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Reconsidering the Greater Europe Concept in the Context of the Ukrainian Crisis

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THE UKRAINIAN STORM of 2013-2014 pushed the world dangerously close to Cold War II. The coup and the bloodshed which swept the country were caused by the refusal of the Yanukovich regime to draw closer to the EU no matter what rather than by the fairly acute social, economic and political disagreements inside the country.¹ The consecutive packages of anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the European Union and coordinated, to a great extent, with the U.S. and several other non-European allies look very logical in the context of the stalled dialogue between the two key European players.

THE IDEA of a united Europe goes back to the European Middle Ages when it had meant unification of the Christian world and to New Times when it took the form of secular projects.

The end of the Cold War did not bury the Greater Europe idea as a two-pole system. Any counterposition of the EU and Russia adds an edge to their political and economic influence over East European states. Ukraine has shown that in extreme form this rivalry might develop into serious conflicts.

Many political forces in the West misinterpreted the end of the Cold War as a collapse of one of the rivaling blocs which left behind a void to be filled rather than as a chance to unify Europe. Certain forces in Western Europe and the United States looked at the simultaneous eastward expansion of NATO and the EU as progress toward Greater Europe. Academics and common people alike find it much easier to grasp the fact that "Greater Europe is a continuity of historical and cultural values of the European continent" which is not disappearing as it moves westward or along any other vector. NATO's barbaric bombing of Yugoslavia and regular fascist marches in Latvia are the best proof that the most ardent supporters of human rights and freedoms among the EU members have not

yet left their ugly past behind and have not yet embraced the European values. In the majority of the EU countries people are baffled by Russia, a European state, in which people take their multinational and multiconfessional country for granted. The polycentric nature of Europe is clearly seen in its economy which is especially important for this analysis. Despite what skeptics are saying about the non-productive nature of Russia's inattention to Brussels in favor of bilateral ties with individual EU members this dialogue should be intensified. Today, Cold War II is prevented by the disagreements among individual EU members over their relations with Russia.

The Possibility of Military-Political Conflicts in the Former Soviet Union

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THE FORMER SOVIET UNION (FSU) remains a zone fraught with conflicts on the political map of the world. Political instability and festering disputes, including territorial disputes and disputes between political elites, prevail in many countries of the region. The developments in Ukraine show the realness of bringing into play the military factor to achieve political objectives. Russia and Ukraine, whose peoples have a shared common history over many centuries and who boast close cultural and economic links without precedent anywhere in the rest of the world, have nearly ended in the state of an armed conflict.

Very relevant in this context appears to be the search for an answer to what causes the periodical recurrence of the factor of military-

political conflicts in the immediate vicinity of Russia, a factor, as developments surrounding Ukraine show, can appreciably destabilize not just the regional but also world political process. There are solid foundations for possible conflicts in the post-Soviet republics. There is a combination of several factors, each of which is capable to destabilize the FSU region. Hard to resolve contradictions between separate clans, ethnic groups and cultures exist at the same locations and at the same time.

The emergence of paramilitary forces is a graphic indication of the deep-seated cultural, inter-civilizational, ethno-religious and clan-related differences mentioned above.

The intercultural differences can be put down to the invisible borders dividing the post-Soviet republics into several segments which do not coincide with the official borders.

In the republics with vestiges of patriarchal lifestyles, above all in Central Asia and Transcaucasus, potentials for conflict vary mostly with the intensity of tensions between tribes and clans. All these republics are in fact a patchwork of culturally and geographically diverse regions which presupposes tough infighting for dominance.

Therefore, sources of military and political conflicts in the post-Soviet republics should be looked for in the specifics of the acquisition of sovereignty by regional states which was accompanied by armed conflicts. In the absence of national political governance traditions, the dominant factor in international relations in this space was and is armed violence.

In the end, let me say that possibilities for conflicts in the FSU tend to hang on and replicate. The clash of interests of the world powers based on hidden geopolitical motives is supplemented with conflicts on national and sub-national levels.

A "Gas Window on Europe": Nord Stream in the Context of Russia-EU Energy Cooperation

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THE GAS CONFLICT that broke out between Russia and Ukraine in the wake of the February 2014 coup in Kiev made it even more important to minimize the share of gas transported to Europe via Ukraine. The planned South Stream would be not enough to resolve the problem - the carrying capacities of the functioning gas corridors, the recently commissioned Nord Stream in the first place, which bypass Ukraine, should be increased.

This article looks at the wide range of issues related to the current stage of exploitation and the present economic efficiency of Nord Stream and the expected effects of tapping its potentials to the full if the exemption clauses of the European Union's Third Energy Package are cancelled.

The gas conflict which broke out between Russia and Ukraine in the wake of the February 2014 coup in Kiev made it even more important to minimize the share of gas transported to Europe via Ukraine.

THE GEOPOLITICAL ADVANTAGES of the trans-Baltic gas pipeline are considerable: it has excluded gas transit across third countries and brings gas from Russia directly to the EU consumers which increases reliability of gas supplies and reduces insurance and political risks. The undersea pipeline which bypasses third countries guarantees deliveries of huge amounts of gas in case transit countries (Ukraine in the first place) start conflicts with Russia.

It is commercially attractive for two reasons: first, underwater pipelaying in the shallow Baltic Sea proved to be much cheaper than on land, where land alienation would have required long negotiations and big compensations. Second, the transit states are excluded from the gas transportation balance: there are no transit payments which can be fairly high.

The strange games around Nord Stream are of a geopolitical rather than commercial nature: our "Western partners" obviously want to supply Kiev, which is slowly but surely losing its exclusive transit advantages, with another political trump.

The European Union and the United States cannot accept this: they want to force Russia to move its gas across Ukraine.

THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS confirmed once more that the Trans-Baltic gas pipeline was a priority, that it was economically substantiated and had no alternatives.

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THE GEOPOLITICAL BALANCE of the latter half of the 20th century was tipped in the early 1990s by the Soviet Union's disintegration which buried the bipolar world order. There is a more or less common opinion that we are entering a Cold Peace era in which Russia might be pushed aside.

At the final stage of Soviet history, Soviet diplomats signed a great number of documents on mutual recognition, cooperation and a single space in various fields of social and humanitarian cooperation within the

Commonwealth of Independent States, a new regional structure. This can be described as a great success of Soviet diplomacy.

It should be said that continued mistrust of Russia and the desire of the post-Soviet Eurasian states to preserve their sovereignty make economic integration the only acceptable form.

The two decades of the CIS showed that the relations between the former union republics were developing mainly on a bilateral basis.

In case of their economic integration, the forecasted fall of fuel prices will negatively affect the economies of all groups of countries.

In the political sphere, Eurasian integration might be encouraged by security-related considerations, peace, stronger democracy, and social-political stability. It should be said that an analysis of economic gains should be accompanied by an analysis of political repercussions of regional integration.

It is important to assess the country's security in the context of integration which might soften contradictions between neighbors and tighten economic cooperation the partners of which would prefer to settle their conflicts peacefully.

It should be said that integration may include social-cultural (cultural-humanitarian) aspects: cooperation in education and science, tourism, family ties, and exchange of cultural programs and events.

Political integration of the EEU members and also of potential members is achieved within other integration structures - the Union State of Belarus and Russia, Commonwealth of Independent States, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Today, the CIS and EEU are not quite effective yet there is always hope that successful political cooperation within these structures will be used at the next (political) stage of integration of members of the developing Eurasian Economic Union.

The American Trans-Pacific Partnership Project and China

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THE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP (TPP) initiative was first launched by New Zealand, Singapore and Chile in 2003. Since the United States joined the process in 2011, this concept, significantly reformatted and with an expanded membership, has been regarded as a purely American one. It is also rightly seen as a (if not the) key element of the strategic shift of focus in U.S. foreign policy to the Asia-Pacific Region. It is also

often viewed in conjunction with the conceptually symmetrical Transatlantic Partnership between the United States and the European Union. Many experts argue - with varying degrees of credibility - that the combination of these two initiatives is of central, systemic importance to the foreign-policy and foreign economic strategy of the Administration of Barack Obama.

The TPP is designed to unify the countries of three regional areas: the Asia-Pacific Region (APR), North America and South America. The partnership will include economic actors differing significantly in the size of their economy, level of industrialization, methods of governance, and involvement in global trade.

As intended by the initiators, along with a phase-out (by 2025) of all tariff barriers to trade, the member countries should accept the obligations, regulations and principles of economic activity known among experts as the "platinum standard." This standard applies not only to trade, but also to production, taxation, rules of competition in public and private business, transparency of investment, intellectual property rights, and labor law.

Even in the view of some American analysts, the terms and criteria for the accession of Pacific countries to the TPP community are excessively "Americentric." They carry the project well beyond the limits of a trade bloc and are dictated by the narrow corporate interests of U.S. industrial groups.

In the analyst's view, the current TPP members have in large part become hostage to the U.S.-China confrontation. They will largely have to accept the American conditions as a preventive measure directed against China's economic and military activity in the region.⁴

THERE ARE TWO POINTS OF VIEW in China leading to different scenarios for a Chinese response to the TPP.

The first, dominant point of view is a negative one: for the time being, it rules out the

possibility of Chinese participation. Supporters of this view believe that the United States does not actually want China to take part in the project although the partnership has been formally declared an "open" one.

The second point of view on the TPP is less influential but nevertheless present in China's expert and political community. Its advocates are less categorical about the prospects of China's non-participation in the TPP concept.

A fairly heated debate is underway in the Chinese political class on fundamental issues of economic strategy.

The TPP is a stepping stone in the APR integration process. This process is impossible without Chinese participation.

Setting Priorities: Human Rights or National Security? U.S. Domestic and International Practice

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THE HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE has always been accompanied by the most heated diplomatic and political debates, while the security issue of addressing new challenges and threats (NCT) has been regarded by some experts as being devoid of politics, presumably making it easier for the states to negotiate common solutions. In the past few years, however, things have changed dramatically: balancing human rights and freedoms, on the one part, and measures designed to promote secu-

rity, on the other, has become one of the most confrontational issues.

The so-called developed democracies led by the U.S have actually made the rest of the world face the following dilemma: if you observe human rights (referring primarily to personal rights and freedoms), you are with us; if, however, you take a tough line in an attempt to raise the security level and inevitably infringe upon human rights, you are against us.

America is, without any reservations, a leading country in the West for trampling on the rights of its own and foreign nationals. The freedom of movement and correspondence, immunity of domicile, property rights and personal data records came under excessive control.

With the help of its intelligence agencies the U.S. government has been continuously spying on its citizens and gathering all possibly available information about them, including individual records.

Intelligence agencies have also got access to personal data of American and foreign nationals through their close cooperation with major corporations, including, among others, Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Skype, and Verizon: the intelligence officers would sign with the latter confidential agreements which stipulate a disclosure of their clients' personal information.

It is noteworthy that a considerable part of offenders are of the African, Latin American or Asian descent. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, around 30 percent of Afro-American males end up behind bars.

Another aspect of the human rights' violations by the government is the use of control measures relating to race, ethnic or confessional affiliation and nationality.

Having introduced much more rigid security procedures as compared to other countries, the United States, within the framework of the "democratization process," accuses those countries of the human rights' abuse while disregarding the fact that the measures of control they have adopted are less intrusive, which is a typical double-standard attitude.

Theoretical Approaches to Regionalization and Regional Integration

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GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS of the last few decades have affected, to a great extent, international space: globalization which added mobility to global population and vagueness to national borders; information technologies and transport infrastructure which are developing by leaps and bounds, etc. are changing the nature of human contacts and the relationships between transnational companies, organizations and states.

Today, the states previously described as "periphery" have moved to the fore; the "code of behavior" on the international political scene has acquired new positive trends and

also retreated, in many respects, to the conservative models of the past.

This article is an attempt at analyzing the main theoretical approaches to the studies of regional integration and differentiation of the types of "security communities."

Not infrequently, functionalism is presented as a universal and politically neutral trend of studies of international integration while in fact it rests on the liberal utilitarian political values. This explains why its positive impacts do not stretch beyond those parts of the world where people share the values of welfare society which functionalism supports and spreads.

Neorealists have developed a theory of hegemonic stability based on the argument that international regimes develop and continue living when the state possesses dominating power resources, the United States after World War II being one of the examples.

Today, the studies of foreign policy and the theory of international relations look at regionalism and regional integration as the key indicators of international changes which appeared in the post-Cold War period when the world was entering the post-bipolar polycentric development stage.

The concept of security communities by E. Adler and B. Crawford regards security communities not so much as groups of people which cooperate on the basis of common values and mutual understanding as social structures which constitute the interests and identities of their members.

Strange as it may seem, power plays a major role in the creation of security communities. This role may be understood as a "magnetic attraction" of periphery states to the core.

In most cases, regional security partnerships are international organizations which rely on complicated multisided structures operating with sets of external measures and mechanisms (normative acts riveted to basic and operational agreements) contributing either to conflict settlement or to conflict prevention.

There is an opinion that as security cooperation in a regional partnership strengthens and becomes durable over time, observance of common practices by the partner states produces common orientations towards problems and values and, consequently, reduces the partners' security culture difference.

By way of a conclusion we can say that the new approaches demonstrated by the new regionalism theory and the security communities concept offer a much more adequate description of the changes going on in the process of setting up new international regional structures with due account for the new conditions which made them possible, the changed composition and nature of the states involved, their strategic aims and forms and methods of their attainment.

Obstacles to the Universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention

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THE CONVENTION on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention or CWC) has become nearly equal in terms of universality to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT) in a comparatively short period of 16 years.

This is the result of persistent efforts by CWC signatory states, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the United Nations.

Altogether 190 nations are parties to the CWC.

The CWC is a unique multilateral agreement whose signatories have absolutely equal rights and an accord that bans a whole class of weapons of mass destruction in a non-discriminatory and verifiable way, and under strict and effective control.

In this connection, it is remarkable that the CWC includes provisions that can be seen as stimuli for participation in the convention. For instance, it limits trade in chemicals with non-participants. There are three lists of chemicals whose sale to non-participants is prohibited.

Moreover, the CWC grants the member states the right to seek assistance and defense in the event of use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons against them.

It is also very important that the convention makes provision for exchanges of chemicals, equipment, and scientific and technological information between participants.

Since the CWC came into force in 1997, significant progress has been made toward the universality of the convention as a disarmament document, which means that a world free from all chemical weapons is a closer prospect today. It is an important move that the Syrian Arab Republic has joined the CWC and that all of Syria's components and precursors of chemical weapons have been evacuated from that country in a unique international operation actively supported by Russia.

There still remain very serious barriers to the universality of the CWC, which can only be overcome by joint and coordinated efforts on the part of the entire international community.

The key role in this process should be played by Russia and the United States, which, one would hope, equally need a universal CWC.

The Bible Is Not Putin's Invention

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The American Conservative favorably quotes Putin as saying at the Valdai forum: "We can see how many of the Euro-Atlantic countries are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis of Western civilization. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious, and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan. I am convinced that this opens a direct path

to degradation and primitivism, resulting in a profound demographic and moral crisis." No Western leader in the recent past could have adopted such a stance, comments the journal with a tinge of envy.

It is an open secret that many Europeans feel that their perceptions are being challenged as Europe upholds sexual minority rights, legitimizes gay marriage, euthanasia for adults and even children, etc. For Merkel, advocacy of traditional values somehow sounds unnatural.

Speaking of the rights of sexual minorities, at least the Orthodox Christian tradition teaches that sins and temptations - not people, whose only judge is God - are subject to condemnation. The impression is that those espousing the rewritten European morality chronically fail to grasp this key point. An individual's freedom to sin or to avoid sin is God-given and may not be revoked, but the message addressed to people affirming and deliberately spreading sin and temptations is lucid.

For ages, the mission of European statehood used to be to shield citizens from temptations, in unison with the church's working to eradicate sins. These days, a child coming back from school might tell his parents that his current homework is to decide about his sex orientation, and, no matter how they feel, the parents can't indicate that the whole thing sounds crazy to them. Charges of intolerance, if not legal problems, will follow if the kid echoes the parents' invectives at school.

There is plenty of realism in the view that we are witnessing a new ideological conflict rather than a mere outbreak of informational warfare. It shocks liberal democrats, says The National Interest, that the Russian system attempts to survive by denouncing their principles and norms as hypocrisy and deception.

Actually, the opposite is true: Russia has no intention to spearhead any anti-Western ideology, nor does a coherent one exists.

Putin has never proclaimed a value system of his own making - contrary to the portrayals compiled by his foes; he is no Mao Zedong to do that. He simply reminds us - and all Europeans in particular - that our civilization can be traced back to Christianity.

Whoever has ears, let them hear (Matthew 11:15).

The OSCE and Its Anti-Crisis Mechanisms in West-East Integration Processes

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THE RECENT EVENTS in Ukraine and the OSCE's constructive role in settling the crisis in the country's southeast (its active involvement under Swiss chairmanship in drafting and realizing the Geneva and Minsk Agreements, dispatch of OSCE observer mission charged with ceasefire and human rights monitoring) confirmed its relevance as an instrument of international crisis diplomacy indispensable when it comes to dealing with the military and political aspects of the Ukrainian crisis. This is a paradox: for the first time in postwar history the anti-crisis potential of OSCE as a universal regional organization was used to deal with the political repercussions of a vast crisis

triggered by a conflict of interests launched by the decision of the EU and Ukraine to speed up Ukraine's trade and economic association with the EU in disregard of the interests of Russia and its partners in the Customs Union.

The OSCE should widen its traditional anti-crisis agenda to cope with the new challenges created by the policy and actions of trade-economic associations. Its considerable potential of "preventive diplomacy" may help it address and resolve the problems and in this way harmonize the integration processes underway in Europe and also in the Europe-Asia context.

THE OSCE was set up as a universal platform to ensure cooperation between the East and the West and a dialogue on security, arms control, confidence building in the military sphere, and conflict prevention and settlement as well as identify cooperation trends in the economic, human rights and humanitarian spheres. This was the main mission of the OSCE in a nutshell.

The OSCE structure is maximally adjusted to these priorities: it is mobile and is "lighter" than the structures of the regional "heavyweights" (the EU and NATO). It is maximally geared at the key issues and various dimensions of European stability and security.

The disastrously deep political crisis in Ukraine caused, among other things, by political blunders of those who headed the country at that time and were responsible for the strategic decisions on the association with the European Union exacerbated the negative impacts

of the risks.

Today, the OSCE is still the most representative universal regional international structure on the European continent (in terms of its number of members) and the only one that passes decisions by consensus.

IF THE OSCE SUCCEEDS in this new role on the European continent it might acquire much wider and much more important prospects in the sphere of peaceful and harmonious integration between Europe and Asia and cooperation among trade-economic organizations in the context of a single Eurasian space.

Azerbaijan and Russia: Developing Economic and Energy Cooperation

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AZERBAIJAN is one of the main countries in international energy policy, particularly in the Caucasus. Moreover, it has experienced rapid economic growth in the last 15 years. This is why economic and energy cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan has been developing quite actively.

Russia stands to gain from cooperation with Azerbaijan because this means transportation and communication links with the South and the East and mutually beneficial energy cooperation. More than 300 Russian companies, including such giants as Lukoil, operate in that country. For Azerbaijan, Russia is one of

the main trade and economic partners.

Non-primary products subject to VAT, including engineering products, are part of the trade between Azerbaijan and Russia. Azerbaijan imports also included transport vehicles, internal combustion engine parts, pharmaceuticals, paper, glass, wheat and other goods and materials. In 2011, Azerbaijan increased exports to Russia of organic fruits and vegetables and other agricultural and food products.

Today, 18 subjects of the Russian Federation have formal documents on cooperation with the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Banking and financial relations as part of trade and economic relations play a special role in developing cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan.

Cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan has been developing steadily, and Azerbaijan's leadership is well aware that Russia is its most reliable partner in both energy projects and economic cooperation in general.

A visit to Azerbaijan by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on July 3-4, 2008 marked a new stage in cooperation between our countries. During the talks, much attention was paid to energy topics. "Energy, industry and transport are kept in view by the presidents and governments of the two countries. Cooperation in the field of trade in energy resources will develop in the near future," said the Russian president during the meeting.

But after the conflict in South Ossetia, the situation in the region changed dramatically. As a result of that conflict, Georgia acquired the status of an unstable country, which nat-

urally dealt a serious blow to Tbilisi's energy policy.

In August 2013, a Russian delegation led by President Vladimir Putin visited Azerbaijan. During that visit, Russia and Azerbaijan agreed to cooperate in the area of oil and gas exploration and production projects.

In conclusion, we can say that cooperation between Russia and Azerbaijan has been developing steadily, and Azerbaijan's leadership is well aware that Russia is its most reliable partner in both energy projects and economic cooperation in general.

International Gas Rivalry: Risks for U.S. Shale Gas, Qatari LNG and Regional Markets

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MUCH HAS BEEN SAID and written about the "shale gas fever" that hit the United States and will spread to other regions to negatively affect supplies of natural gas by long-established exporters.

There are many reports from the United States that it has seriously cut gas imports and has plans to step up production and soon begin to export low-cost gas, and that the United States is already ahead of Russia as the world's biggest gas producer.

Simultaneously, many expert forecast that a bit later Europeans and Asians will follow in the U.S. footsteps and will substitute a certain proportion of imported gas with their own gas extracted from shale wells.

It's worth mentioning that fracking for gas is banned in more than 30 countries. More than 75 towns in New York banned this technique in 2008. While the environmental lobby, according to many reports, will not be able to put great pressure on hydraulic fracturing in the U.S. this pressure is a serious threat to gas production rates and, by extension, to some of the planned export projects.

YET ANOTHER OBSTACLE lies in some major companies' reporting a drop in profitability of shale development. Some reports speak of selling off shares in shale gas fields. There were even some bankruptcies.

Shale ambitions have by now brought to giant companies serious losses.

Yet another reason for major players' abandoning shale business in one area and eagerly beginning to explore other areas is that the wells deplete rapidly.

As things stand now, European countries are unlikely to speed up the development of their shale fields, due mainly to their small territories and uncertain shale reserves.

There should, therefore, be continuous access to large amounts of water and silica sand, which can be a problem in some areas of potential production.

EU member countries are waging heated debates on the future of shale industry. France has banned shale gas development citing the environmental harm from hydraulic fracturing. Germany has imposed moratorium on shale gas mining, while the European parliament is imposing tougher rules on shale gas production.

Besides, shale projects in Europe are less economically viable than in the United States

due to higher costs and geographical features.

The West's gas sanctions against Russian companies and financial agencies are likely to seriously hamper Russian LNG exports which require external funding and technological inputs of its international partners. Hit by these sanctions, Rosneft (LNG production facility in Sakhalin construction project), NOVATEK (Yamal LNG project) and Gazprom-bank (Vladivostok LNG and Baltic LNG projects) not only risk failing to complete their planned projects on schedule but also to carry through these export projects at all.

The Cyprus Conflict: A Decades-Old European Problem Still Pending Resolution

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The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus was adopted by the House of Representatives (parliament) and was enacted on Independence Day on August 16, 1960. This is the first and the only constitution the Republic of Cyprus ever had.

Summing up the experience of drafting and adopting the Constitution, as well as of the emergence and formation of the young Cypriot state, we can come up with the following few conclusions:

- The formation of national statehood in Cyprus has always been an extremely difficult and complicated process. Winning political independence set the task of its constitutional formalization, which turned out to be a challenging task;
- Despite the fact that the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus was officially adopted by the country's representative branch - the parliament - the people of Cyprus have been actually denied the opportunity to participate in its drafting and adoption;
- The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus is an integral document, recording in a systematic way all major government institutions;
- A distinctive feature of the Constitution is the Cyprus former British rulers' special "concern" about artificially stirring up hostility and animosity among Cypriots of different ethnic affiliation;
- Reflecting the then existing historical context, the Constitution sets forth a unitary form of government structure.

The problematic nature of the Constitution imposed by the British and its strict basic provisions impeded the operation of government structures and incited ethnic discord among the Greek and Turkish communities. It didn't take long before the Constitution revealed its fallacies.

It is noteworthy that either amending or revising the Constitution "granted" to the Republic of Cyprus is the most challenging and complicated task, because its drafters "well provided" for the emergence of problem situations.

CONTINUING THE POLICY of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has been firmly and consistently upholding the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Cypriot state, especially during the years when its viability was put to trying ordeals.

Cooperation between Russia and Cyprus has always been based on the principles of friendship and mutual benefit and remains unaffected by the current and temporary conditions. The ties between the two countries and peoples are deeply rooted in their history and have been time-tested.

Saudi Arabia and Iran: Political Confrontation in Syria

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THERE IS EVERY REASON to describe the Syrian conflict as an open confrontation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia which relies on the Sunni doctrine of Islam as the cornerstone of its statehood is acutely aware of Iranian pressure too close to its borders. This leaves the KSA no other alternative but to wipe the Ba'ath regime in Syria.

The roots of the present Syrian crisis go back to the 1970 military coup which brought Hafez al-Assad, father of President Bashar al-Assad, to power. The Shia Alawi president and his Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party steered the country toward socialism Arab style under the leadership of the country's top military (mainly Alawi) crust.

Russia insists on non-interference of external forces in the Syrian conflict and on a political resolution. Very much to the displeasure of the West and its Gulf allies, Moscow goes on fulfilling previous agreements on weapon supplies.

At the early stages of the Syrian conflict, Tehran warned its neighbors that foreign interference in Syria would force it to move in on the side of its ally. Hezbollah, which appeared after the Islamic revolution in Iran and was banned in the West as a terrorist organization, is already fighting in Syria together with the government forces. To a great extent, it was support of Shia Iran that transformed "a rebellion by the Syrian people to a rebellion of Sunnis."

The West led by the United States is unanimous in its conviction that Bashar Assad should leave the political Middle Eastern scene. They talk about human rights violations and massive civilian casualties caused by continued fighting. We should bear in mind, however, that the West wants to weaken Iran and its paramilitary formations of the Hezbollah type which figure prominently on the political scene of Lebanon and Syria.

The American-Russian disagreements outside the Syrian file suggest that Washington will side with its allies in the Middle East to address two immediate geopolitical tasks with a long-term perspective in view:

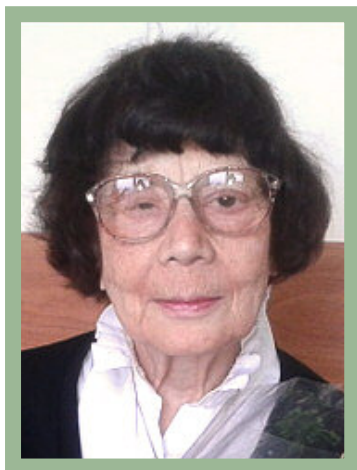
- 1) Weakening Iran by setting up a Sunni (democratic or Salafi) state on Syrian territory to destroy the "Shia belt" which ties Iran and Lebanon together;
- 2) Weakening Russia and China. With the Assad regime safely out of the way the Salafi will spare no effort to pursue anti-Russian propaganda, a direct threat to Russia's security in the south. China will not be forgotten either.

The balance of power in the Middle East depends on who will win in Syria. Saudi Arabia and Iran, each claiming the status of the core state, reveal to the world the disruptive contradictions in the Islamic world.

India: Results of the General Election and Re-alignment of Political Forces

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THE GENERAL ELECTION of 2014 in India, one of the most influential nations not only in the rapidly developing Asia-Pacific Region but also worldwide, has aroused special interest globally.

The noticeable upsurge of political activity in the run-up to the elections and intensive struggles between principal seekers of parliamentary seats reflected qualitative changes in Indian society and a new alignment of political forces, all of which determines the further social and economic development of India.

THE DETERIORATION of the economic situation in India was definitely the main factor behind the outcome of the elections.

PARTIES that had been set up in individual states and had advantages because of good knowledge of local problems and sentiments were prominent in the elections of 2014, but, as usual, it was between the INC and BJP that the main battles were fought.

THE EXPERIENCE OF INDIA confirms the general rule that economic reforms are launched in a country when the situation there deteriorates considerably. Reforms became the key word in the vocabulary of Prime Minister Modi and his government.

India is less than well off economically today. Experts believe that the country is experiencing a structural decline rather than a cyclical slowdown.

The majority of the new ministers come from Gujarat. They are officials most of whom Modi has known well, who have accumulated substantial experience of practical work and are in the same age category as the prime minister.

Another part of the Modi government's economic policy are measures to stimulate foreign direct investment (FDI), which have produced some results already.

Russia and India clearly don't make complete use of their potential for economic cooperation and trade. Trade between them grows slowly, standing at about \$10 billion, and has remained structurally unchanged for years. Apparently, there is not enough mutual information on new resources for exports and other forms of cooperation. Russia remains India's main foreign supplier of armaments, but, because of market struggles, the share of Russian weapons in the Indian arms market is shrinking gradually and is expected to go down to 37% in 2015. Moreover, Russia has occasionally been missing delivery deadlines, and some of its arms haven't been of impeccable quality. The Modi government is unlikely to put up with this. Besides, talks on proposed Russian exports of weapons to Pakistan have stirred some unease in India.

Islamism: The True Face of Armed Conflicts in Africa

Author: D. Malysheva

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UNTIL RECENTLY, the African countries north of the equator and south of the Sahara and their problems remained, on the whole, at the periphery of not only Russian but also the world's information and political field.

Everything changed on April 17, 2014 when Boko Haram fighters abducted 276 schoolgirls aged 12 to 17 from the school in Chibok and threatened to sell them into slavery.

The Nigerian drama has awoken the world community to the grave and worsening situation in Africa (in Nigeria, Mali and Libya in the first place): the level of violence has risen under pressure of radical Islamist trends while transnational terrorism and its bases are spreading across the continent together with drug abuse.

This is unfolding against the background of huge and widening scope of conflicts on the continent, the fact which cannot but cause concerns.

Sub-Saharan Islamist and transnational terrorist groups, which recently have been demonstrating more activity, represent a global security threat.

In recent years, an external factor has been playing a great role in African conflicts. This is true, first and foremost, of political imbalance in the Middle East created by the so-called Arab Spring. It should be said that Colonel Qaddafi left a noticeable and ambiguous trace in the life of the Sahel countries and on the continent as a whole.

POLITICAL DESTRUCTION accompanied by disintegration of the traditions in all spheres is especially obvious in Nigeria, a country with 177 million-strong population, vast territory and considerable political and economic weight in the region.

No wonder, the number of people ready to fight in a conflict of a new type unfolding in Nigeria is steadily increasing.

On the whole, the rapidly worsening situation is pushing the country toward a civil war.

The local extremist religious movements and groups are connected with transnational terrorism (al-Qaeda); they rely on the methods and means of struggle previously unknown in Africa yet tested and perfected in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Syria (suicide bombers, in the first place). This means that the center of global terrorism is shifting toward Africa, at least partially: a dangerous trend because the terrorist organizations operating in Africa have allied to act together.

The Russian-American Elbe Group

Authors: : Anatoly Kulikov, President, Military Chiefs Club of the Russian Federation, Doctor of Science (Economics), General of the Army (Ret.)

Vladimir Goltsov, Deputy General Director, AtomEkspert, Candidate of Science (Economics), Colonel (Ret.)



ONE OF THE MAIN POINTS on the agenda of the fifth meeting of the Elbe Group in Marrakesh (Morocco, March 22-24, 2014) was a discussion of the vulnerabilities of the international physical security and nuclear protection regime.

Russia and the U.S. have done a lot to develop global opportunities in a search for ways and methods of preventing, detecting and responding to acts of nuclear terrorism, including the Global Initiative

to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. The identification of the steps that countries and the international community could take to counter this threat is a complicated and time-consuming process. There is a lack of new ideas and mutual trust.

The goal of the Elbe Group is to create an open and continuous communication channel on sensitive issues. The Elbe Group is unique since it includes former chiefs and officers of the Internal Affairs

The Russian participants formulated the following proposals:

1. All nuclear weapons and special nuclear materials, nuclear and other radioactive materials and the related installations and activities in Russia are protected in accordance with the norms of binding legal instruments, national legislation and regulations.
2. An international physical security and nuclear protection regime has been created under IAEA auspices and national regimes are developing.
3. The international physical security and nuclear protection regime is vulnerable to the extent to which its weak elements are vulnerable.
4. Vulnerabilities of the national physical security and nuclear protection regime result from partial or complete loss of the ability to ensure the functioning of its chief components and principles.
5. Physical nuclear security is a special area of activity, a sphere where the formation of a single international standard modeled, for example, on universal aviation security standards is presently impossible.

The central theme of the Group's work includes the issues of countering nuclear terrorism.

It became clear that their resolution is related to a number of other important issues in relations between our countries, for example, mutual trust.

Today, the Elbe Group is widely known in the U.S. and Russian government circles. The results of the Elbe Group's work were approved by the Russian president. The group's American participants also regularly brief U.S. leaders on joint activities.

Unfortunately, the number of issues affecting the entire world community is not decreasing. The situation in Ukraine is not an exception there. The members of the group have suggested that we will soon discuss issues with which we are not familiar yet.

Russia and Europe: Topical Issues of Contemporary International Journalism Third International Conference

Session I

Personal information security amid information wars. International aid: domination or assistance. The new realities of digital communication. Media coverage of financial and economic crises.



Armen Oganessian, *Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs*: The theme of our conference, our third conference, devoted to current issues of international journalism, is Global Challenges in the Media Mirror. I would like to thank **V.I. Voronkov**, *Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the International Organizations in Vienna*, for giving us an opportunity to work in this wonderful building. He will be the first to get the floor.



Vladimir Voronkov: I welcome everyone to Vienna, to the premises of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation. About 30 various international organizations are located in Vienna. I believe that your discussion today will be very meaningful, because there is both a European dimension here and the global context of modern problems. So I would like to wish you productive work.



Sergey Nechaev, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Austrian Republic*: Austria holds a special position amid the developments which could be described as the turbulence that has hit the European continent in the context of the Ukraine crisis, and advocates for the continuation of a comprehensive and constructive dialogue with Russia. Austria constantly champions strengthening the journalists' status and security, and it was among the initiators of the well-known UN resolution on the safety of journalists, especially those working in "hot spots."



Gennady Gatilov, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation: Allow me to start with the main thing and read out the welcome message from Russian Foreign Minister S.V. Lavrov to the participants and guests of the Third International Conference "Russia and Europe: Topical Issues of Contemporary International Journalism." The message reads, in part:

I cordially welcome the conference participants and guests who have met in Vienna to discuss topical issues of international journalism. Today, international relations exist in a zone of turbulence. They are characterized by a significant rise in instability and unpredictability. In these conditions the need for compliance with the standards of professional ethics in the international information field is especially relevant. Attempts to start information wars and play without rules are only further destabilizing the situation and exacerbating threats to security and equal cooperation between states and nations on the basis of mutual respect. There is a need for truly independent, competent and courageous journalism oriented not toward egoistic interests but devoted to the truth and justice. Obviously, only an objective reflection in the media "mirror" of the global challenges and key problems, common to all countries, and balanced and unbiased comments will facilitate a creative search for solutions to conflicts and will help normalize relations between Russia and European states. I am confident that your discussions will contribute to better mutual understanding in the European space and help strengthen trust in the representatives of the "fourth estate." I wish you productive work and all the very best.

Attempts to start information wars and play without rules are only further destabilizing the situation and exacerbating threats to security and equal cooperation between states and nations on the basis of mutual respect.

It is important to understand that, unlike the traditional media and journalists, the new category of information producers so far does not have a definitive legal status. Many of them lay claim to special rights and freedoms, which, importantly, involve a special responsibility and obligations to society.

Cooperation between Russia and the European Union should be based not only on expertise, innovation, and advanced technology in series production but also on the active creation of a common information space, based on principles of equality and mutual respect.



Andrei Kelin, *Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE*: Obviously, security issues, the crisis in Ukraine and its consequences are in the focus of attention today. In this context I would like to note that during my 35-year career this is perhaps the first time that we diplomats are so closely working with journalists, and this is very important.

I admire the courage of the people who work in real time and give diplomats an opportunity to follow and receive information, think and make decisions. I believe that there are two problems here. The first is the reliability of information. The second problem is of course the journalist's ability to approach a source of information and his safety. Naturally, however, there is a gap between the need to approach a source of information as close as possible and a journalist's safety and ability to work. Journalism is a very dangerous profession, and we all know that.



Tatyana Naumova, *Deputy Head of the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation*: Allow me to read out the welcome address from M.V. Seslavinsky, Head of the Federal Agency on Press and Mass Communications of the Russian Federation:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! We are happy to welcome the organizers and participants in the Third International Conference "Russia and Eu-

rope: Topical Issues of Contemporary International Journalism." We are closely watching the proceedings of this conference, as it addresses the most important trends in the development of international journalism, demonstrates the changing approaches toward the coverage of international events and is a principal factor of mutual influence in international politics, diplomacy, and the global economic situation on the formation of the media field.

If the focus of the first two conferences was mainly on the search for optimal methods of work and interaction in the international media to provide objective and optimal coverage of ongoing events and developments the present conference should identify and work out approaches to the coverage of the central themes on which entire international journalism is based.

An in-depth analysis of the global media field over the course of several years has singled out key media priorities, but the approach toward their coverage drastically differs in various countries.



Lucio Caracciolo, *Editor-in-Chief of Limes, an Italian geopolitical magazine*: I believe that contemporary conflicts are oftentimes about rhetoric. If your coverage satisfies your audience then you successfully achieve your goal. If not, you are a failure. As one professor said recently, perception often means more than reality.

Problems always arise when you are less sure about your truth and especially so when you believe your own propaganda. Thus you end up one-on-one with the bodyguards who do not defend your country but, quite the contrary, cause misunderstanding within your own camp. This is what happened with our U.S. allies in Afghanistan last year, when they tried to create plausible rhetoric about the success in which not even the U.S. public believed, let alone foreigners.

It seems to me that the Ukraine conflict is a good example of a conflict of rhetoric. With regard to the conflict in Ukraine, many Europeans, in particular northeastern Europeans, believe that Ukraine should be part of the North Atlantic alliance, but in reality people who live in eastern Ukraine belong to eastern Slavic civilization. Today, there is a challenge to Russia and the United States but it is different from the cold war.



Yaroslav Skvortsov, *Head of the Department of International Journalism*: As we mark the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, we realize that there remain walls in the minds of Europeans, and, moreover, we may be building new walls as well.

Just make a note of this - the new cold war idea is literally in the air. It is with our own hands, dear fellow journalists, that cold wars are begun and fought, and it seems to me that it's very important to see what, at the end of the day, is our role, the role of journalists, in the new reality: will we create opposing groups on both sides of the barricades, on both sides of the wall?

One more subject I'd like to raise is the new media. Those who use the Internet as a source of information have a better knowledge of specific events, respondents from that category are more rarely undecided when asked about their views on various issues, and a larger proportion of them are interested in politics.

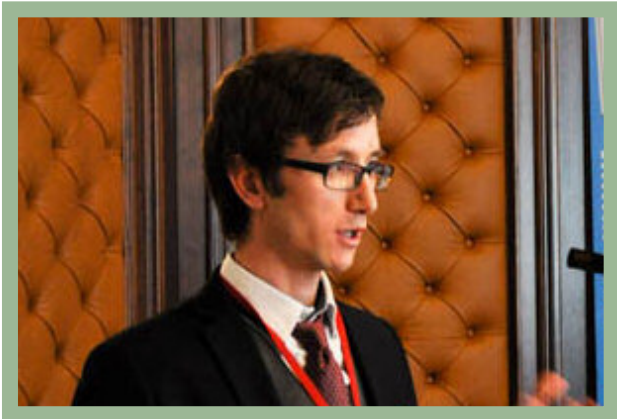
However, this has practically no effect on one's political preferences and in practically no way determines which candidate one supports at elections. In other words, one may take interest in information and take it in, but by no means always does such information un-

derlie any specific political position.

The Internet, which, I believe, is unquestionably becoming a significant power in the media world, may quickly create a stir but the latter subsides just as quickly, and often without fallout that would have been caused by such a stir in traditional media.

Moreover, how much the average Russian trusts any specific piece of information depends very little on where they get this information from.

To be honest, as a person who follows what's happening in the media community I was quite amazed by this survey because it's generally accepted that the Internet and new technology are something that will eventually overshadow traditional channels of information. It seems to me we're having a very important discussion here. I'm an optimist and so I believe that we'll definitely be able to come to some practical conclusions in regard to the issues which are raised here, although, of course, we ought to be realists and to realize that the situation changes very quickly and today's information processes are very different in essence from processes that we have seen in the past, have studied, and have got used to.



Vedat Sevincer, *managing editor of the Norwegian newspaper The Nordic Page*: I would like to speak about online social media, their influence on the overall media landscape and rhetoric used in the media.

If we look at the influence of journalism and the traditional media on social media, at the number of channels through which social media operate, and at the volumes of information that is publi-

cized through social media, we will see that that this mechanism is hopefully less controlled and less filtered because, on the one hand, people can exchange information directly and, on the other, they are able to criticize various events, and this gives rise to larger amounts of diverse information. I wanted to check whether this was really happening in social media. For instance, I've studied the coverage of the conflict in Syria. In social media, coverage is mainly based on official reports, but at the same time there are reports from both camps in the conflict. On the whole, one may say it is unbiased information, and that there have been debates. But it has been heavily polarized, and it has been very difficult to find common language, just as it has been for journalists to cover the conflict in Syria without bias. The same is the case with other conflicts, for example that in Ukraine.

There are some practical and conceptual barriers to be overcome. As regards free flows of information, crowdsourcing is an essential way to obtain unbiased information on the ground. People who are on the ground make their own analysis of information and publish their opinions. Such content is difficult to use for an unbiased report.

Data problems can be divided into three categories: data that exists and is in circulation,

reports that do exist but don't circulate, and data that doesn't exist but should exist. It is human nature that structures the character of social media too - we disregard, pay no attention to opinions that we don't like, opinions that aren't in tune with our ideological convictions. We seek out people who have the same opinions and points of view as we do. We create our own online environment. There are those who assume that information in social media is not controlled. You think that social media build ties between people that help us talk to one another. That surely is awesome, it's a great idea. But that's not what happens today. If we see more nuances in this landscape, we'll realize that the structure of social media is also based on human nature.

Yelena Vartanova, professor at Lomonosov Moscow State University and head of its Department of Journalism: We are all raising overlapping issues here, and so there will be some theses in my presentation that have been stated already.

The reason why information wars have become an object not only of practical but also academic discussion is that they affect audiences. Whether an information war is successful or not depends on the volumes, quantity and quality of information used in it.

We are turning today to social media, to new media, which are part of the media system. Journalism is an open profession. But journalists have one very important task, a task they absolutely have to be taught. This task is creation of agendas. An agenda that is put together competently and with a sense of social responsibility is something that distinguishes a professional journalist from a dilettante. So it's fair to say today that making an agenda is, of course, a task in its own right.

But I would probably disagree with the point of our esteemed speaker Lucio Caracciolo that we live in a society that is not the same as the former society where we knew one another very well. It's true that we live in a different society. But the reason we don't know one another is not that something has changed. It's the society itself that has changed - it's become fragmented.

Digital society presents us with numerous challenges in information war environments. The modern Russian spends eight hours per day seeing or hearing media content. In this respect the Russian isn't too different from the American, who spends 11 hours per day in the company of various types of media, whether they are social networks or traditional media such as television or the press.

I agree with the previous speaker that we need media education. Of course we do. In conclusion, I'd like to say that our political discussions are obviously becoming less professional. There are upsides to this because there's a growing diversity of voices, but there are downsides as well because it's sometimes cooler to write something on Facebook than not to write anything.

Session II

New Dimensions of the World Energy Industry. Global Humanitarian Challenges as Covered by the Media. Fair Information and Geopolitics. Obscure Aspects of Illegal Migration. Journalism Under Extreme Conditions



Gennady Shmal, President of the Union of Oil & Gas Producers of Russia: Dear colleagues, as an ordinary Russian reader and viewer, I would like to start by indicating two problems existing in both Russian and international journalism. The first problem is a lack of professional approach to coverage of various events. And another problem is a lack of objective approach.

As for the above problems, I believe that the solution would be to more actively attract highly skilled professionals who are able to speak a language easily understandable by all, and, most importantly, who will do it in a fair and objective way.

Many of your colleagues in the media have presently been involved in heated debates over the prospects of the oil and gas industry, saying that the oil and gas era has come to an end and that a collapse will follow soon, etc. I can assure you right now: there will be no collapses in the energy sector in the coming 100 years. As for oil, gas and coal, these particular components will remain the major sources of energy until the end of this century, and probably in the first half of the next. There is no doubt, however, that we should closely address the issue of developing both solar and wind energy sources, but in this context I would also like to cite an observation made by a renowned scientist: "If there's anybody who thinks that the power generation problems can be solved with the help of the wind, he's a scatterbrain."

We are currently facing a lot of challenges, including, among other things, the falling oil prices and sanctions. However, we have on many occasions been able to hold out against numerous difficulties. Our country has a tremendous potential to develop oil and gas sectors, and it can be a reliable partner for many countries across the world, especially for the European countries.



Ruth Freedom Pojman, Special Representative and Deputy Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings: There are cases of human trafficking for labor or sexual exploitation on the territory of Europe. We have witnessed of late a growth in human trafficking for organ removal, which has also been reported by the Russian media.

Trafficking in human beings has in many ways been linked to migration and border-crossing. I believe that in terms of migrants received the Russian Federation ranks second after the USA. A larger part of trafficked people are legally transported to other countries, specifically to former Soviet republics. They come on a legal basis, but subsequently they find themselves in certain situations where they lose their legal status.

The media have a large role to play in raising the awareness about this issue and preventing human trafficking. We give briefings every day. We have found human trafficking cases in nearly all countries of the world. Media representatives often lack a professional approach to covering this problem. Indeed, only a few people know what has really been going on in this area. We have worked in cooperation with representatives of the Moscow State University, developing a special project on the global perspective problems for the students and post-graduates of the journalism department. The studies carried out under the project were published in a book which has become a new manual for the students.



Lyudmila Shcherbina, *First Secretary, Moscow Union of Journalists*: In the past few months, getting to Ukraine was by no means an easy business for our journalists; in fact, it was more like going through the nine circles of hell. More often than not they are refused entry to Ukraine, and they have to travel back to Moscow. Indicatively, the reasons offered by the Ukrainian side are downright ridiculous - like, say, a "lack of sufficient funds."

A wide range of methods are being used by the Ukrainian side, including refused accreditation, kidnapping, illegal expulsion, severe beatings, and threats of homicide. Within a matter of months, Ukraine has become one of the most dan-

dangerous places in the world for media representatives. And nevertheless numerous Russian reporters have continued to go on their missions.

How many more deaths are needed before the policy-makers come to their senses and start respecting every human life? And what has to be done to ultimately secure the safety of our colleagues, so that all correspondents who go to troubled areas are sure that they get back home alive and intact when their mission is over?

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to remind you of the sad statistics existing in our profession: since 1992, as many as 1,076 journalists have been killed in different parts of the world. It is unthinkable that this sorrowful number may further increase. In many ways it depends on us to prevent this from ever happening. Thank you for your kind attention..



Leonid Gankin, *Director of the International Affairs and Public Relations Department, Skolkovo Foundation (Russia)*: I have been lucky enough to be one of the organizers and subsequently senior managers of the international affairs section of Kommersant Daily, one of the leading Russian newspapers. The section has been setting new standards for international journalists, and I believe that many will agree with me here, has made a tangible contribution to the development of international journalism in Russia.

Kommersant is in many ways a singular phenomenon in Russian journalism. The newspaper's founder and owner Vladimir

Yakovlev preferred experts in various fields to professional journalists, believing that it is easier for expert to learn to write than for the journalist to get a profound knowledge in some specific area. As a result, a lot of economists worked in the economic section, and book, theater and movie critics - in the culture section.

I'm deeply convinced (and this has been confirmed by practice) that an international journalist should not only see far and wide, but should also be an expert in at least one country, one region, he should know its language, culture, history, etc. And this, I believe, is a necessary precondition for becoming a professional international journalist.

We worked really hard to introduce in international journalism what is called the "Russian dimension." Back at the start only a few political analysts would comment on the situation in Russia's neighboring countries, about the developments in Ukraine, Belarus, the Transcaucasia, and so on. We were continuously monitoring the situation in these countries and, of course, their relations with Russia. Secondly, while commenting on any event - ongoing elections, the coming to power of a political party - we analyzed the party's position towards Russia, and we were trying to forecast the main trends in the development of relations with Russia, following the victory of that political force.

We also placed special emphasis on having internship programs for journalists and building the bench strength on a long-term basis.

Energy of Eurasia and Clash of Civilizations

Author: V. Bushuyev

*Director General, "Globalization and Sustainable Development. Institute of Energy Strategy Co (Ltd.)",
Professor, Doctor of Science (Technology)*



THE WORLD has come dangerously close to a hot stage of World War III; today the war is in full swing albeit in a different form. Confrontation has gone beyond scholarly and culturological discussions, political dialogues in the media, threats, and sanctions. Today, civilizations no longer clash for the right to follow their own paths, develop according to their traditions and their own vision of modernity. This is a struggle for survival and for the right to remain on the stage of history.

This is not an evil design of evil forces; the clash at the turn of a millennium reflects the objective process: the dominance of world development is shifting from the mercantile patriarchy to the spiritual matriarchy; from universalism and globalism to variety and self-sufficiency of human values and development priorities; from the material to the spiritual.

Change of development paradigms is never peaceful: at all times, it is accompanied by an uncompromising confrontation between the past and the future.

The world is acutely aware that it needs a different development vector dominated by socio-humanism. ... Socio-humanism presupposes an integration of personal cultural-spiritual elements and a collective form of coexistence among peoples.

Western propaganda proved more effective for the simple reason that while looking unbiased on the surface it permitted a limited share of criticism of Western shortcomings and a carefully measured praise of the opponents. Demonstration of material wellbeing in everyday life proved very attractive for those who denied themselves the necessities for the sake of "world peace."

Today, all pretenses have been pushed aside: bogeys are piled up to scare audiences and affect minds.

We should arrive at a much clearer understanding of the idea of civilization so that to acquire a much better understanding of the objective processes of world development and of subjective possibilities of behavior.

This potential is used by all sorts of subjects in their own interests to ensure continued existence of their own societies or to promote the interests of mankind.

The world is acutely aware that it needs a different development vector dominated by socio-humanism.

The Ukrainian crisis provoked by the West was not a struggle against the corrupt Yanukovich regime. This is a clash of civilizations. It will not end any time soon.

The Phenomenon of Post-Secularism: Religion and Politics in Contemporary Society

Author: M. Granovskaya

Commentator for International Affairs



THERE IS a widely spreading opinion that we are living in a post-secular society. This is true: religion is gradually restoring its former authority which can be described as one of the main trends of social development. Two centuries of secularization have been replaced with the growth of religious feelings in the world very much disappointed with the ideas promoted by an absolutely secular society. Religion has become one of the main factors and instruments of world politics.

In the historical context, the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, the official starting point of the contemporary system of international relations, also marked the beginning of the age of secularization. From that time on, religion was gradually pulling out of political activities and was gradually losing its authority.

The French Revolution of 1789 marked the highest point of secularism in Europe; it had increased the alienation of the crown from the altar which later spread across Europe. In the Treaty of Westphalia, the term "secularization" was applied to Church property; later, this phenomenon started gradually changing European culture and political life by extolling human Reason and alienating God from man.

Today, philosophy and sociology can offer a great number of interpretations of secularization, one of them being a statement of its contradictory nature. In his *Secular Age* philosopher Charles Taylor has offered the most balanced interpretation of it: "A secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable."

Secularism was gradually spreading across the world reaching its peak in the mid-twentieth century; it seemingly pushed aside all religious and ethnic distinctions to become one of the main characteristics of the epoch of modernity.

In recent years, more and more scholars have been writing that religion is returning to public and political life.

American sociologist Peter Berger has written: "Modernization necessarily leads to a decline of religion, both in society and in the minds of individuals, and it is precisely this key idea that has turned to be wrong... The world today is passionately religious."

The above suggests that world politics has learned to take the religious factor into account; today, we should move cautiously when dealing with the ideas of identity and ethnicity. At the same time, not infrequently religious hues are added to purely political conflicts.

The highly contradictory and unificatory nature of globalization puts the concepts of identity, ethnic affiliation and religious conflict into anew context.

Moscow in Its Fateful Hour

Author: D. Safonov

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



The big window in my shop floor office offered a view of all the welding cabins and the bright flashes of light coming from them to indicate they were operating. When suddenly the light went out in one cabin, I waited a bit before walking over to see why the work had stopped. What I saw was the poor girl with her head bent down with her visor on and asleep, apparently after many sleepless nights, and dead to the

world with the cooling electrode resting on the component she was working on.

I didn't have the heart to wake her up.

The factory was mainly making artillery guns and other defense equipment. An important part of what it made were the so-called makeshift defense contraptions like anti-tank hedgehogs made of angled iron.

I can't undertake to pass judgment on how effective those things were, but I know the factory soon discontinued manufacturing the midget "hedgehogs" because the tires on German vehicles were self-sealing after any puncture.

At first I worked the usual eight-hour shifts and could leave for Moscow after duty to stay with my small but very dear family till morning and take the train back to the factory. But this easy schedule didn't last long; soon they introduced a war-time schedule.

Special teams were assigned to stay through air raids on rooftops and in garrets to dispose of incendiary bombs if any. These teams were filled in by the aircraft defense instructors on how to throw incendiary bombs off the roofs to the ground and how to deal with them thereafter.

Air raids on Moscow and its suburbs grew in frequency the closer the enemy was drawing to Moscow. At the end of August, the factory already had to interrupt work several times during the night.

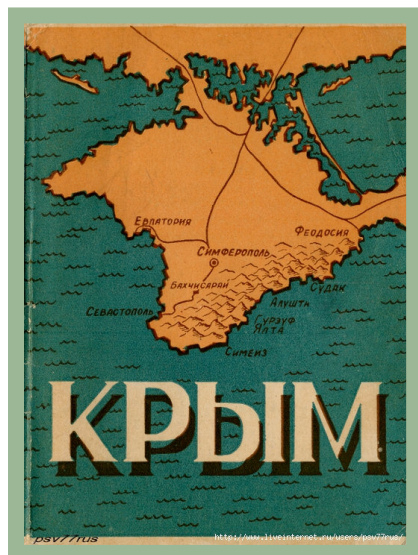
Moscow was at the hardest, if not critical, point during the entire war.

That was Moscow as I saw it during its fateful days in mid-October 1941: fidgety, tense and even anxious. It was totally different from what it always used to be: settled in its ways and feeling it was inviolable. There was good reason to be anxious and taken aback to a degree, because the enemy was literally on its threshold and could discern through binoculars Red Square and other places. German tanks could start rolling along its streets at any moment.

Crimea 1954: How It Was

Author: A. Frolov

Doctor of Science (Political Science)



CRIMEA'S ACCESSION to Russia (some people call it return or reintegration) is, without a doubt, one of the main issues on the Russian-Ukrainian agenda.

The reasoning provided by the Union authorities for public consumption obviously differs considerably from the genuine reasons behind the decision by N.S. Khrushchev and his entourage to transfer a part of territory from one Union republic to another, a move that has no precedent in history. Most analysts believe that N. Khrushchev was guided by purely political motives. It is enough to recall that N. Khrushchev and the party leaders, who had rallied around him, first, arrested and then, in December 1953, executed L.P. Beria, one of his main rivals in the power struggle.

N. Khrushchev's positions in the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee were not sufficiently strong. N. Khrushchev as the leader of the great country, who, in order to ensure his own political and physical survival, had to strengthen his personal power as much as possible by relying on loyal and controllable people.

That could be done by strengthening the positions of representatives of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the second most important Union republic, in the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee.

In Soviet times, public opinion was not taken into account. Polls, especially on political issues, were not conducted.

Some researchers say that the 1954 decision was made in violation of the established procedure and that it was prepared under intense pressure from N. Khrushchev, who liked the idea.

Another theory is related to ethnic problems and the way they were resolved. In 1944, Tatars were deported from Crimea together with Greeks and Bulgarians. However, the deportation especially affected the peninsula's agriculture. In 1950, grain production fell almost five times compared to 1940, tobacco production twice, and vegetable production three times. So "voluntary" Ukrainization was used to solve that problem. This theory, however, can only be regarded as supplementary.

There is also a view that the transfer was timed to coincide with the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's reunification with Russia, and thus the country's leadership decided to thank Ukraine for the three centuries of "friendship and love" between the fraternal peoples.

There are many divided peoples in the world. And these peoples, who speak a language that is different from the language spoken by the majority of the population, have faithfully and loyally served their state. The Ukrainian authorities decided to make such an exception for the Russian-speaking population. The result is there for all to see.

At the Turn of an Epoch: From the Diary of the Russian Ambassador to Belgrade

Author: V. Egoshkin

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary



AMID THE BLOODY EVENTS in Ukraine and the massive propaganda and economic attacks on Russia by the U.S. and its satellites, the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic's regime, which was unacceptable to the West, provides a series of instructive lessons. Incidentally, Slobodan himself predicted that everything that was used against Yugoslavia would soon be used against Russia, which he believed was the Americans'

main goal. It seems that the time for this has come.

As the ambassador of the Russian Federation, I worked with Yugoslav President S. Milosevic for exactly six months - from my arrival in Belgrade on April 5, 2000 until he was forcibly removed from power on October 6.

THE BALKANS, especially Yugoslavia, always attracted me. Like all those who studied at the International Relations Department of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, I studied the history of diplomacy, and it was especially important to study the experience of Russian diplomatic activity in the Balkans.

The stormy events in the former Yugoslavia, in the not so distant past a prosperous state, were an excellent illustration of the term "Balkanization," adopted back in the late 19th century, which was quite applicable to what has been going on in the Caucasus in the past several decades.

At the initial stage of my stint in Belgrade, it was important to prepare for the presentation of credentials. Slobodan Milosevic, who was under intense pressure from the U.S. and its Western allies, was extremely interested in the speedy "legalization" of the Russian ambassador, hoping that this would give him more room for political maneuver. It was clear that the Yugoslavs would not drag their feet on the credentials presentation ceremony.

AMBASSADORS often have to wait for months to formally present their credentials. They are arranged into groups as they arrive and then a collective presentation ceremony is conducted. However, the FRY leadership made an exception for the Russian ambassador. I had to wait only a week.

Our meeting was quite long. Following the recommendations I had received in Moscow, I briefly outlined the Russian approaches on the situation in the region and the development of cooperation with the FRY. However, S. Milosevic did most of the talking, offering a detailed characterization of the country's economic and internal political situation, assessing

the U.S. actions and stressing the importance of Russia's role.

During my meeting with S. Milosevic on April 13, I mentioned my intention to pay a visit to the patriarch at the behest of Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia. Milosevic spoke in glowing terms about the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, which, according to him, enjoyed great respect in Yugoslavia and was perceived as a sincere friend of the Serbs.

A Russian diplomat, especially in a country so close to us historically as Serbia, can always be of interest to local residents, and contact with him is a matter of prestige to many of them. Of course, it is necessary to cut off "riffraff," all sorts of scoundrels who seek contacts for purely selfish motives, but it is wrong to reject those who can be useful, as is sometimes the case here.

The Foreign Policy of Modern France

Author: Ye. Osipov

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IN THE SPRING OF 2014, T.V. Zvereva, a research associate at the Russian Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Academy, published a monograph on the foreign policy of modern France. In June 2014, the author used it to defend her dissertation for the academic title of Doctor of Political Science.

Chronologically, the monograph covers a period between the start of the 21st century and June 2012. The main focus is on the study of the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-12). T.V. Zvereva's monograph has a number of incontestable objective advantages. It came out two years after Sarkozy left big politics. During this time, a wide range of studies appeared, primarily in France, providing a

better insight into various decisions made by the French president. The monograph also analyzes President Francois Hollande's first diplomatic steps, for the first time in Russian historiography. It should also be noted that amid the sharp exacerbation of relations between Russia and the West, an expert view of the evolution of the foreign policy of France, which has always stood out for its special position on the development of international relations, is highly relevant today.

The book gives special priority to the two main lines of French diplomacy: European and Atlantic (relations with the U.S. and NATO).

TV. Zvereva provides a detailed description of Sarkozy's Union for the Mediterranean (UFM) project, which he put forward in 2007 in Morocco. The Union was supposed to become a platform for the implementation of large-scale joint programs and for the discussion of the region's economic and political problems. France, which always gave high priority to the Mediterranean, saw the UFM as a chance to consolidate its positions not only in the Mediterranean region but also in Europe as a whole.

The monograph also addresses the Chinese and Russian tracks of French diplomacy. France was the first Western power to normalize cooperation with Beijing, establishing diplomatic relations with it back in 1964. In the 21st century, China's economic progress and its emergence as one of the world's largest economies led to a sharp increase in French-Chinese trade turnover. In 2011, China "was the fifth largest supplier of goods to France, after the U.S." (p. 304).

As Yu.I. Rubinsky justly noted, "each of the Fifth Republic's presidents usually started his term in a conflict-like tonality of relations with Moscow, but also ended up building a rapprochement with it."⁵ As far as Francois Hollande is concerned, the sharp exacerbation of French-Russian cooperation this time happened not at the start but in the middle of the presidential term. One is only left to hope that by the end of this five-year presidency, cooperation between Russia and France will reach its traditionally high level.

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