

Russia and Europe: Topical Issues in Contemporary International Journalism (International Conference)

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Session 1.

Russia-Europe: Reset Prospects. The Role of the Media

Deputy Director, Information and Press Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (Russia)

Escalating confrontation in the media space has become a sign of the times. While accusing Russia of nonexistent sins, Western government officials are pursuing a coordinated line toward confrontation in the media sphere. This involves an array of anti-Russian measures of a political, diplomatic, military, technical, financial, economic, and informational nature.

It's an open secret that the tonality of Western media outlets toward Russia has visibly changed in the past several years. It has become more critical, sometimes openly provocative. Media outlets often resort to unscrupulous methods: brazen disinformation, fake stories, and the distortion of facts in order to manipulate public opinion.

Unfortunately, we are now faced with the challenge of the media being used to establish new dividing lines between nations and conduct unfair activity in the media field to divide people connected by close neighborly relations for centuries, which is at odds with professional journalistic standards. Although the journalists' original mission is the exact opposite - i.e., to serve as a kind of bridge between nations and objectively inform the public about the events in

the world at large, including Russia. The media have an enormous potential for impacting public opinion and it should be used in a positive way, for the benefit of our nations.

It is important to foster an honest and frank dialogue between journalists and experts along the lines of our present meeting and help reporters get to the truth and bring it to the national audience.

We hope that cooperation with European journalists and publications, both traditional and so-called new media outlets, will continue.

Senior adviser to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (Austria)

THE PROBLEM of fake news and its impact on the discussion of freedom of the media is hugely important in the context of this conference. Today, international journalism, on the one hand, is sick with fake news; on the other, it is trying to resist the pressure of structures of power and the state in general determined to suppress what they interpret as fake news and propaganda.

Another concern is that some governments try to suppress dissent and control public communications through such measures as repressive rules regulating the establishment and operation of media outlets and/or websites. These rules envisage denying accreditation to journalists, foreign correspondents in the first place.

What are the conditions under which the free media could effectively clean themselves from fake news and disinformation? There are several of them. First, an impartial, authoritative oversight body independent of political and commercial pressure; second, strong independent public media; third, the economic regulation of the media sphere; fourth, measures to promote media and digital literacy, including introduction of these topics in the regular school curriculum; fifth, equality, non-discrimination, inter-cultural understanding, and other democratic values that teach citizens to reject fake news and propaganda.

Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs

THIS is an important or even burning issue. The conflict in Ukraine is rooted in "either Russia or Europe"; the attempts to replace "or" with "and" failed with sad and well-known results. You have pinpointed the most painful problem of our relations.

Professor at Budapest Corvinus University, visiting professor at Moscow Lomonosov State University (Hungary)

WHAT IS SAID here about the discussion of fake news as a phenomenon of the last decade is debatable. Fake information existed in the past, exists now and will survive in future. At no time the world was free from confrontations and manipulations. All sides in the never-ending rivalry and competition for attention relied on manipulations through the international media system.

An open competition for information in the virtual sphere is unfolding before our eyes. The more lies you tell the stronger is your conviction that you will be heard. Indeed, the crowd pays attention to those who shout louder.

On Earth, we cannot build a paradise - but politics, and diplomacy as part of politics, should spare no effort to prevent hell.

The new media reject neutrality, moderation and mutual understanding. I have no choice but to comply with those who pay me, otherwise a conflict is inevitable.

Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs: We often separate philosophy and morality from our practical activity. We often discuss ways of harmonizing media responsibility with business and trustworthiness. There is no simple solution. It is very difficult to combine these three concepts

There is not a single monophonic region or country in the world. The larger a country is, the greater its political and cultural polyphony.

Session 2.

The Revival of Neo-Nazism: An Analysis of Media Technology. Developing Counterstrategy.

Professor of international law and global political studies at the IMC University of Applied Sciences (Austria)

Today, we are being offered an absolutely different - the exact opposite - version of the fight against Nazism, which denies that the Slavic world paid the highest price for peace.

We are seeing communism being essentially equated to fascism. This is a delusion that is fraught with numerous problems and the misinterpretation of historical events.

Administrative Director, Russian Public Television (Russia)

THE BEGINNING of the 21th century was marked by the resurgence of aggressive nationalism, as well as various forms of political extremism and international terrorism. In the process of political, military and ethnic mobilization, certain unscrupulous groups are actively trying to use religious slogans and postulates. Meanwhile, interreligious friction as such, which has escalated recently, is preventing religious centers from combining their efforts in the fight against evil forces that disrupt peace and stability in society and bring untold suffering to nations.

The principles of interreligious and inter-confessional dialogue involve a minimum of assumptions accepted by its participants, without which it is impossible to go ahead with the dialogue as such. First and foremost, it is the principle of tolerance. In this context, tolerance is a tolerant attitude on the part of members of one religious community toward members of other religious communities. Everyone has his own religious beliefs and everyone acknowledges that others have the same rights.

During the centuries of interreligious and inter-confessional strife, a confrontation mentality has evolved that still affects many people.

Recent events show that the increasing number of armed conflicts and the rise in extremism are to a very large extent caused by xenophobia, intolerance of other religious identities and cultures, as well as the intolerance of different opinions and views.

The media can serve as a platform for dialogue and are called upon to become key partners in this dialogue. The only question is what motives are behind this role: Is this the public need for information or the wish of certain governments to impose stereotypes or dogma on their citizens? Or maybe the media sometimes set themselves this task? Answers to these questions determine the role of the media in intercultural dialogue.

Head, Association of Journalists and the Media Abroad, Editor of the portal "Vsya Shveytsaria na ladoni" (Switzerland in the Palm of Your Hand) (Switzerland)

INFORMATION WARFARE is a form of collective brainwashing and a weapon used to warp peoples' political identity and their ideas about the past. In the twenty-five post-Soviet years, attempts to revise the results of World War II persisted in Europe. Today, European politicians are saying that the Soviet Union and fascist Germany were equally responsible for the war.

The European Parliament went even further. It suggested that the day when the Non-Aggression Pact of Molotov-Ribbentrop had been signed should become the "European Day of Remembrance" de facto putting Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin on the same footing. Polish and Baltic politicians even asserted that the Victory Day had not brought liberty to Europe but occupation. They spoke of Soviet power on their territories as the darkest period of their history.

The speed with which history is revised suggests that very soon the military cemeteries will disappear. In his primary school in Switzerland, my elder son learned grammar rulers, multiplication table and literature while the secondary school surprised us: according to the history textbook, it was the British and the Americans who had won World War II and liberated the world from the "brown plague."

Information war is waged in people's minds that are not harder to reformat than any primitive gadget. Brainwashing is hard to detect. Great American sci-fi writer Robert Sheckley once said: The saddest fact is that, in an information war, the one who tells the truth always loses. He is limited by the truth, while the liar can proclaim whatever he wishes.

The Western media are guided by the naive conviction that money is all important in any information war. I think that we - journalists and representatives of the media - with the widest possible audiences within our reach should push aside what the famous writer said in his time. We should stake on truth: information wars are won by those whose spiritual potential is greater.

Correspondent of Izvestia (Russia)

THERE IS NO NEED to explain what Nazism is. Our belief that the Nuremberg Tribunal had condemned Nazism and discontinued its spread proved to be an illusion. In the twenty-first century, we are confronted with new forms of fascism while the world community is paying lip service to its denunciation.

European countries are challenged by some groups trying to revive the dangerous ideology of Nazism, the Baltic countries and Ukraine being the pertinent examples. There are neo-Nazi groups in the United States as well, Charlottesville being an ample proof. Russia is not free from neo-Nazi outcrops, either. All relevant state structures in Russia are working hard to suppress this phenomenon. Here I represent the media that have many instruments at their disposal to attract attention of the international and Russian public to these facts, to raise inconvenient questions and call to struggle against this dangerous ideology. We should work rather than indulge ourselves in empty words, slogans and proclamations.

Session 3

Russian and European Media Seen From Inside

Observer with the Magyar Nemzet newspaper, member of the Valdai Club

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS are highly turbulent, which makes the job of journalists even harder. Indeed, it is far from easy to work in the media and to bring Russia and Europe closer. High professionalism is badly needed.

Editor, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia journal (Bulgaria)

In the last few years, the idea of a development strategy for the Black Sea macro-region has been gaining popularity in the European Union. In fact, this is a homogenous approach to common problems in this geographic region that brings together EU members and other countries determined to cooperate for the sake of economic, social and territorial development. It is expected that their concerted efforts and the resources the EU has already allocated for this purpose will bring the desired results. This integrated structure has two important advantages: it can address and settle the problems outside the reach of individual countries and create a common idea about the region's future.

The region might become an arena of rivalry that will do nothing good to the future of the Black Sea states and will perpetuate backwardness of regional communities. In fact, undisguised interference of third countries has become an important regional factor and a dangerous trend that requires adequate decisions to overcome contradictions and confrontation.

The economic ties between Russia and Turkey that have reached impressive dimensions should be considered as one of the axes of the region's development.

This project is associated with the political interests of local countries which can be described as another highly important aspect. The scope of the project and the far from simple conditions in which it will be developed mean that the process will be long and tortuous.

Higher Pan-European School, Bratislava, Faculty of Mass Media (Slovakia):

THE PROBLEM of so-called "fake news" has touched the community of professional journalists, academic circles, and the public at large for several years now. The problem is a subject of energetic debate among doctoral candidates, presidential candidates, and now sitting presidents.

"What is fake news?" There is no methodology for identifying it. We also tried to identify it in the course of our conference, but there's still no final answer. Or we should we not use the term at all, since it's simply straight propaganda and the stirring up of hatred - plus rumors, unreliable information, and so on?

Our distinguished colleague from the BBC (Kate Adie) proposed searching for a solution in each piece of news, dissecting each publication. This is what we do in the Faculty of Mass Media at the Higher Pan-European School in Bratislava. The aim of our work is to study the functions of a television director in producing news programs while observing the standards of journalism and objectivity. Our work includes conducting empirical studies of three TV companies' television news: the daily news program Vremya on Russia's Channel 1; the Russian-language version of the program News on Europe's Euronews channel; and the program Novini on Ukraine's State Channel 1.

In today's context of the growing political confrontation between Russia and the West, the media on both sides have once again become "propagandists and instigators," and television news is now an effective real-time format of audience manipulation.

Armen Oganessian: It really was interesting and useful for us to exchange opinions. Today we even went beyond the sessions' strictly delineated topics, but I think this was justified.

We've talked about professionalism. It's good to get acquainted with these criteria. At the School of Journalism, they taught us that three sources should verify a news story. These principles have applied for a long time, even during the Second World War.

But let's examine the situation today. For example, a correspondent is in Syria or Lugansk. There are no other correspondents around, and no sources of information are available. This journalist is the sole source of information at the given point or in the entire region. Does this raise the degree of the journalist's responsibility? Yes. Are these criteria observed? Not always.

The same can be said of news stories not associated with hot spots. The emergence of social networks and other sources of information hasn't resulted in having a number of sources of information on one and the same fact. This is a paradox. It would seem such an abundance of information and number of channels affect veracity. And here we have a problem. Today, we have not two or three, but dozens of viewpoints and ten to fifteen approaches to one and the same fact. This blurs the actual picture, making it relative in the eyes of many. There's obviously a second problem: Nowadays, getting objectivity and truth is like pulling teeth. Does this mean journalists should fall into a state of suspended animation and be nihilistic where professional criteria are concerned? Of course not. This is why the OCSE representative's report was of such interest today. In principle, the OSCE should collect all of the different criteria that apply to today's conditions of media work and journalism. Let's not rely solely on the OSCE. We have to do it ourselves. And, as the great writer Gogol said, sometimes it's enough to make a diagnosis.

We didn't expect to find answers to all of the complicated problems and challenges facing today's journalism. We're grateful to all of the participants who gave honest assessments and expressed sensible viewpoints. It was very interesting and useful. Thank you very much.

Russia: The Part of Europe that Has Never Been Part of It

Author: Armen Oganessian

Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs

Remarks at the session in honor of the 30th anniversary of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Europe

NEW EUROPEAN INTEGRATION coincided with an intensive phase of the globalization process that was a stimulating and driving force in the evolution of the European Union. Today, the debates about the crisis of globalization and the troubling phenomena evident in European

integration are occurring almost simultaneously. Polemics are raging in the European media as to who is to blame for the fact that globalization, which has brought a lot of positive elements to world development, has not become a universal and, most importantly, harmonizing model for the world at large.

The European elites dedicated to the European Union do not deny that initially, the idea as such had elements of a political project structured "from the top down." A collective study of identity issues in Europe published by Cambridge University says that EU political experts, who are often sponsored by the European Commission, focus primarily on the Union itself and the impact of its institutions.... At the same time, almost no attention has been paid to the question of how the sense of community has evolved from the bottom to the top and outside or around EU institutions.... The economic and financial crisis has shown clearly that the external disciplinary principles of integration are running ahead of internal integration, and in some cases, are at odds with it, as well as with its regional diversity.

Today, Europe has become aware of the need to support global competition and a quick transition to a new industrial revolution. However, East European countries do not have sufficient financial and economic resources to develop their own competitive industry. The 20% share of EU subsidies in these countries' budgets helped somewhat narrow the glaring gap in socioeconomic development between "Old Europe" and "New Europe."

Naturally, we are concerned not only about economic issues but also the stability of the European market for our energy resources. The postulate that Russia is part of Europe seems to be incontrovertible.

Here, we are confronted with a kind of antinomy: Russia is part of Europe that has never become its part. Did Byzantine culture not have a major impact on European civilization? Is there not enough tangible evidence of that cultural presence in Italian, German and other European cities? Nevertheless, Byzantium never became part of Europe, which spared no effort to destroy the civilization that was inherited by Russia.

It is important for us to understand how Europe's further development in all its political, cultural and economic aspects will reflect on us.

The Sanctions Regime Is Here to Stay

Author: V. Garbuzov

Director of the Institute for the U.S. and Canadian Studies, Russian Academy of Science

The decision-making process in any country is not as simple as it may seem. As a rule, it is preceded by a discussion. Our institute is naturally involved in this discussion at the level of the Foreign Ministry's Scientific Council, the Security Council of Russia, the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly, and the State Duma. It cannot be said that the Russian authorities at different levels and in different branches of government take no account of our considerations, assessments, and analytics. But, of course, the final decision is taken by those who are responsible for that decision.

When people say that current Russian-American relations are at their lowest level compared to the Cold War, one should bear in mind that the Cold War was quite a long process, which started after the Second World War and lasted until the breakup of the Soviet Union. The events of the Cold War kept changing, and the war itself evolved.

Compared to the 1970s and early 1980s, the current level of relations can be regarded as very low. That was a Cold War period when both superpowers - the Soviet Union and the United States - managed to develop a mechanism for regulating the bipolar confrontation, and it worked. Today, there is no such mechanism. Obviously, it will have to be created, although some would probably prefer to avoid this.

In the early 21st century, with a change of president in the country, Russia's previous foreign-policy line was revised. This revision was seen as Russia's challenge primarily to the West. In the United States, the new Russian policy was considered a challenge not just to a particular American president, but to the constants of American foreign policy developed over the decades. That is why our relations have been deadlocked. Today, it is extremely difficult to provide a simple prescription for breaking the deadlock.

We should not set unrealistic goals. Clearly, it will be impossible to reverse the negative trend in our relations under the Trump administration.

It is also clear that the policy of containing Russia is a long-term policy and that the sanctions regime exists and is here to stay, because the experience of other countries shows that when sanctions are imposed, they last much longer than a few years or even a decade. We should act on this assumption.

The American and Russian societies are collaborating through contacts between researchers, universities, and cultural organizations. As it turns out, the sanctions regime does not work in these areas.

NATO Militarization Gathers Speed

Author: Yu. Belobrov

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AS THE MEMBERS of the alliance never tire of saying, the NATO countries are conducting the largest buildup of the bloc's collective military forces since the end of the Cold War. Along with the programmed increase in military expenditures, the expansion of the alliance's military potential, and the rise in the number of forward-based troops along Russia's borders on the territory of the East European countries, the scale of military activity is expanding, and facilities for the stockpiling of weapons, heavy vehicles, and other materiel are being created or brought up to NATO standards.

NATO strategists believe this will allow the alliance not only to quickly deploy front-line forces near Russian territory, but to speed up the subsequent assembly of troop formations considerably by shortening the time needed to transport them from Great Britain and the continental United States.

The alliance is therefore creating an offensive military potential on Russia's western border that reinforces the existing imbalance in conventional arms on the European continent in favor of the West and elevates the level of military tension in the region.

The events in Ukraine, which were provoked and fueled by the Western countries, were chosen as a pretext for the North Atlantic alliance to flex its muscles.

Russia's relations with NATO have entered the most dangerous period of extreme confrontation since the end of the Cold War, at the initiative of the alliance.

To neutralize Russia's resistance to NATO's global policy of establishing Western hegemony over the planet, and to curb its independent actions both within the country and in the international arena, a comprehensive plan to deter Russia was adopted in Warsaw that contained a complete set of measures for applying military, political, diplomatic, financial, economic, and informational pressure to Moscow.

NATO analysts note with satisfaction that the participation of many of the bloc's countries in creating multinational combat units on the alliance's eastern flank is its own sort of guarantee that all of them will automatically be involved in military actions, should an armed conflict with Russia break out.

For the first time in a quarter of a century, the Pentagon has adopted a new operational plan for the defense of Europe. It calls for the deploying offensive weapons on the continent and ensuring superiority in the air and at sea in order to block enemy forces.

NATO's actions to enlarge the alliance, strengthen its offensive potential, and reinforce its eastern flank are raising tension and weakening military security in Europe by upsetting the balance of forces in the region that has endured since the end of the Cold War. As a result of these disruptive and provocative actions, Europe is gradually being transformed from the relatively stable and militarily calm region of not so long ago into a zone of heightened tension and confrontation.

The alliance's current militaristic policy indisputably poses a fundamental challenge to Russia, demanding from it the intense development and implementation of adequate retaliatory defensive measures and effective solutions to mobilizing military, diplomatic, informational, and other resources for successfully countering it. It is not too late for Western Europe in turn to consider in which direction the zealous Atlantists, who expect ever newer sacrifices from NATO's member countries, are taking it.

Middle East: "The Americans Take Action"

Author: V. Naumkin

Academic Director, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Academician

I wouldn't exaggerate the importance of this trend, since the Americans haven't left the Middle East at all. Despite all of Trump's statements that he's going to reduce the American presence abroad and concentrate on domestic affairs, the Americans are firmly ensconced in the Middle East. This region's bound by American military bases, weapons depots, and an enormous number of enterprises and representatives. American banks are full of Arab money. Wherever there's oil and gas, the Americans are there too.

We're hardly going to get into competition with the Americans. It's another matter that we're successfully conducting an operation in Syria in what I think is a unique multi-vector format. We've shown ourselves to be a strong, influential player that has a strong interest in the region.

Without doubt, both the West and many countries in the region would like to press the United States into taking a strong stance in Syria. Turkey and the Gulf States demanded that the Americans take active measures to bring down the government of Bashar al-Assad, but this never happened - to everyone's disappointment. So, the problem isn't that the Americans are fighting mainly against ISIS, which isn't entirely true. They're arming and training units of the opposition - units they view as moderates. We grit our teeth and accept this situation because we can't fight the whole world in the Middle East.

Our presence in Syria and that of the Americans differ in status. Nobody called the Americans there, and they have no mandate from the United Nations, which they'd need for any actions in a foreign country. We were invited by the Syrians, we're there legitimately, and we have an agreement on bases.

The future of this region has yet to be decided. In addition, there are rumors that a new de-escalation zone will be established there in order to avoid clashes between these pro-American forces and the Syrian army, which we support. For us and the Syrians, however, it's vital that control be established over these areas and their hydrocarbon deposits. I think this will be done.

One Year of President Donald Trump's China Policy

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CHINA became a defining topic of Donald Trump's election campaign, since it was closely associated with the basic elements of both his foreign and domestic policy.

Trump's strong criticism of China in a wide variety of areas and on a great many grounds played a considerable role in his being elected. For a broad spectrum of American voters, China was presented - and perceived - as a source of many evils.

We believe it is entirely appropriate to view Trump as an iconic figure - in essence, the leader of a unique revolution unfolding in American society.

THE MAIN UPSHOT of the past year is probably that the expected anti-Chinese revolution of Donald Trump failed to materialize, and there was no drastic change in relations or elevation of the level of conflict.

Trump's taking office resulted in no appreciable adjustments to - or, more important, drastic revisions in - the institutional structure of bilateral relations.

Throughout the year, the administration clearly rolled back somewhat, and rather quickly too.

The situation with Taiwan brought about by the phone call from President Tsai Ing-wen was defused.

Of special importance is the North Korean issue. With all its problems as a matter of nuclear proliferation in a transitional period, the unique nature of the North, the personality of Kim Jong-un, and other attendant factors, the lack of progress here also testifies to the limitations of the business approach in solving such foreign policy problems. It appears the Trump administration has come to understand this.

Another interpretation of the Korean situation is that Trump continues to see and deal with it according to his understanding of the problem, and his own idea of how and why to solve it.

It must be said that the Chinese have retreated as much as possible from any sort of hostile confrontation with the Trump administration.

While Russia is China's main foreign policy and geopolitical partner, Beijing does not see it as an entirely reliable ally.

The combination of these key domestic and foreign policy factors, accompanied by many others, will most likely lead China's political bosses to see the expediency of delaying or avoiding any hostile confrontations with the United States, especially where economics is concerned.

Russian-American Cooperation in the Field of International Information Security: Proposals for Priority Guidelines

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THE POSSIBLE AGENDA for Russian-American cooperation in the field of international information security (IIS) is determined mainly by the current state of Russian-American relations and the growing role of the ongoing scientific and technical revolution in world politics in general.

Analysis of the events happening in today's U.S. foreign policy provides a number of arguments supporting the assumption that the American establishment has in recent years been strategically preparing to create a strong-arm scenario for resolving conflicts with Russia. Great informational and psychological pressure is being put on public opinion to sell it the image of Russia as the main cause of all problems in the domestic and foreign policy of the United States and the West in general.

Sergey Lavrov believes that "bilateral ties [between Russia and the U.S.] remain hostage to the clashes inside the American establishment.... This is a direct consequence of the policy of Barack

Obama's administration, which demolished the foundation of cooperation and laid time bombs beneath it...."

As the work of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security has shown, the efforts of (among others) the Russian Federation and its partners have led to a general understanding in the international expert community of the need to observe the worldwide obligations that stem from sources of international law recognized by all governments: general and special international conventions, international custom, the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations, and court rulings.

The international community could concentrate its efforts on the progressive development of international law by adapting it to the characteristics of the ICT environment as a new sphere of international cooperation.

To organize efforts a specialized working group should be created to prepare proposals for drafts of international agreements under the supervision of an international organization or the UN General Assembly's International Law Commission. Such a working group could include legal experts, engineers, and representatives of the uniformed services of the interested states.

Expertise in the documents drafted by the specialized working group could be achieved by taking advantage of the potential of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications, convened by the Secretary General upon the recommendation of the General Assembly, and in the format of bilateral and multilateral consultations.

Russia and the Vatican: Frank and Constructive Dialogue Launched

Author: V. Bogomazov

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IN TODAY'S COMPLICATED and unstable international situation, a special role belongs to influential forces that cooperate with our country in trying to stop humankind from sliding toward a catastrophe.

For a long time, the views and attitudes of the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church were with good reason associated in Russian opinion with hardline conservatism and were definitely not pro-Russian. But an objective analysis of the current dialogue between Russia and the Vatican and developments based on it make clear that much has changed and that today there is a mutual desire for fruitful coordination.

Analysts and journalists continue to compare the positions of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Holy See as stated during Parolin's visit, both analyzing them in light of relations between the two churches and evaluating possible effects of the visit on the current global political situation in general. Let us go over the main points stated by the Moscow Patriarchate and the Holy See ahead of Parolin's visit.

In an interview with the Italian newspaper *Il Sole 24 Ore*, he called for "better mutual understanding between those who risk coming across as two opposite poles."

Parolin and his Russian hosts made public assessments of current political relations between Russia and the Vatican and of the dialogue between the Russian Orthodox and Catholic churches.

In dealing with the similarity of the Russian and Vatican positions on regional issues, Lavrov focused on the Middle East. Moscow and the Holy See "have a common view on the need to launch a dialogue alongside the irreconcilable fight against terrorism and extremism and to ensure the movement towards a political settlement in the interests of all the main ethnic and religious groups in the given countries," he said.

The dialogue between the Russian Orthodox and Catholic churches received high appraisal on both sides during Parolin's visit. A meeting in Havana on February 12, 2016, between Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis was assessed as an event of special significance.

We would attach special importance to a point made by U.S. Vatican analyst and journalist Robert Moynihan. Moynihan described Parolin's visit as a pivotal moment not only for the present, but also in terms of what the future could be like.

The global political status quo is a sufficient reason for various forces across the world to come together to pursue causes that are in the interest of the entire humankind.

70 Years of India-Russia Relations: A Historic Milestone

Author: Pankaj Saran

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of India to the Russian Federation

RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA and Russia are rooted in history, mutual trust and mutually beneficial cooperation. This is a strategic partnership that has withstood the test of time and that enjoys the support of the people of both countries.

This year, in the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, India participated as Guest Country in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum-2017. The Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi was the Guest of Honor. During this time, the 18th Annual Bilateral Summit was also held, which saw the adoption of the historic St. Petersburg Declaration: Vision for the 21st Century, and signing of 12 Agreements in economic and political areas.

Both countries are celebrating the 70th anniversary by organizing events across the length and breadth of the countries reflecting the deep and multifaceted relationship.

THE DEFENSE FACET of the relationship is one of the strongest pillars of the India-Russia relationship and has withstood the test of time. India, with Russia's cooperation, has achieved capacity-building in strategic areas through acquisitions and development of weapons.

RUSSIA is an indispensable partner in the sphere of nuclear energy and recognizes India as a responsible country with advanced nuclear technology with an impeccable non-proliferation record.

INDIA AND RUSSIA have identified several new areas of cooperation. These range from deep sea exploration to building knowledge-based economies based on science and technology, innovation, robotics and artificial intelligence, focusing on infrastructure, agriculture, shipbuilding, railways, aviation, and greater connectivity, especially people-to-people contacts. Special focus will be given to cooperation between the younger generation and to the cultural sphere.

Thailand and Russia: Sharing the Past, Building a Shared Future

Author: Don Pramudwinai

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

THIS YEAR Russia and Thailand are marking the 120th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The kingdom attaches special importance to this event.

The Russia Festival - a central event organized by the Thai Foreign Ministry, other ministries, agencies and commercial entities, as well as the Russian embassy in Thailand - was held at a famous department store in the heart of Bangkok on July 14-16 under the slogan "Sharing the past, building a shared future."

This festival helps further strengthen all aspects of our close and cordial ties. It also provided a glimpse at the opportunities for future cooperation in various fields

In addition, the ministry plans to publish a collection of historical documents (1971-1991) from the archives of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

Despite the ups and downs in the history of their relations, Thailand and Russia have always adhered to diplomatic mechanisms to make progress.

Thai-Russian ties have been growing over the past 120 years. All developments in our shared history have made a constructive contribution to the evolution of strong and cordial relations between our two countries.

Today, it is important for us to speed up the implementation of the agreements that were reached between our heads of government at their meeting last May. This applies primarily to the goal of increasing bilateral trade fivefold in the next five years. Considering the current state of the global economy, as well as our ability to cooperate closely to enhance our competitiveness and look for new forms of economic cooperation, we will be in a position to meet the existing challenges and achieve the set targets.

Our bilateral ties are not limited to diplomatic relations, going far beyond.

The Post-Truth World

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FAKE NEWS played a very limited role in the presidential campaign in the United States that brought Donald Trump to the White House yet the despair of the Western liberal world attracted a lot of attention to this phenomenon.

The Oxford Dictionaries selected "post-truth" the word of the year to describe the situation in which the truth surrendered to a long chain of so-called truths. The British linguists specified: "an adjective defined as relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." Extended a bit further fake news and false information can be described as the phenomenon of the year while the place of the hero of the year belongs to the Internet troll that, as many people believe, won the presidential election in the United States, triumphed at Brexit and, together with the hackers, joined the Kremlin's vanguard in the so-called hybrid war.

It should be said in all justice that in recent years the borders between the truth, reality and fakes or fake news has been eroded. The world has become less predictable than in the Cold War years when two poles stood opposed to each other. Today, a much bigger number of players harmonize their interests through ad hoc blocs and alliances; diplomacy that, while steadily gaining weight amid the turbulent international relations typical of the period of transition, is losing its habitual discretion.

In the world devoid of reference points, an individual seeks safety in his corner with the Internet as his only contact with the world. The global network and its algorithms - Facebook, Twitter and Google - gradually and stealthily draw him into their hole, their information bubble.

Moscow's opponents are especially irritated by the fact that the Russian channels and their alternative information are gaining popularity across the world and have already deprived the U.S. of its monopoly on information.

Today, the journalist community has been hit by a wave of replacement of human resources with automatized means and instruments; editors are replaced with algorithms probably because the

online users prefer the clickbait news as commercially highly attractive. This trend is responsible, to a great extent, for the spread of fake or at least partly true news.

We have all been involved in this spectacle since the late 1980s; today, it reached its highest point. In the world living beyond the limits of truth, it is much more important what the press writes rather than the truth; the border between what is true and what is false is disappearing.

The Catalan Experiment: From Sunrise to Sunset in One Month

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On October 1, the regional powers - the government and the Parliament of Catalonia - carried out a referendum on independence from Spain. The Spanish government declared its results null and void. Prime Minister of Spain Mariano Rajoy dismissed it as a "democratically deplorable spectacle."

Carles Puigdemont, President of the Generalitat (Catalan government), spoke of the plebiscite as an event of huge legal consequences by which he meant independence of Catalonia.

Each of the opposing sides brandished juridical arguments to confirm the legitimacy of their decisions and corresponding measures.

In fact, what happened was not an ad hoc outburst of emotion in the self-governing community; these events are rooted in a tense standoff between the region and the center that goes back into history, in which periods of relative calm alternated with attempts to declare independence.

THE WAVE of Catalan nationalism/separatism rose high in 2010 when Artur Mas, who represented the right-center and (until recently) moderately nationalistic coalition *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), was elected President of the Generalitat. History (not only Catalan history) has taught us that for the transition from rhetoric to practical actions a leader or a group of leaders are needed so that to fan the smoldering fire of nationalism in any society and launch an attack at a conventional citadel.

The current context is highly specific: Catalan separatism is driven by a coalition knocked together out of Catalan bourgeoisie and their traditional opponents from the Republican Left of Catalonia.

THE CRISIS was unexpectedly and promptly resolved amid the tension the separatists had been gradually building up for years to achieve the apogee on October 1. All those who had expected that independence would be immediately proclaimed were very much disappointed.

In the course of history, Russian intelligentsia asked itself two major questions, one of them being "What is to be done?" Today, Spanish authorities and Spanish society, of which the Catalans are an inalienable part, should look for a well-substantiated answer to the same question. It seems that the unity between the Spanish government and the main opposition parties was the main factor that showed the road toward settlement. The separatists had probably expected to use the contradictions between the parties in their own interests and to split the front of the main political forces of Spain united to protect the country's territorial integrity.

Euro-Culture: Some Aspects of EU Cultural Policy

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WITH ITS ECONOMIES SHAKEN by financial woes and its system of fundamental values - democracy, the rule of law, and human rights - watered down, the European Union attaches special importance to cultural affairs, seeing them as the core of its foreign policy and the basis for its social and economic development.

The EU has been revising its legislation on cultural and creative sectors to bring it into line with the Union's foreign policy, social, and economic agendas. The EU has launched various cultural initiatives, some of them of global significance.

The EU cooperates intensively with international organizations such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe in linking cultural issues to the promotion of the Union's democratic values.

The strategy for international cultural relations that was presented by Federica Mogherini, EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, on June 8, 2016, includes the task of helping achieve stability and security in regions bordering the EU.

There is growing interest in European countries in the European Capitals of Culture program. Its current record proves that it helps boost cultural tourism, attract investments, improve the look of cities, and draw young people into the protection of cultural heritage.

The growth of cities is directly dependent on investment in high-tech industries and on human talent, and hence cultural and creative sectors are seen as instruments for the revival of urbanization and as drivers of economic development. One of the goals of The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor is to popularize Europe's urban potential and raise its significance.

The EU is also involved in the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program, which was launched in 1987 and aims to support cultural and tourism initiatives at national and local level.

Projects on which the EU and Council of Europe have been cooperating over the past eight years include facilitating young people's access to cultural heritage under the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society; creating documents reflecting key trends in cultural and creative sectors and setting cultural policy guidelines; the Cultural Routes program; digitization of cultural heritage; supporting Europe's film industry and audiovisual market; combating illegal trade in cultural goods³⁴; and seeking more effective international legal cooperation in trying to protect cultural heritage.

Encouraging Chinese to Study in Russia: Challenges and Prospects

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EXPORT OF EDUCATION is a traditional instrument of soft power in foreign policy and simultaneously a wide-scale foreign economic activity.

One wonders whether association with Soviet higher education, which has traditionally enjoyed a high international reputation, may give present-day Russian educational institutions competitive advantages in Asia. A Chinese, however, in choosing a foreign university to apply to, mainly uses quantitative and qualitative criteria such as prospects for employment after graduation.

The Chinese higher education system was initially organized along Soviet lines, but the situation has changed. China has gone over to a multi-level system of training bachelors and masters; Chinese universities have wider representation in global rankings; and their staffs include academics invited from leading foreign educational and research centers.

Chinese students account for the world's largest proportion of those studying abroad, and China itself is one of the world's largest exporters of education services.

In 2017, about 30,000 Chinese nationals have been receiving higher education in Russia - this number includes both those paying for their instruction and those receiving grants from the Russian state. In China, there have been more than 17,000 Russian students in 2017.

Russia's export of higher education to China mainly takes the form of student exchanges with Chinese institutions or is based on agreements on the enrollment of Chinese students in Russian institutions. There also are multilateral projects.

On the one hand, advertising Russian higher education in China as one of the most attractive options for education abroad is a challenge for any Russian university that wants to win competition for Chinese students. It is the preferences of prospective Chinese students that determine today's educational map of the world.

On the other hand, trying to persuade young Chinese to study in Russia is a major political and economic task for the Russian government, which primarily needs to focus on employment statistics for foreign graduates of Russian institutions and on concrete achievements in education and research that have won recognition in world academia and have been covered by the world media.

The Russian Language as an Integration Factor in the Post-Soviet Space

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It is hard to imagine the growing international prestige and influence of Russia without the increasing use of the Russian language in territories that are part of Russia's spheres of interest. Russian is one of the recognized world languages - it ranks sixth globally in terms of the total number of speakers and is the mother tongue for eighth-largest proportion of the world population.

In the absence of any material basis under the 1990s succession of independence declarations by republics of the collapsing Soviet Union, the Russian language practically remained the only means of salvaging the unity, albeit loosened, of nations that had close historical and cultural ties and until a short while before were parts of the same state. The Russian language became the last link between Russia and Russian-speaking communities in other former Soviet republics. It also became an inherent cultural element of both formalized and non-formalized integration processes in the post-Soviet space.

The integration processes in the post-Soviet space are much more than "civilized divorces" between parts of the former Soviet Union, and hence it has inevitably been a complicated task to maintain the status of the Russian language.

THE "RUSSIAN WORLD" TERM as used in academic discourse and the implementation of the Russian World concept in international practice have come up against sharp antagonism, as, indeed, has Russia's regaining the status of an independent center of world politics. Many academics and politicians see the Russian World idea as a direct threat to the sovereign interests of various countries.

Today, the Russian World is an ideology more than anything else, but filling it with practical content will offer the new independent states an opportunity for more effective cooperation.

THE INCREASING USE of Russian as a language of tuition in former Soviet republics is an

extra reason for confidence that the restoration of the post-Soviet space as a Russian-speaking area is a stable trend.

Over the past few years, more opportunities have emerged for receiving education in Russian in practically all ex-Soviet republics, which is a direct effect of growing demand for the language in various sectors.

THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE, which has recently become one of Russia's key soft power instruments, also owes its growing role in the post-Soviet space to the increasing Russian media presence in ex-Soviet republics.

To sum up, the Russian language is not only a serious factor in the survival of the post-Soviet space as a single sociocultural entity but also an indicator of integration processes in this space and a catalyst for them. All this proves the inevitability of Russia's revival as a leading global political actor whose policy neither is determined by petty opportunistic considerations nor depends on what foreign advisers say but represents a long-term strategy to acquire the status of a renewed center of a regional community of nations.

Quiet Flows the Hawaiian Don

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IN 1816-1817, the flag of the Russian Empire was waving on the westernmost of the Hawaiian Islands, Kauai. The word "Don" appeared on the Kauai map as a new name for what had been the Hanapepe River. Three Russian forts, which were named Elizabeth, Alexander and Barclay, emerged at key strategic points on the island - at the mouth of the Waimea River in the south and on the shore of the picturesque Hanalei Bay in the north.

Today, nothing remains of two of the forts. A posh hotel stands on the site of Fort Alexander. But Fort Elizabeth has been restored. This building is one of two reminders of the history of "Russian Hawaii." The other is a section in the Kauai Museum devoted to the Russia-related

period on the island. The items in the section include a flag of the Russian-American Company, which established Russian presence on Kauai.

Meanwhile, archives provide much more information about that brief but eventful period, a time when Russia had a chance to take control of Kauai and thereby close the boundary around its possessions in the North Pacific, which spread from the Kamchatka Peninsula to Alaska and to Fort Ross, and make that part of the ocean a "Russian lake." There also are documents in archives explaining why Emperor Alexander I decided that this would run against Russian interests.

The history of Russian Hawaii is a hodgepodge of the romanticism of sea travel, trade arithmetic, strategic planning, adventurism pure and simple on the part of some individuals who had reckless ambitions, state policies that dampened them, risks taken by some people, and the emperor's avoidance of any risks, even non-obvious. The history of the Russian flag hoisted on Kauai is also a history of geopolitical games in the Pacific with Russia playing a sophisticated game with the young United States in a bid to turn rivalry into partnership, with Britain always in the background, and with China, which by then had not yet suffered any defeats from Europeans, aspiring to be the ultimate beneficiary of the struggles over Kauai.

THE AMERICANS tried to provoke a conflict in September 1819, four months after the Russian flag was hoisted over Kauai and King Kaumualii stood under it in Russian naval uniform.

Three American captains tried to tear down the flag but were detained by the king's guard.

Americans who were living on Kauai or visited Kauaian ports on ships, began to spread rumors that Russia and the United States were on the brink of war and that the Russian envoy had been expelled from Washington.

This was total disinformation because in that period Russia and the United States were getting closer together and Russia hoped that the United States would join the Holy Alliance.

But this disinformation worked. Kaumualii didn't even suspect that it was a lie and was scared of consequences that the supposed Russian-American war would have for him. On May 7, he and a thousand Kauaians went to Schäffer's men and demanded that they leave the

island.

The Russian flag never returned to those islands.

Kauai's annexation by the United States changed the life of the "Garden Island's" population drastically. But that's another story altogether as by that time the Russian Hawaii utopia was a thing of the past.

Russian Revolutions of 1917 and the Versailles-Washington System: Contradictions and Alternatives

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THE GREAT RUSSIAN REVOLUTION echoed far and wide. The revolution of February 1917 catastrophically undermined Russia's international positions; the revolution of October 1917 shifted its foreign policy vector by pushing it out of the coalitions trapped in World War I. The centenary of the events that changed the course of Russian and world history has given us another chance to ponder on how they affected the postwar international order known as the Versailles-Washington system.

The experience of two interwar decades revealed that no viable system of international security was possible "without Russia and against Russia."

It should be said that certain foreign policy moves of Soviet power did not contradict the interests of the Entente. The Decree on Peace confirmed "peace without annexations and contributions" (as applied to Russia) that the former allies readily agreed with.

Everything changed when the Bolsheviks started talking to the Quadruple Alliance. In March 1918, Soviet Russia, having signed in Brest-Litovsk an ignominious peace treaty with the Quadruple Alliance, withdrew from the war. "Our country," President Putin said, "lost this war to the losing side. This is unique in human history!"

The Brest Peace legalized the death of the Russian Empire, temporary loss of the Great Power status together with part of its sovereignty and confirmed its de facto dependence on Kaiser Germany.

Today, the Versailles Peace Treaty between the Entente and defeated Germany signed twelve months after the Brest Peace is severely criticized as unjust and repressive.

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION of 1917 radically changed Russia's foreign policy course: from that time on, it was hugely ideologized. The Bolsheviks considered their advent to power as an event of not national but world consequence. They believed that their fundamental knowledge of the laws of history ensured their undoubted superiority over all bourgeois states and looked forward to an imminent world revolution expected to "grow" out of the world war.

Stalin supported more realistic approach to the world revolution. Late in 1917, he polemicized with the Left Communists: "There is no revolutionary movement in the West. There are only facts but no potential."

The impact of the Russian revolutions of 1917 on international inter-war politics was ambiguous. Indeed, the Versailles-Washington system collapsed mainly under the pressure of confrontation between the Soviet state and the capitalist world unfolding in 1917-1933. It should be said, however, that the Soviet Union, an ideological opponent of the Versailles-Washington system, and not the Western powers, its architects and guarantors, paradoxically, tried to consistently protect it when the Nazis came to power in Germany. Moscow's foreign policy course was changing together with the changes going on in the Soviet political system and Soviet ideology that British diplomacy later assessed as "the process of replacing ideas of world revolution with Soviet patriotism." In the inter-war period, the Soviet foreign policy strategy was gradually losing its ideological garbs as Moscow started looking after its own security interests in order to achieve a victory in the future world war, in which it was destined to play the decisive role.

"Our Country's History Is Unbreakable"

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Why do we have a completely different view of the revolution now compared to 30 years ago? Because there is a perception of the revolution as a deep split in society. This is a severe wound on the nation's body that is taking a very long time to heal. Our task, the task of historians is to help heal this wound.

Evidently, the Provisional Government failed not only to convince the peasants of its liberal values but even to explain to them that in reality by that time 77% of arable land was used by the peasants and only 16% belonged to landowners. As they would put it today, the information and propaganda mechanism failed to make an effect.

The war ensured the quick enrichment of all sorts of wheelers and dealers, and this is true. There were especially many of those among the St. Petersburg elite. So, they were the first to be affected by the revolution.

In December 1916, speaking before young European social democrats in Zurich, Lenin said bluntly: "We old people will probably not live to see a revolution." Two months later, a revolution took place. This goes to show that, despite their revolutionary zeal, the Bolsheviks did not expect everything to happen so soon. When the autocracy fell and when Russia's state mechanism began to fall apart, a wonderful opportunity for propaganda and agitation emerged.

In the East, with the help of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union, entire states with communist ideology and a Soviet-style social development model emerged that are still around today: China and Vietnam.

The Great Russian Revolution (from 1917 until 1922, i.e., the end of the Civil War) was a national tragedy. It led to an economic collapse and unprecedented demographic losses. After all, Civil War casualties were heavier than Russia's losses in World War I many times over. It led to the disappearance of entire elites and cultural layers, as well as mass emigration from the country. There is no getting away from this. We are not inclined to share the former apologetic

view of revolutions as the locomotives of history. This view is no more relevant. This expression belongs to Karl Marx. If he had witnessed the revolutionary events in Russia himself I believe that he would have changed his mind.

The Poles have largely themselves to blame for their troubles and misfortunes. Nevertheless, there is no getting away from the fact that the Soviet Union sacrificed 600,000 lives in liberating Poland from Nazism, and those were neither occupants, nor proponents of Stalinist ideology, as the Poles are trying to portray the situation today. Those were soldiers who died for the sake of liberating the Polish nation. Let the Poles say what Poland would have been if it was not for the Soviet liberation. Would Poland still be around in the first place? After all, if we consider this question of alternative history, many things will become clear. Of course, Poles as part of the Third Reich were doomed.