this heroic feat, its recognition fully affirms Russia's historical struggle to strengthen peace throughout the world.

This is a legacy that must not be forgotten or distorted. Humanity is forever indebted to Russia, for without its resolve and heroism, the world would have faced a very different fate.

Russia – Jamaica **50 Years of Diplomatic Relations**

S. Petrovich

Keywords: cruiser Rossiya, poet McKay, M. Manley, Labour government, interministerial contacts, economic ties, sports power

DIPLOMATIC relations between Russia and Jamaica were officially established on March 12, 1975, through the exchange of personal notes between the permanent representatives of the USSR and Jamaica to the UN – Yakov Malik and David Mills. Thus, this year we celebrate their 50th anniversary – a milestone that reflects decades of multifaceted interaction between our countries, marked by both highs and lows.

A new chapter in the history of bilateral relations began with the emergence of the new Russian state as the legal successor to the USSR. Jamaica recognized the Russian Federation in this capacity on January 6, 1992.

In June 2000, Jamaican foreign minister Paul Robertson visited Russia, during which, among other things, a Protocol on Political Consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries was signed.

The Russian side highly values the level of cooperation achieved with Jamaican partners at the UN, which is grounded in shared or closely aligned positions on many issues of the international agenda. Russia continues to enjoy Kingston's traditional support for its initiatives on combating the glorification of Nazism, ensuring transparency and building trust in space activities, refraining from the first placement of weapons in outer space, and implementing further practical measures to prevent an arms race in outer space. In recent years, we have also worked productively with Jamaican partners on drafting a comprehensive convention on countering the criminal use of information and communication technologies.

Our cultural and humanitarian cooperation with Jamaica remains traditionally strong. Jamaican culture is well known and appreciated in Russia.

Today, amid ongoing tectonic shifts in global politics and economics – accompanied by the emergence of a more equitable world order replacing the obsolete unipolar model – our countries must seek new formats for cooperation, drawing on the half-century of experience accumulated across various fields. At the same time, the current confrontation between Russia and the collective West imposes its own constraints, objectively limiting the potential for our cooperation with Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean Basin.

Nevertheless, at the threshold of the 50th anniversary of Russian-Jamaican relations, Moscow and Kingston – separated by 14,000 kilometers – look to the future with hope. It is important for us and our Jamaican partners that the history of relations between our two states has never been tainted by the shameful legacies of the slave trade and colonialism. Standing together in support of sovereignty, justice, and equality in international relations, our peoples intend to continue strengthening time-tested ties built on traditions of friendship, mutual affection, and respect for each other's interests.

At the Pinnacle of Russian American Studies:
In Memory of RAS Academician Sergey Rogov

A. Frolov

Keywords: RAS Academician Sergey Rogov, Institute for US and Canadian Studies, the US and Russia, Ukraine, NATO

ON FEBRUARY 9, Russia lost its foremost expert on American policy and US-Russia relations: Sergey Mikhailovich Rogov, Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Science (History), Professor, Director and later Research Supervisor of the Institute for US and Canadian Studies.

The early 1980s saw the emergence at the Institute for US and Canadian Studies of relatively young but already experienced and distinguished researchers from the first postwar five-year generation. They made a name for themselves not only on account of their comprehensive knowledge of their subject area, their analytical skills, and their ability to draw conclusions, but also because of their talent for debate. This group included Andrey Kokoshin, Sergey Plekhanov, Vladimir Pechatnov, and Anatoly Utkin. Sergey Rogov was undoubtedly among them. For us – the next generation of American studies scholars – these figures served as scientific beacons, models to emulate.

Sergey Mikhailovich Rogov passed away at a moment when a glimmer of hope had appeared in US-Russia relations. A hope for improvement, normalization, and the triumph of reason. He believed in the power of diplomacy, striving to build constructive dialogue between the academic community and government authorities. This at one time allowed him to make a significant contribution to the establishment and development of the arms control regime. I believe that, with his knowledge and vast experience, he could still have greatly contributed to this process today. But we would like to believe that his ideas will live on among his students and followers. Blessed be the memory of this eminent scholar and man.

Counterpoints of Latvian Foreign Policy After the Establishment of the Nazi Regime in Berlin

V. Simindey

Keywords: Latvian foreign policy, Kārlis Ulmanis dictatorship, German expansionism, Nazi regime, Soviet-Baltic relations, collaborationism

THE complex interweaving of foreign policy, military, and economic processes in the 1930s on the European continent left a distinctive imprint on how Latvia, its ruling groups, and strata of society perceived their place in the world. After the establishment in Germany of Hitler's expansionist regime, based on a misanthropic ideology and direct violence, Riga had to determine its strategy and tactics in relation to Nazi Berlin, as well as build relations with neighboring states, including the USSR, and Western countries. By tracing the diplomatic maneuvers and regime characteristics specific to Latvia as a central country in the region during the early period of Kārlis Ulmanis's dictatorship (1934-1938), one can discern the patterns behind the failure of contradictory attempts to preserve neutrality and "leader-centered" statehood amid the unfolding of World War II and the inevitable dramatic clash between the USSR and Germany.

The establishment of pro-fascist authoritarian rule in the Baltics had a key influence on shaping the stereotypes, preferences, and antipathies of official circles in Riga, Tallinn, and Kaunas toward the major players in world politics. According to the classification of American historical sociologist Michael Mann, the Baltic nationalist dictatorships that formed in the interwar period belong to the most common type of interwar regimes – "semi-reactionary authoritarian regimes". A characteristic marker of the personalist-nationalist dictatorships that emerged in the region was their struggle both against leftist and center-left forces and against rivals for power who occupied ultra-right and openly fascist positions (such as the "Pērkonkrusts" and "Legionnaire" groups in Latvia).

The Portuguese Revolution and the Restoration of Soviet-Portuguese Diplomatic Relations

D. Yermolovich

Keywords: history of international relations, history of Portugal, Soviet-Portuguese relations, “Carnation Revolution,” Russian-Portuguese relations

THE period from 1974 to 1976 marked the peak of Soviet-Portuguese relations. Subsequently, however, Portugal’s political elite gradually chose the path of European integration and alignment with the leader of the Western world – the US. This shift in Portugal’s foreign policy priorities initially led to stagnation and eventually to a crisis in bilateral relations. The early 1980s became the most difficult period in the history of Soviet-Portuguese relations. During this time, bilateral ties were reduced exclusively to cultural exchange, while all other forms of cooperation were suspended.

In the second half of the 1980s, relations between the two countries shifted toward mutual rapprochement and expanded bilateral cooperation. Notably, President of Portugal Mário Soares visited the Soviet Union twice: on an official visit in November 1987 and an unofficial one in May 1991. In turn, Portugal was visited by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze (March 1988) and Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh (April-May 1990). A new stage of bilateral interaction began with the formation of the Russian Federation. Portugal was among the first countries to recognize Russia on December 26, 1991.

Over the 50 years since the restoration of bilateral relations, 10 Soviet/Russian ambassadors have served in Lisbon and 13 Portuguese ambassadors in Moscow. Portuguese presidents have visited Russia/the USSR seven times. Among the more recent contacts was the official visit of President Jorge Sampaio to Moscow in 2001 (October 25-29), and in 2018, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa visited Moscow to support the Portuguese soccer team at the FIFA World Cup. Russian Presidents have visited Portugal four times: Vladimir Putin twice – in November 2004 and October 2007 – and Dmitry Medvedev twice – in November 2008 and November 2010.

Portuguese prime ministers have visited Russia/the USSR nine times. Notable among recent visits were Prime Minister José Sócrates's working visit in 2007 (May 27-29), and Prime Minister António Costa's trip to the 2018 FIFA World Cup in June.

The most recent visit of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Lisbon took place in 2018 (November 23-24), while Portuguese Foreign Minister Augusto Santos Silva visited Moscow on a working trip in 2021 (May 30-June 1).

The sharp deterioration of the Russian Federation's relations with the collective West following the start of [Russia's] Special Military Operation [in Ukraine] has had a severely negative impact on Russian-Portuguese relations. Lisbon chose to align with the policies of Washington and Brussels, joining all anti-Russian sanctions packages automatically. As a result, nearly all bilateral dialogue has been "put on pause."

It may be said that in modern Russian history, bilateral relations are experiencing their most difficult period. Under such conditions, broad celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations are, for understandable reasons, out of the question. Nonetheless, there is hope that after the international situation stabilizes, Russian-Portuguese cooperation will gain new impetus and, building on the positive experience accumulated earlier, will develop dynamically and steadily. And the next anniversary, given the necessary conditions, will be celebrated in both capitals in a more positive and solemn atmosphere.

The History of Saudi Arabia Through the Eyes of an Expert

S. Filatov

Keywords: Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Muslim world

THE author elaborates on the third edition of the book *The History of Saudi Arabia* (revised and expanded) by RAS Academician and now Scientific Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for African Studies Alexey Vasiliyev.

The book opens with a warm address to readers by Rustam Minnikhanov, rais of the Republic of Tatarstan and Chairman of the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group.

In the new chapters of the book, the author shows how the power hierarchy of the House of Saud was strengthened after King Salman and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman took control in 2015. Saudi Arabia launched wide-ranging reforms in the economic, social, and political fields, in religious practices, and in the area of women's rights. On the international stage, Riyadh has confidently asserted its sovereignty in today's multipolar world and reinforced its ties with Russia on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Vasiliyev discusses a question of critical importance for Saudi Arabia: the extent of its dependence on the US. He notes that Washington has already demonstrated that it cannot serve as a guarantor of the Kingdom's security.

Given that Saudi Arabia has become not only an economic partner for Russia but also stands on the threshold of joining BRICS, Academician Alexey Vasiliyev's new work offers specialists and a broad audience a wealth of practical information, analysis, and recommendations for building further relations with this country of great importance to the Islamic world and the Middle East. The combination of deep academic research with elegant literary language in presenting complex material – a hallmark of Alexey Vasiliyev's work since his journalistic days – is a defining feature of *The History of Saudi Arabia*.

De Gaulle and His “Team”

T. Zvereva

Keywords: de Gaulle, Gaullism, Resistance movement, Fifth Republic, Constitution of the Fifth Republic, André Malraux, Georges Pompidou, Jacques Soustelle, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Michel Debré

THE book by renowned Russian historian Marina Arzakanyan is devoted to exploring the professional and personal journeys of the French political figures who surrounded General de Gaulle at various stages of his life and who continued his legacy after he left politics. These include two presidents of the Fifth Republic – Georges Pompidou and Jacques Chirac; three prime ministers – Michel Debré, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, and Édouard Balladur; as well as two outstanding representatives of French intellectual life – ethnographer Jacques Soustelle and writer André Malraux.

The biographies of de Gaulle’s associates are set against the vivid backdrop of 20th-century French history, which the author skillfully brings to life with fresh insights. The study is grounded in a wide array of unique sources: memoir literature and archival documents, including materials from the Foreign Commission of the Union of Soviet Writers, the Russian State Military Archive, the files of the French Committee for National Defense, the Soviet Foreign Ministry archives, and others. This volume makes a striking and distinctive contribution to the study of France’s political history in the 20th century.

M.Arzakanyan’s new book presents biographical vignettes, each of which is a self-contained, fully developed narrative. Together, they complement one another and help the reader better understand and appreciate the work of the most renowned Frenchman of the 20th century – the founder of the Fifth Republic, General de Gaulle – and his team. The reviewed volume conveys the place each associate held within de Gaulle’s circle. What emerges is a portrait of vivid, dynamic, and extraordinary individuals who cannot be reduced to rigid assessments or simplistic categories, all set against the rich, newly illuminated historical tapestry of 20th-century France.

The International Security Index: A Russian Perspective – Insightful and Confident

Ye. Buzhinsky

Keywords: international security, Security Index Yearbook 2024-2025

The Security Index Yearbook 2024-2025 is a new joint product of the PIR Center and Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO) of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, addresses the most pressing aspects and developments in global systemic security. It examines the evolution of multipolarity through the lens of Russian foreign policy thought and presents a comprehensive analysis by more than 20 of Russia's leading experts.

The yearbook offers a thorough analysis of the key crises in the global security system linked to the reconceptualization of the strategic order. In one of the chapters, Andrey Kortunov, academic director of the Russian International Affairs Council, emphasizes that the Ukraine crisis has further deepened the crisis of the European security system. A clear signal of rising tensions is the 2023 address by President Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly, announcing Russia's suspension of participation in the New START Treaty.

The yearbook offers an in-depth examination of both the historical context and current state of Russia's strategic relations with key international actors, in pursuit of the overarching goal of maintaining peace and security.

The high quality of the yearbook is ensured by both the composition of its author team, assembled by Editor-in-Chief Vladimir Orlov, and the high standards set by its International Editorial Board.

For the unbiased international reader – the primary target audience of this new edition – the yearbook should certainly find a place on the shelf, standing prominently alongside if not displacing established but Westernbiased annual publications such as the SIPRI Yearbook. It will also undoubtedly occupy a well-deserved place on the bookshelves of Russian specialists and practitioners in international security. As the saying goes, we look forward to the next volume.