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BRICS: A New-Generation Forum With a Global Reach

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BRICS initiated by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in 2006 has been one of the most significant geopolitical events since the beginning of the new century. The group has shortly become a powerful factor influencing world politics and economy.

BRICS's influence in the international arena is a result of the growing economic power of its

member states and their important contribution to global demography and natural resources supply.

According to Carlos Pereira, a Brazilian political scientist, BRICS "is definitely becoming one of the key pieces on the global chessboard". And the abovementioned Jim O'Neill comes to the conclusion that "BRIC's rapid growth tips the global balance".

It is important to note that it is long-term shared interests of BRICS countries that facilitate their rapprochement.

For the Russian Federation, cooperation within BRICS is a key long-term foreign policy priority. Moreover, Russia supports positioning BRICS as a new model of global relations overriding the old East West or North-South barriers.

There are good prospects for a more active engagement within the UN in order to preserve and strengthen the central role of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security and to prevent the use of the Organization.

Interaction among member states in reforming the international monetary and financial system will remain the key long-term priority of BRICS cooperation.

BRICS's experience gained so far allows us to draw some conclusions regarding prospects for this association's further development.

Progress achieved by this young association of states at its early stage and particularly its development momentum and prospects clearly show that BRICS is the global forum that will become increasingly important in defining the thrust of the world development in the 21st century.

Russia and Algeria: A History of Mutual Trust

Author: Mourad Medelci

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria



EXCELLENCIES, Honorable Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first of all express my gratitude to you for the honor you have granted me to address this distinguished forum of the "International Affairs" magazine.

Our political dialogue that has been marked at all times with the seal of mutual trust and density, as witnessed by our discussions of

yesterday, confirms our belief that the relations between our two countries can only grow stronger and take advantage of the fabulous potential of our economies and the esteem and respect that our two peoples share.

As heirs to a history that is similar in many ways, our two economies are now facing almost the same challenges, those of modernization and diversification, energy efficiency as well as the entry into the era of know-how economy.

The beginning of this new decade, characterized by exceptional regional developments, has been an opportunity to initiate a new stage of reforms announced by the President of the Republic on April 15, 2011. These reforms aim to ensure:

1. More freedom;
2. More transparency;
3. More participation of women in elected assemblies;
4. More openness at the political and economic levels;
5. Better responses to citizens' expectations.

I would like to welcome Russia's position on Syria and join my voice to call all parties to reach a pacific and longstanding solution for the good of the whole country.

I would like to welcome Russia's position on Syria and join my voice to call all parties to reach a pacific and long-standing solution for the good of the whole country.

The situation in Iraq is also receiving our full attention and we hope that with the withdrawal of foreign troops, the Iraqi people can look forward to the future in peace and unity.

Our two countries are actually mobilized against international terrorism and we daily achieve substantial progress to overcome this phenomenon and to save security in our countries and in the whole international community.

Latin America Requires a Special Approach

Author: Sergei Ryabkov

Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation



As for the retrospective, I believe that there are not very many regions in the world, if any, far away from our borders where there would be so many people sympathizing with Russia. People who either have studied in our country or are in some way or other linked to our country. Generally speaking, that is a unique set of circumstances that, in my opinion, still have a positive impact on Russia's relations with the Latin American region and the

prospects for our ties.

I would also like to point out that unlike in the Soviet days, today we do not have any pronounced, obvious ideological predilections or the desire to set ties with a particular country or a group of countries against the lack of such with other countries. In other words, Latin America is not a region where Russia in some way or other is competing for influence.

There are first sprouts of direct Russian-Latin American business interaction.

I believe that we still have an outdated perception of Latin America as a remote region that is interesting and exotic; we are still much more focused on Europe, the CIS countries and China.

I believe that it is also important that the Latin American countries are still interested to send their students to study in Russia.

We cannot be satisfied with the work on Russia's image in Latin America. New formats are needed while everything that has stood us in good stead should not be ignored. New formats involve expanding broadcasting and communication via the Internet. We have an acute shortage of activities in Spanish targeting Spanish speakers.

Everything depends on us. There are no constraints there. If we build hotels in Cuba; if more Brazilian footballers play for Russian clubs despite the climate differences; if Chilean wine and Ecuadoran bananas are produced with Russian investment at the local plantations; if we continue to supply military-technical goods to countries in the region and build power facilities there, and if more and more Latin American students come to Russia for studies the outlook is very good.

Needless to say, Latin America has plenty of its own internal problems to deal with. However, most of them are growth problems. Overall, the region's economic and human potential is huge.

OSCE: The Search for Its Niche Is Ongoing

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THE OSCE IS STILL at the crossroads, continuing to lose its relevance. The past year was not an exception: the results of the ministerial meeting in Vilnius in December 2011 only confirmed that the critical mass in the organization's activity is increasing while no progress was made toward the implementation of the task of building a "security community".

The impression sometimes is that the OSCE has simply abandoned any attempts at being cured and is doomed to retreat further into the European political backyard. Still, I venture to say that not all is lost yet.

The OSCE's effectiveness is still impaired by the inertia of Cold War thinking that it has failed to overcome.

The OSCE is also hindered by its incomplete institutionalization. During the 17 years after "Conference" was renamed "Organization," it has failed to overcome its structural porosity and looseness, codify all aspects of its activity, including on the procedural level, and build a clear-cut vertical chain of command between collective bodies and executive structures.

In its present form, the OSCE is a mirror-like reflection of the processes and trends that are ongoing in the Euro-Atlantic space and in relations between the key players.

The "Corfu process," launched within the OSCE framework, helped shake up the organization, refocusing the discussion from secondary matters to genuinely relevant security issues affecting the interests of all states.

Obviously the OSCE can only be reformed by a reconsideration of its policy priorities and a curtailment of its functions as a "democracy controller" of processes in countries east of Vienna.

On the practical level, the OSCE remains a unique instrument for tripartite interaction between Russia, the EU and the U.S. on European affairs.

Obviously the Organization can only be reformed by a reconsideration of its policy priorities and a curtailment of its functions as a "democracy controller" of processes in countries east of Vienna. That can be ensured through a more decisive expansion of the thematic agenda by including in it issues common to all - not just to a part of states, above all those issues which are linked to new threats and challenges.

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Today, the center of international political and economic life is shifting towards the Asia-Pacific region. APEC, the region's main economic forum, includes the world's most powerful economies: USA, China, Japan, and almost half of G-20 member countries, which account for the greater part of global production, including high technologies. The USA assigns great importance to this region in its global forecasts. The Asia-Pacific superpower China is playing a growing geopolitical role.

The aim of the upcoming summit should be more than just to unfurl the Russian flag over the Pacific Ocean.

Russian strategy in the Asia Pacific should pursue such goals as:

- Protection of its national interests and guaranteed security on its eastern borders;
- Making use of the Asia-Pacific economic and political potential for its own modernization and development;
- Provision of a dignified life for the population of the Pacific coast of Russia.

Russia can effectively assure its national security on its far eastern borders only by making its neighbors interested in the advantages of long-term economic partnership.

The APEC Forum is multi-polar and includes economies with different levels of development.

The interests of Russian domestic and national security are closely linked in the Far East - even more than in other regions. It is necessary to strengthen domestic stability in order to solve foreign-policy problems. In turn, stable domestic development is possible only in the absence of external threats and on the condition of good relations with neighbors.

Our country also assigns importance to work on introducing modern technologies into agriculture. All of these measures should in the long term promote the expansion of Russian exports of agricultural products to the Asia-Pacific region.

Cooperation is also important in the power industry. There is an acute shortage of energy resources in the Asia-Pacific region, and Russia should play an increasing role on the Asia-Pacific energy market in upcoming decades.

Russia must act circumspectly and selectively, refusing to support vague general statements and insisting that all initiatives involving "green protectionism" be as specific as possible.

BRICS Countries: Strengthening Cooperation

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The nations that became part of this association are located at the most different points of the planet - in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America. Nevertheless, the development of the economic structures of the BRICS countries has brought about a diversification of the world economy and global market. It is safe to say that the BRICS countries are active supporters and practitioners of global partnership for development and a bridge for North-South

dialogue and cooperation.

BRICS nations with the high liquidity and profitability of their economies, as well as high financial security, are able to absorb global capital flows, thus creating a special influential geo-economic force which by gradually expanding the scale and intensity of impact on the world's economy will bring about great opportunities for all other countries as well.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS, the threat of a euro zone collapse and the BRICS' contribution as Europe's saviors have shown how nations that were, until recently, considered "pariahs" have taken vengeance on those states which had paraded themselves as models of advanced democracies.

All common human notions that have evolved over the last two centuries will change to a significant extent.

the approaching sunset of the Western era is foretold by the progress China has made in recent years. And it is not out of place to recall that right up to the 18th century it was already one of the largest economies in the world.

THE INTERACTION of the BRICS countries in the world economic system is aimed at:

- Reforming the world financial system.
- The fight against protectionism in trade and investment.
- Active cooperation on climate change
- Coordination of positions in the G20 framework.

THE MECHANISM OF COOPERATION between the BRICS nations is mostly still in its formative stages. This applies to some organizational issues, setting topics for discussion, suggesting debates and other forms of communication.

If we study the internal dispute resolution mechanism and strengthen bilateral cooperation within BRICS, its multilateral and bilateral cooperation mechanisms will become more and more efficient.

Libya Without Qaddafi

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IN LIBYA, the supreme power in October 2011 passed into the hands of the National Transitional Council (NTC), which declared the country's liberation from Muammar Qaddafi's dictatorship.

With his removal the authoritarian model he called Jamahiriya ("state of the masses") lost its top leadership.

The current balance of power in Libya is unstable and bears the imprint of both the

Qaddafi-era legacy and vicissitudes of the eight-month internecine war, which is fraught with potential conflicts.

Events have shown that, although some tribes long supported Qaddafi, as we can see, nothing is eternal in the precepts and traditions of Bedouins. Pragmatism and group interests can often prevail over traditions and the honor code.

New media shed light on the differences and rivalries in the rebel camp due to often conflicting interests and ambitions among their leaders.

But no matter how much the rebels claim that they are "guarantors of the revolution" on the scale of the country, their unity and cohesion seem far distant.

In the conditions of a legal vacuum, prisoners are subject to abuse and discrimination as attested to by various human rights organizations of the West.

Libyans are also worried by the fate of more than 10,000 people who went missing without a trace during the war, according to Al Jazeera.

The new leadership of Libya has vast resources, but they need to be put at the service of the country and its people. It seems that the authorities, which are just getting on their feet, experience great stresses and are under internal and external pressure.

Some political analysts believe that the longer the various military councils remain in existence and become firmly established in the provinces, cities and towns, the greater the likelihood that they will turn into influential and autonomous power centers, which is fraught with increased familial/tribal particularism to the detriment of national unity.

The leadership of Libya is currently being tested on its ability to find a consensus with urban population sections that show mounting disagreement and impatience and are beginning to increasingly demand public order, tranquility and stability.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Culture: A New Resource for Russian Public Diplomacy

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At the very beginning of the 21st century, it became clear that a new wave of interest in atomic energy, dubbed the "nuclear renaissance," is engulfing an ever greater number of states. Nuclear technologies and materials have not yet become an object of common everyday use, but access to them by new countries, companies and people is increasing.

There is also a growing understanding that nuclear technology is not just a matter of energy, it is a new level of medicine, production efficiency, and an enhanced quality of life.

Today almost all activities for developing technology for the nuclear fuel cycle (NFC) can be viewed as steps in the pursuit of the non-peaceful use of nuclear technology. But the attitude among countries embarking on nuclear power towards these projects is passive or even negative.

The report calls on UN member states to support the publication of information and education materials related to nuclear non-proliferation for all levels of education

The Russian organizations have good experience of fruitful collaboration with overseas scientific and educational, foreign governments and international organizations. It is important to note that the skeptical attitude of relevant government bodies toward collaboration between Russian and foreign NGOs has become a thing of the past.

RUSSIA INTENDS to start pursuing its own nuclear interests in the world more actively - an institution of nuclear attachés at embassies is currently being established for this purpose. In order for these measures to bear fruit, they need the support of public diplomacy.

Nuclear non-proliferation culture is an indispensable condition for international nuclear cooperation. All responsible players in the world nuclear market must accept and understand it.

Author: I. Ivanov

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WHEN THE RUSSIA-EU SUMMIT in Moscow on May 10, 2005 endorsed the road maps for the Four Common Spaces, this gave rise to many hopes and expectations. Optimistic scenarios were built as to how the abolition of the visa regime would unfold, how the harmonization of legislation of the parties would proceed and what institutional forms the declared "strategic partnership between the European

Union and Russia" could take.

Today, the number of optimists in Moscow and Brussels has greatly diminished. Europe in general has called into question the very relevance of the European project for Russia.

This is not the first time that a "decline" in Europe has been predicted over the past 100 years. Yet Europe is still a major league player in the world's economy, and a global source of technical innovation and a vast social laboratory.

I do not want my words to be construed as if I am attempting to play off Europe against Asia. I mean something else - in the contemporary, fast changing world, no one is guaranteed a spot among the leaders.

The modern world does not fit at all into its traditional geographic scope; it is no longer dividable into East and West, Europe and Asia.

At the same time, it is equally obvious that the tough competition offered by the global world does not exclude, but presupposes close cooperation. Europe and Asia need each other - economically, technologically, and culturally.

Russia is of course present in Eurasian markets, but it has to be noted that Russia's involvement in the mechanisms and processes of Eurasian cooperation at the moment is very superficial, heterogeneous and fragile. So far Russia remains chiefly the principal Eurasian storehouse of natural resources, a source of raw materials and energy for its neighbors.

But no matter who we accuse of the existing problems one thing should be clear to the policy makers in Moscow: Any "entry" - or "return" - of Russia to Europe will require persistence, consistency, patience, and long-term and very substantial political investment on our part.

One of the obvious lessons of history, in my opinion, is that the principled agreements and political declarations are an essential but not sufficient condition for the development of relations.

If Tomorrow Brings War...

Author: Armen Oganessian

Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs



THE LAW ALLOWING the U.S. President to severely limit Iran's oil exports has sparked a flurry of comments and a strong reaction from Iran. But then the anti-Iranian rhetoric abated and conciliatory notes were heard on both sides. A curious picture is gradually emerging from the mosaic of actions being undertaken by Washington.

Almost simultaneously with the law on new sanctions against Iran, we heard another statement on New Year's eve, this time from the lips of U.S. Vice President Joe Biden. It affirms that the Taliban is not the U.S. enemy anymore.

The shadows of the tragic past that followed the withdrawal of a superpower from Afghanistan cannot but disturb the Afghan leader. That's why Democrats' eventual rejection of Republicans' hardline stance of no talks with the Taliban made him glad so much.

The USA's withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan and its reconciliation attempt, albeit superficial, with the Taliban - this all looks like an alignment of the front. In the latter case, the aim is to reduce the level of confrontation with one of the most radical and dangerous forces in a region extremely sensitive for the USA in the event of an operation against Iran. By taking control of Iran, the USA will be able to get back to devising an arrangement for the Middle East with much greater confidence in its resources. In the meantime, simply don't interfere.

One must say that there are a good many critics of "harsh moves" in world politics, both in the Old World and the New. Most of them think that the state of the world economy and finance, and the Euro zone crisis exclude the possibility of military action, especially of the kind that can inflate energy prices and drain the budgets by unproductive expenditures, slowing down the pace of economic recovery.

A war with Iran is not a WWII scenario; and the global economy is living under other laws much more complex and unpredictable than those witnessed in the middle of the last century.

All these circumstances make those who are currently perhaps unaware of this, or simply turn a blind eye to it, hostages to the situation surrounding Iran.

But the fact remains that Washington has ratcheted up its preparation for military action, which though is unlikely at this stage (preparatory measures are still not fully in place). In addition, any decision on Iran will inevitably be weighed on the scales of the U.S. election campaign.

Europe: Identity Crisis or Schizophrenia?

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THE YEAR 2011 will be remembered as a period of unprecedented uncertainty in the history of modern Europe. On the one hand, contrary to widespread apocalyptic expectations, the EU did not crumble and the amplitude of the oscillations in the value of the relatively young European currency did stay within tolerable limits. On the other, it is clear that the integrated Europe's worst crash tests are still.

While, in the majority of cases, outbreaks of instability that can easily go global invite conspiracy theories, it must be recognized that external influences have contributed little if anything to the EU nosedive.

Other global players, including China and forces of politicized Islam, must be watching the situation closely, but blaming on them the widening gap between Great Britain and France or South European countries' credit rating misfortunes would be as unrealistic as saying that Ronald Reagan, Deng Xiaoping or Osama bin Laden personally brought about the collapse of the USSR.

Due to two attempts to build a continental empire around a dominant nation - one made by Napoleon, another - by Hitler - being on Europe's record, the nationalist renaissance across the continent evokes unwelcome similarities with the atmosphere of the past epochs. Euro is a currency similarly stuck somewhere between the past and the future. Scrapping national currencies under pressure from Brussels, the EU countries did retain their individual financial institutions, budgets, and central banks. As a result, the stronger EU players predictably ended up donating resources to keep the balance sheets of the weaker in decent shape.

Another corrosive tendency which threatens the EU and gained additional momentum in 2011 is the intensification of the internal stratification process

In Croatia, a shop window of the Balkans, European integration is supported by slightly more than half of its population. In Serbia the situation is even more dramatic.

Contradictions inside the Union are rapidly piling up; the gaps between its members are widening while the radical nationalist forces in many of the member states are gaining popularity; the number of Euro skeptics along the Union's external boundaries is rising. It is a too heavy burden to be carried into the 2012 year.

Hard Times for European Social Democracy

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THE 20TH CENTURY is commonly believed to be the golden age of Social Democracy even though the number of enthusiastic supporters is balanced out by the number of no less enthusiastic opponents of this idea. Democratic socialism was not limited to the principles of democracy, humanism, human rights, political and ideological pluralism, and social partnership between the wage workers and employers.

Social Democracy, which is represented by quite a few parties in many countries, infringed on the working people's social and economic rights which they (the SD parties) had helped acquire in the first place.

It is wrong, however, to seek simple explanations of fairly complex processes and phenomena. Today, social democracy is obviously in a dead end; it has to find a way out or discard its ideology to become one of the props of the state system Western style.

The 2008 crisis came like a bolt from the blue; the blow was a painful one: It bared the flaws and structural disparities seemingly completely remedied during the previous period of economic growth.

European social democrats failed to produce anti-crisis economic programs. The PSOE was no exception.

Today, the situation is different: the present PSOE leader Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba owes his popularity to his successful struggle against Basque terrorists he waged as minister of the interior.

THE SPANISH SOCIALISTS are not alone: European social democracy has similar concerns.

Today, social democracy has reached a crossroads: It should either subject its experience of the last few decades to a profound, comprehensive and critical analysis and correlate it with the foundations of social democracy to be able to build up a platform for the 21st century or remain floating in the stale political waters without trying to change it in any noticeable way in a hope that sooner or later election cycles will bring them back to power. Some of the social democratic leaders are counting on this. There is no third way.

"The Abduction of Europe"

Author: Armen Oganessian

Editor-in-Chief of International Affairs



WE ARE WATCHING the "abduction of Europe": the European dream of many generations of great European politicians is melting away. It was immediately after the war that Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet, Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle, Konrad Adenauer, Paul-Henri Spaak and many others laid the ideological foundation of united Europe.

The European Union was born as a post-Communist and post-Cold War political project by those who were convinced that time had come to set up the United States of Europe, the chance too good to be lost. This is not the first attempt at "globalization of Europe" in its long history.

The European Union was the first attempt at peaceful supra-national integration geared at universal criteria of democracy, the free market and inter-national tolerance.

The unifiers, however, stumbled at the early stage - the mishap echoed far and wide. The original idea of a European Federation was buried by Europeans who rejected the draft Constitution of the United States of Europe - the brightly illuminated and lavishly decorated banquet hall was suddenly plunged into twilight. National egoisms drifted away from Brussels toward regional associations united by common interests.

The builders of the EU Tower prefer to ignore the warnings coming from all sides that the Union suffers from an identity, rather than economic and financial, crisis. It has become abundantly clear that consumer habits based on borrowing, abidance by tax rules and life styles differ from country to country. Unwilling to give up their national identities together with a great deal of their sovereignties the Europeans rejected the universal model.

Having scattered the nations around the Lord stopped their work and destroyed the Tower. The common European "construction project of the century" cannot be suspended - the building will immediately tumble down which makes the situation highly dramatic

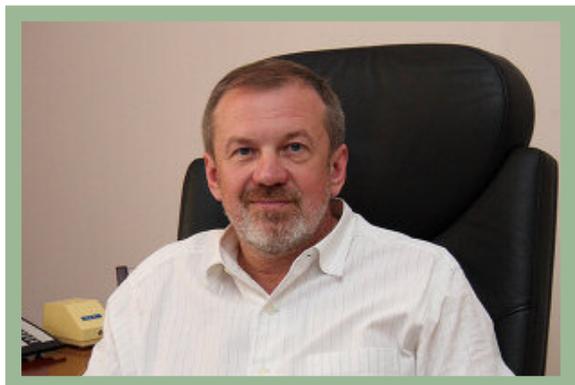
The euphoria of the early, romantic stage of Euro integration has evaporated; the fetish which charmed Europe lost much of its former attraction. Abduction of Europe is going on yet "quod licet Jovi..."

Neototalitarianism, or The Dull Mistakes of Our Century

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TODAY, IT HAS BECOME abundantly clear that the world has changed its development paradigm. The living standards in Western Europe and North America have stopped rising; the global economic crisis shows no signs of folding up - it is unfolding.

The drama is not limited to the West: the Arab Spring was another evidence of a crisis that gripped the traditional Arab Muslim world.

During the years of relative stability and peace, Europeans grew accustomed to an image of a harmoniously developing European community; recent catastrophes look like ancient history. This is what people think of World War II and even of the recent Yugoslav tragedy.

The word "neototalitarianism" gained (limited) currency in the latter half of the 1990s. Serb Zoran

Vidojević was probably the first who put it into circulation. He warned that shifts in some of the post-socialist societies toward neototalitarianism would be an extremely dangerous and regressive phenomenon. He is convinced that totalitarianism is never far away in Western civilization suffering of depleting liberal democracy.

One can even say that the world has lost its *raison d'être*: there are no ideas that can ignite the minds. The resultant void may be filled in with totalitarian rubble, denial of European multiculturalism, xenophobia, and racism (including social racism).

Europe is moving toward neototalitarianism, a close relative of the totalitarianism of the past.

THE ELITES all over the world, from Britain to Indonesia, are frightened; they want to establish control over the latest means of mass communication. This is logical.

The common European home is in danger because panicking societies do not need knowledge about themselves. The media which were expected to tie together fundamental science and society failed.

Totalitarianism is society steeped in complacency and self-containment. It is not without faults, either: part of the population should disappear without trace and for no rational reason. Those who survive felt that life is growing more cheerful.

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ON DECEMBER 5, 2011, Bonn hosted a large-scale International Afghanistan Conference under the slogan "Afghanistan and the International Community: From Transition to the Transformation Decade" attended by practically the entire range of the world community.

It looks doubtful that in 2014 Kabul will be ready to shoulder full responsibility for the state of affairs in the country.

The 2001, post-Taliban developments looked very much like what had been going on in the country in the 1980s. For ten years, Washington in vain tried to resolve the problems with methods which, at first glance, looked logical and reasonable.

The world community readily accepted, both politically and psychologically, the statements that Afghanistan and its theocratic regime were the source of international terrorist threats.

In an effort to shift the burden for the country's future onto the regional states, Afghanistan's neighbors in the first place, Washington proceeds from recent external developments.

The American "New Silk Road" idea formulated on the eve of Bonn-2 caused mixed feelings in some of Afghanistan's influential neighbors (Russia, China and Iran among others). The idea is politically vulnerable because Islamabad, one of the key regional political players, was demonstrably absent from the Bonn Conference.

In Bonn, heads of delegations of the CSO member-countries, Russia and China, the most influential of them in the first place, declared that the SCO would work toward the revival of Afghanistan. The future of the Kabul Process is still unclear; it looks doubtful that in 2014 Kabul will be ready to shoulder full responsibility for the state of affairs in the country. President Karzai said as much in Bonn; he pointed out that intensive international cooperation should be extended for at least another decade. In any case, complete reconciliation is still far away; its realization will require huge varied and multisided efforts.

Looking Back to See Forward

Author: Yannis-Alexis Zepos

Secretary General of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs The views contained in the present study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Ministry.



NATO'S FIRST STRATEGIC CONCEPT, "The Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Area (DC 6/1)", was adopted by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) on 6 January, 1950. DC 6/1 emphasized the deterrence of aggression as NATO's basic task. To the extent that deterrence was not successful and an attack was launched, NATO forces were to be engaged.

Among the substantive changes brought about by new thinking in the requirements of NATO's deterrence policy was the endorsement of the doctrine of "flexible response".

The new Concept highlights two principles: NATO poses no threat to Russia; and NATO-Russia cooperation is of strategic importance as it contributes to creating a common space of peace, stability and security.

In the 1990s the transformation in the structure of the international system has been extensive and profound.

With a view to improving the effectiveness of NATO's core commitment to collective defence, the Group believed that it was essential for the Alliance to back up its pledge to shield member states from armed aggression not only by basic military capabilities but also by contingency planning, focused exercises, force readiness and sound logistics.

The new Concept enables NATO to maintain its capacity to deal with the immediate security challenges while, at the same time, becoming better at responding to the unexpected and at adapting to evolving and unforeseen threats that could take many different forms, making thus the picture of the security environment of the next decade increasingly blurred.

Dealing with current and future security challenges - one is able to read from the new Strategic Concept - demands an integrative kind of response, one which calls on an immense variety of military and civilian tools. Neither NATO nor the European Union can advance without the other, toward delivering the enhanced safety sought by their expansion and reform, in the context of a strategic environment that is no longer structured around super-power confrontation.

According to the new Concept, we live in an "unpredictable world". Predicting the future is always fraught with uncertainty. There are a number of potential paths that the international security environment could take during the next quarter century.

Russia's New Arctic Strategy

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OVER THE PAST SEVERAL DECADES, the situation in the Arctic has altered greatly. For a long time, it had remained an insufficiently studied, poorly developed, remote region with a harsh climate where the situation was of not so much concern to the international community. In the 19th century, however, some Arctic states actively sought to establish their sovereignty over the Arctic islands and water areas unilaterally.

In fact, the concept of Arctic sectors was realized only by Canada and the Soviet Union. The bounds of polar sectors are not considered state borders while their declaration as such did not predetermine the issue of the legal status of the maritime areas comprising that sector.

As a result, the process of the establishment and protection of the national sovereignty the Arctic states over the Arctic islands and water areas in the 19th - the first quarter of the 20th century effectively took care of the issue of no man's land status in regard to the Arctic areas, as well as of the probability of the entire Arctic region being placed under international administration.

THE MILITARY-STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE of the Arctic came out clearly during the world wars. The opposing sides understood very well that control over Norway would enable them to take key strategic positions in the North Atlantic and the Arctic.

The discovery of vast hydrocarbon deposits provided a material basis for the rise in the Arctic's geopolitical importance today.

In an effort to adapt to the new geopolitical reality in the Arctic, all of the Arctic nations have adopted regional strategies.

A small population, low population density, the huge size of the territories and their remoteness from the main industrial centers, and the undeveloped transport and energy infrastructure are key factors in the economic development of these resource-rich Russian regions

Russia, as well as other Arctic states, needs to build up its Arctic capabilities in patrolling, monitoring, emergency response, search and rescue operations, strengthening its communication system to protect its national security, preserve the deterrence capability and ensure Russian sovereignty in the region.

Russian Diplomacy and the Nagorno-Karabakh Settlement

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THE CONFLICT SURROUNDING Nagorno-Karabakh and the adventurous acts of Georgia's leadership ratchet up tensions in the North Caucasus thus hampering war on terrorism and holding up economic development all over the Caucasus.

While offering its own suggestions for resolving this issue, Russian diplomats focus on the

need for continued talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia, including top-level talks. Russia is prepared to accept the plan of settlement that seems to be acceptable to the conflict parties and be a guarantor of compromise solutions. To stabilize the situation, end the conflicts and deal with their aftereffects as soon as possible.

As for the negotiations, Russia opposes all and any formulas imposed on the conflict parties from outside.

DESPITE 19 YEARS OF TALKS under the umbrella of the Minsk Group there have been no tangible results, and the position of the mediators in the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement draws sharp criticism from parties in the conflict.

All these problems could be analyzed by the High-Level Working Group created in line with the decision of the heads of state. Within its mandate, it would be a good idea to ask CIS members to develop a joint mechanism for settling conflicts designed to tackle a number of interrelated tasks in the peacekeeping sphere, such as:

- To form a system of conflict monitoring and preventative actions;
- To develop efficient international mediation efforts;
- To develop a mechanism for making political decisions on intervention in conflicts;
- To make it possible to select appropriate levels and formats of international intervention in conflicts;
- To create and maintain an arsenal of;
- To provide for measures of post-conflict settlement, stabilization, humanitarian assistance, the rebuilding of peaceful living in conflict regions;
- To address problems related to extirpating the root causes of social, economic, political and other conflicts to prevent their recurrence.

Steps like these on Russia's part would promote the negotiations on settling conflicts and preventing their recurrence in the future.

Moscow-Hanoi Oil Projects

Author: A. Kuz'mitsky

Auditor of the Audit Chamber of the Russian Federation



The intergovernmental agreement on founding the joint company, Vietsovpetro, for geological exploration and production of oil and gas on the continental shelf in the south of Vietnam was signed back in 1981. Commercial production began there in 1986. Vietsovpetro produces the greater proportion of the country's stock-tank oil. The joint audit by the Russian Audit Chamber and the State Audit of Vietnam confirmed the earlier assessment of Vi-

etsovpetro as a highly efficient company with low production costs.

Since its foundation at the end of 2008, Rusvietpetro has been investing in geological survey and development of oil and gas fields. The harsh climate and its tight schedule of work in the remote area made the company put in a considerable amount of money and face increased risks throughout its operation. This year, the company registered its first profit. The company is supposed to reach its highest production target by 2020.

I should note that five years ago all revenues from Vietsovpetro's operations were paid into the federal budget and Zarubezhneft was only getting commission of 5% of the revenue. In 2008-2010, Zarubezhneft paid in taxes a total of \$3.8 billion rubles.

The inspection at Vietsovpetro found that every year it bought goods it did not practically need. The protracted storage of the unneeded material and equipment resulted in deterioration of their quality, and this why in 2010 oil production expenses grew by \$2.5 million against the plan.

By the end of the current year, Vietsovpetro had a residue equal to \$79.6 million which, after paying the profit tax, should be distributed among the partners. The audit found that the debt had been paid up and the residue distributed. It also found that the company had prepared no plan to close down one of its two oil fields.

The State Audit of Vietnam and Russia's Audit Chamber looked into the details of the matters concerned with the company's property and funds that formed during the period the agreement of July 16, 1991 was in effect. Under this agreement, the property was to be divided between the partners in accordance with their shares in the authorized capital. But the terms of the new agreement do not specify a procedure and conditions of the distribution of the property formed earlier.

Besides, under the agreement in effect today, the area of operation of the joint company is limited to a separate territory. Thus, once on December 31, 2030 the agreement terminates, or if the company gets dissolved, all its property made up of the partners' contributions towards its authorized fund and earnings from sales of oil produced on this territory, becomes property of Vietnam. This does not in any way motivate either the Russian or Vietnamese partner to invest in the project.

Public Diplomacy of the Moscow City Duma

Author: V. Platonov

Moscow City Duma Chairman

This interview has been prepared by International Affairs' observer Sergei Filatov



The City Duma maintains international ties in order to more effectively tackle the problems of urban management and to adopt various advanced technologies.

We represent our citizens in the halls of power, and our task in international activities primarily consists in ensuring that the residents of the capital feel comfortable in other states, and so do accordingly foreigners in Moscow.

Q: It is known that the Moscow City Duma has signed over 20 agreements with the bodies of legislative power in this or that city of the world.

We form partnerships with various cities and draw on and learn from their useful experience, although not always foreign practices are applicable here because people living in different countries have a different mentality and some other attitude to law and regulations. But in any case, other countries' experience is of great interest to us.

Of course, we meet with our Ukrainian colleagues, and we have established an exchange of experiences. We do not perceive each other as foreigners; we have the same mentality because we came out of the Soviet Union. They are interested in how we develop the urban economy. We wonder, for example, at the passions that flare in the Kyiv parliament.

Recently there has been an interesting meeting with Tallinn's mayor, Edgar Savisaar. We agreed on possible three-way cooperation involving the colleagues from Berlin, because we are close to each other - on the territory of Europe.

The program for economic unification of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan has now been officially announced. And I will say the most important thing: You can sign a lot of different agreements, but if there is no active joint legislative work - namely, universal laws - a full-fledged union may not pan out.

As for compatriots ... Moscow was one of the first regions to start the work with compatriots. I think it is very important.

When planning a business trip, we agree on the topics for discussion with our colleagues, prepare all necessary materials and questions, and then, on this basis, we form a delegation. We plan to further develop our international activities. Inter-city cooperation presupposes the joint participation of both the executive and legislative branches. The executive branch develops an annual program in which we work together.

The Road Home: Ivan Kramskoi's The Portrait of a Peasant

Author: V. Sibilev

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I would like to relate the story of how a painting by outstanding Russian itinerant artist Ivan Kramskoi called The Portrait of a Peasant (according to another version, The Head of a Peasant) was returned to Russia with the active support of the Russian Consulate General in Brno and the Russian Embassy in Prague, thus bringing it once again to the attention of interested specialists and readers, straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

The particular value of this work, which Ivan Kramskoi painted in 1868, is that it is one of the first portraits of the peasantry by Russian artists in the mid-19th century. In his painting, the artist revealed features of the new and positive image of the ordinary people the Russian realist painters of that time were creating. So this work is extremely valuable for studying the trends in the development of Russian portrait art of the 19th century.

In June 1941, many items of the exhibition that were not evacuated on time and waylaid in the Vorontsov Palace Museum in Alupka were seized by the Nazi German forces and taken out of the Soviet Union.

This was how Ivan Kramskoi's famous painting became a lost art treasure. It surfaced again at the beginning of the 1950s in the Morava Gallery in Brno, Czechoslovakia, which bought the painting, by that time called The Head of a Man, from a private citizen.

During 2003-2004, upon Rosokhrankultura's request and with the assistance of the Russian Consulate General in Brno, a dialogue began with Czech colleagues regarding the return of the painting.

However, the new director who came from Prague to replace her did not show the same enthusiasm as his predecessor and asked for the painting to be "magnanimously" left in Moravia, purporting furthermore that Russia had enough masterpieces as it was.

Thanks to the efforts of the Russian Museum specialists, employees of the Russian Ministry of Culture and Rosokhrankultura, as well as the Russian diplomatic representative offices in the Czech Republic, it was returned to Russia and has taken up its worthy place in the Russian Museum's permanent exhibition.

It was noted at the presentation in St. Petersburg that the return of the lost painting was almost a miracle. Such events are too rare and improbable in today's world.

"Oil Reserves Were There, Are There and Will Certainly Be There for Another Century"

Author: Yu. Shafranik

Chairman of the Board of the Union of Oil and Gas Producers of Russia.

This interview is part of the Vis-à-vis the World project of the "Voice of Russia" international radio broadcasting service, http://rus.ru/radio_broadcast/2227329



As regards politics and economics, every oil and gas project in the world is political. The world rather strongly depends on oil and gas which are indicators of the state of world finance.

I would like to stress once again that the pipeline's operation benefits above all the consumer or Europe. We run a risk because we are responsible for the resources and the funds invested. The transit countries run a risk because

Russia may redirect the flow, especially if the South Stream comes into service.

The world has come to a point where oil and gas resources are becoming most certainly a political commodity.

As a customer, Europe finds it advantageous to have more pipelines and liquid gas terminals. It is an even greater advantage if pipelines come there from different sides. And when we hear from Europe judgments insisting that there is no need for the North Stream and there is no need for the South Stream and no need for anything at all, it sounds like opportunism or spin doctoring.

America at the moment is a good example to us all. It has developed technological procedures and taken a swift stride forward. It has met its demand for gas. Gazprom used to dream of supplying its gas to America five or seven years ago.

OPEC is now raising its quotas because Libya has folded. Thus, the same amount of oil is being supplied, instead of from Libya, from other OPEC countries.

OPEC has raised quotas, Libya will be recovering. It is not to be forgotten that Iraq has five major projects. The drilling is already in progress. A year or two years from now, the world may be glutted with this additional oil.

We've nearly doubled oil exports; now imagine how much more oil we came to produce. To make it possible, we launched many projects and the Baltic Pipeline System (BPS) among them. This is a tremendous effort and plainly a colossal success.

It's a great responsibility. Russia has proved to be equal to the task. Now can you imagine for a second that we could have failed to double our exports? What would have happened to prices? The Western press should ask this question. Please treat Russia with respect if only for this.

Russia-Ukraine-Belarus: A Roundtable in Yalta



This is the third time the International Affairs journal, in conjunction with the Russian Foreign Ministry, is holding here in Yalta, Crimea, a discussion on a topical subject of modern politics. This time we have met to hold an international theoretical conference on ways and means of the integration of the three fraternal Slavic states - Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

The subject of our first session is the architec-

ture of integration processes in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

Integration is not simply trade and economic cooperation that brings nations closer together. It is, above all, a pivotal structure of globalization defining the modern era and affecting the fundamentals of the organization and governance of modern civilization based on the global process of the concentration of capital.

The perception stereotypes that have evolved in the world with regard to the Belarusian economy and the Belarusian political scene are humiliating and unfair.

Another serious problem in this context is our constant orientation exclusively toward the political establishment. Whatever the establishment might be, our vision excludes civil society, which is only in its embryonic form, and regional elites, which fall by the wayside, are often intensely disappointed.

One of the main reasons of the crisis in interaction between our countries lies outside economic, geopolitical or any other rational factors. It lies in the realm of purposes and senses.

So far, integration in all three countries is going in the Western direction which means that the relationships with the West form the core of all contexts, be it political, economic or humanitarian.

We shall arm ourselves with "soft power," our intellect, and our cultural traditions and innovations. We shall use these instruments to build up our civilization together with the most developed states and realize our cultural potential, our values and our ideas about the future. These are our plans; to go ahead we should do a lot of preliminary work.

Representatives of three states - Russia, Ukraine and Belarus - demonstrated here heartfelt communication and perception of the world and of each other which sometimes pushes to side rationality and realities. This means that we are still the same; this is the main fact confirmed by the conference. I congratulate all of us with this: Such meetings are very much needed.

The Russian Council on International Affairs

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THE CREATION OF THE RUSSIAN COUNCIL on International Affairs (RCIA) and the first meeting of its members in July 2011 brought up a large number of questions.

Foreign relations councils are often positioned as a link between the state, the expert community, business and civil society in addressing foreign policy tasks and promoting

a country's interests. Nevertheless, so far there are no generally accepted standards and rules of operation. They can differ from country to country in the principle of organization, priorities, membership mechanisms, financial base and other features.

Our first project is called International Studies in Russia. It aims to develop a directory and database of Russian organizations and experts on international studies.

Common features of such organizations.

First, a specific organizational form. It is usually represented by a small staff and a diversified membership base uniting different representatives of the foreign policy community.

Second, participation in the formulation of a foreign policy course.

Third, active work with foreign partners.

In establishing the Russian Council on International Affairs we took into account foreign experience but were mainly guided by the needs of the domestic foreign political community.

We have launched two information and analysis projects. We also initiate other research projects. Our focus is on quite an extensive range of issues: APEC, Russia's role in the G-20, G-8 and BRICS, migration, the Middle East, and relations with our key partners. It is noteworthy that all of these projects are implemented at the request and in close interaction with all government structures concerned

Obviously, the Council's membership base gives it considerable weight in fulfilling political tasks at the public diplomacy level.

We also believe it is important that despite the limited number of the Council's members it is open to a very broad circle of people interested in foreign policy and international relations: Our Internet portal should give them that opportunity.

Civil Society: Cure for the Ailing State

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MAY YOU LIVE in a time of change! Lately, the old Chinese curse has become very popular yet when you find yourself in a time of change it dawns on you that there was hardly a different time in human history.

The recently published "The Citizen and the State: A Tragic Circle of History"* by Sergei Kurits and Valery Vorobiev is a compass in the turbulent sea of social, political, economic and legal disagreements between the citizen and the state.

The background history of this book is fairly interesting yet the story, as told by Prof. Vorobiev, of how these two people started working together is fascinating.

Their recent book is deliberately less academic - it reads like good journalism and is addressed to wide readership, well beyond the academic community directly involved in analytical activities. The authors have managed to put into their fairly compact book the latest developments in the chosen field obtained after their magnum opus had been already published in 2009. Throughout human history, social protest has been the result of a tragic recurrent cycle of confrontation between the citizen and the state.

The tragic cycle of the citizen/state confrontation can be cut only if executive power and its moves are absolutely transparent. This means that new principles of state administration and law (some of them have been mentioned above) should be applied together with new functions.

The authors dwelt in detail on the means of diagnostics to be applied in order to find the deep-seated defects of the system of state administration and constitutional law and forecast, with a great degree of reliability, the prospects for the ailing state if its diseases have been either cured or left untreated. "To stop the vicious circle it is necessary, with the help of social networks, to create civil society in the countries in which it has not yet been developed - a community of citizens independent of the state yet relying on its legal and material support. Civil society can grasp the essence of the cause-and-effect relationship of deep-seated sources of the ailments of the state; inform the masses about them and train future generations. As a legal and responsible partner of the state civil society can help the state address and resolve the most urgent problems related to the standards of living even during the far from easy transition to the social state governed by the law" (p. 63).

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