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The Humanitarian Crisis in Syria: How Human Tragedies Are Used for Political Purposes

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THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has resulted from a protracted civil conflict in that country, can be described as the most wide-ranging in modern history. Here are just a few figures standing behind which are human lives and fates.

The conflict in Syria has acquired a pointedly interfaith character: the Islamic State (ISIS) and Jabhat al-Nusra (JaN),* as well as illegal armed formations the absolute majority of their

members being jihadists, profess radical Islamism and are doing all they can to destroy the centuriesold traditions of peaceful coexistence between various ethnic groups and confessions.

Unfortunately, neither large-scale military operations nor the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria could unite the international community in a joint effort to help the people in need. The principles of humanism and compassion were pushed to the sidelines.

The West made several attempts to involve others in its unseemly game but all of those attempts were firmly rebuffed by Russia, which was supported by China.

It was obvious that the new UN Security Council resolution would not help international aid operations in Syria. Those operations went along anyway, but in order to facilitate aid deliveries there was no need to adopt new documents at the Security Council. Instead of that consistent and patient work was necessary to get the Syrian sides to cooperate with international aid agencies.

Since the outset of the crisis, Russia has been providing humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people. Importantly, this assistance has never been predicated on any preconditions or on the political situation of the moment. Humanitarian assistance is provided to all those in need regardless of political preferences, religion, ethnicity or residence.

The whole story of the humanitarian "dimension" of the Syrian conflict and the international community's cooperation on humanitarian issues in Syria has shown that Russia remains in fact the only state that is committed to resolving the concrete problems related to ensuring humanitarian access.

The politicization of humanitarian issues, confrontation, and attempts to demonize the legitimate government - none of this will help resolve concrete tasks, but only hurts the UN and adversely affects the political atmosphere. And of course, this will not bring a political settlement of the long-running conflict in Syria any closer.

The Causes of the Civil War in Syria

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THERE ARE ESSENTIALLY two theories regarding the causes of the civil war in Syria that are being promoted throughout the world by Western propaganda and intelligence agencies, as well as by Western satellites such as the "pillars of democracy" Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

First, Syria itself is too fragmented religiously and ethnically. How can Kurds possibly get along with Arabs or Sunnis with Alawites? Until 2011, however, they did get along some way or other and then the

example of neighboring and even more diverse Lebanon shows that there is nothing impossible there. It is certainly not always that diversity inevitably leads to a civil war.

Second, Western peacemakers (or rather mythmakers) are pointing fingers at the "unbearable tyranny" of Bashar Assad or the Assad dynasty. Of course, the Syrian regime cannot be classed as pure democracy of an ancient Athens kind. However, there is no question that until 2011 Syria was one of the most secular, progressive and modern countries in the Arab world. And compared to the U.S. barbarous medieval (to be more accurate, early medieval) and despotic allies/satellites such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and others of their ilk, Syria is simply a fragrant oasis of eastern democracy.

If the legendary Caliph Harun al-Rashid, with the help of his beloved Scheherazade, transported himself to modern Saudi Arabia he would see no difference in the political regime.

There was nothing "spontaneous" about the "popular unrest" of 2011 in Libya or Syria, unlike the events in Tunisia. This time, the "revolutions" were organized by the United States and the Gulf monarchies with support from local oligarchs and the reactionary clergy that had long been receiving funds from Saudi Arabia. If people in Egypt and Tunisia were brought out to the streets by the Internet, antigovernment demonstrations in Syria and Libya began after sermons in mosques.

Now it seems that the U.S. has only one way out - namely, to agree to a political settlement in Syria through negotiations that will inevitably reaffirm the mandate of Assad and Ba'ath (and Washington always knew this).

Thus, the elimination of the last hotbed of socialism in the Arab world will be put on hold. Otherwise the Americans will be faced with the terrorist international that has strengthened its positions with their own help.

Then the West will have other things to worry about than Syria, but that will be too late. So, no matter how badly it might want to finally cleanse the world of Soviet fragments, Washington will have to wait. This is in its own best interests.

France at a Syrian Impasse

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FRANCE PLAYED A SPECIAL ROLE in developing the Syrian statehood partly through the notorious Sykes-Picot Agreement signed by the UK, France and Russia in 1916 in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg) that was moving under French control practically the entire territory of what is now Syria and Lebanon and part of Iraq with the city of Mosul on it. Officially annulled in 1917, when the Bolshevik government of Russia had published the secret agreements of the Entente, it was, on the

whole, realized. France lost its Iraqi "share" to Great Britain in exchange for the right to extract oil in Mosul.

Very much in line with the mandate, France ensured Syria's independence: in 1926, Syria had adopted a Constitution that envisaged the president and the parliament; two years later, under the supervision of the French Administration, it elected its first parliament; in 1936, Hashim al-Atassi was elected the country's first President.

The relations between France and independent Syria were strongly affected by the Cold War, the Suez crisis of 1956 and the Israeli-Arab wars.

France had nothing to do either with building up CENTO or with its activities yet its highly negative attitude to Syria's close relations with the Soviet Union did nothing good to the efforts to tune up cooperation between Paris and Damascus.

In the energy sphere, the French companies were especially attracted by Qatar's huge resources of fairly cheap gas, an access to which could have lowered Europe's comparatively great dependence on Russian gas and meant support of the United States and its European allies for potential projects in this area.

Oil and gas were not the only attractions: huge contracts on weapons supplies to Qatar and Saudi Arabia and modernization of their infrastructure were no less tempting.

On November 26, 2015, during President Hollande's visit to Moscow, the Russian president supported the French initiative and assured him that Russia was ready to coordinate its efforts in Syria, in particular, along the lines of air and naval forces, as well as special services. French Defense Minister, Le Drian and Chief of the Defense Staff, General Pierre de Villiers came to Moscow to discuss further cooperation.

These contacts that at least slowed down the slip to another Cold War between the West and Russia over Ukraine proved useful yet no real cooperation on the Syrian issue was achieved.

The French media that criticized the new course of France as hardly realistic and doubted its results did not abandon the habit of demonization of Assad.

In other words, on the Syrian issue France has been caught in the "noman's land" between the desired and the real: on the one hand, even acting together with its allies, it cannot depose Assad and, on the other, it stubbornly refuses to proceed in its reasoning from this fact. It is insisting, at least officially, that Assad should leave. Nobody knows how long France will insist on it; much will depend on the United States and its position. The history of international politics has taught us that sooner or later reality prevails.

An Attack on Universalism in International Relations

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THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY of human civilization, the system of international relations has been moving through radical changes toward complexity and perfection. Today, we have arrived at a unified and homogenous system of commonly accepted norms and rules of behavior approved and recognized by the absolute majority of states. This system emerged from fragments each belonging to its own specific historical stage of social development and related to political, philosophic, cultural, religious and other distinctive features of countries and regions. Universalism on the international arena is one of the gains of mankind, a visual evidence of its maturity achieved through evolution and the calamities of the twentieth century caused by two

world wars. This means that the further deepening and improvement of universalism should open new vistas of mankind's harmonious development, bring closer countries and nations so that to jointly address common challenges and threats of global nature.

In recent years, however, we have been watching how certain extremely dangerous trends and processes were piling up to push mankind in an opposite direction.

The United States that together with the Soviet Union and the UK had set up the UN and formulated its basic criteria and principles did not like it much at the best of times and always looked at it as a rival on the world arena. Throughout its history, the UN relied on the Security Council's veto mechanism to contain, as best as it could, America's determination to achieve global domination. It erected international law obstacles to American expansionism and blocked off Washington's attempts to suppress the rest of the world.

Having appointed itself the Cold War winner and gotten rid of the Soviet Union, its unignorable global rival, Washington became especially irritated with the UN.

Russia is being tested by the strategy of "sanctions" introduced to stifle its national economy and to stir up massive discontent so that to change the regime the West finds unpalatable. Never before it had acted on the same scale, never before it had challenged countries of that size and importance. These actions contradict the spirit and principles of the WTO and are fraught with disintegration of the world trade system as we know it today.

We know from history that at all times the West tried to deprive Russia of that breathing space and draw it into another confrontation. In fact, this is going on today: I regret to say that thanks to the efforts of certain forces sport has become part of a multi-component and deeply eche-loned pressing organized and directed by the most rabid Russophobes in the West.

Universalism in all segments of international relations - politics, economics and sports - is an

achievement of all mankind and the result of many millennia of its history. All states and communities and all categories of citizens - politicians, analysts and common people alike - should protect universalism. We should not allow the destructive forces to tear down our common wealth. The cost is prohibitively high: we should not let any country push the world into chaos and instability.

Nonproliferation: Russian and American Policies

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Effects of the transformation of the international relations system at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century have included changes in the character of global security threats. The emergence of a black market for nuclear materials, information and technologies and the possibility of extremist networks getting hold of nuclear weapons are among new sources of danger.

Recent achievements in various fields of technology are one more obstacle to maintaining the nonproliferation

regime.

All this gives special importance to the study of Russian and American policies on nonproliferation as Russia and the United States hold the unique status of nations with the most powerful strategic nuclear arsenals.

The Concept prescribed that Russia join the missile technology control regime (MTCR) as an equal participant and called for a universal and comprehensive ban on nuclear tests.

An analysis of Russian and American government documents makes clear that nonproliferation is high on the agenda of both sides and is acknowledged by them as a problem of fundamental importance.

The mid-2000s were a landmark moment in Russia as documents came out setting fundamental objectives for Moscow's nonproliferation policy.

TOWARD THE END of the 20th century, the United States had embarked on serious changes to its position on nonproliferation. The initial changes were recorded in the Defense Counterproliferation Initiative of 1993.

AN ANALYSIS of Russian and American government documents makes clear that nonproliferation is high on the agenda of both sides and is acknowledged by them as a problem of fundamental importance.

Both nations focus on a wide range of measures such as building stronger guarantees of nuclear safety, control of nuclear materials, including control of their exports and of plutonium recycling. Russia and the United States discussed these measures during world nuclear security summits in Washington on April 12-13, 2010, in Seoul on March 26-27, 2012, and in The Hague on March 24-25, 2014.

Russia and the United States have made a large number of joint achievements such as initiatives to consolidate the nonproliferation regime, enhance guarantees of nuclear safety and security, prevent trafficking in nuclear materials, limit the use of highly enriched uranium and plutonium in reactors, and prevent nuclear terrorism.

The adverse trends of the past couple of years devalue achievements that preceded them and raise obstacles to finding answers to a wide range of complicated and multifaceted security-related questions. Respect for each other's interests is the only way to remove those obstacles.

BRICS in a Multipolar World: From Technological Asymmetry to Catchup and Breakthroughs

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TEN YEARS have passed since Russia initiated the BRICS project in 2006.

The first three years were devoted to analysis, detailed work on key points of the project, finding out the views of participant nations, and organizational procedures.

At a summit in Sanya, China, in 2011, South Africa joined BRICS on a consensus basis. Hence BRICS is now represented on four continents. But there have been no less important structural and procedural changes within BRICS, which has moved from the dialogue format and the coordination of positions on key international issues to an interstate association and a broader sphere of dialogue, coop-

eration, and partnership.

As a result, BRICS has become a global forum of a new generation and a highly important step toward a multipolar world order. BRICS brings together 45% of the world population, including three billion consumers living on one third of the globe's land surface.

BRICS' executive system includes an expert group on trade and economy, working groups on information and communications technology (ICT), information security, healthcare, agriculture, science, and technology, and a consortium of research centers. BRICS is looking for more efficient cooperation formats all the time. It has, for example, set up a virtual secretariat.

All the member countries, but primarily Russia and China, intensively develop space-related industries and are engaged in space research whose results are used in practically all economic sectors. Russia retains its status of one of the world's leaders in space exploration.

As energy, agriculture is one of the most vital industries, and so it is human well-being that is behind the BRICS countries' attention to agriculture.

Humanitarian technology could be an important field of innovation for BRICS. There can be a bunch of reasons for BRICS to focus on this aspect of the sixth technological revolution. Cognitive and psychological conflicts are an increasingly serious global problem.

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THE CRISIS of the unipolar world order and the United States' unbridled efforts to deter Russia entail a growing need for our country to enhance its national security system and develop wide-scale international cooperation based on our nation's global prestige and involving our active participation in alliances of sovereign states that do not belong to any major blocs.

NATO's buildup of military infrastructure virtually next to Russian borders, the escalation of subversive political activity geared at hybrid warfare, the fanning of Russophobic sentiments in foreign media, the suits filed against Russia demanding millions of dollars, and wide-scale efforts to discredit Russian arts and sports are in effect indications of a geopolitical confrontation.

The United States has used the soft power concept for the sole purpose of giving some temporary semblance of legitimacy under international law to its illegal interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states.

The increasing mutual integration of former Soviet republics, Russia's leading positions in some sectors of the world economy, the consistent defense by Moscow of Russia's national interests at the UN Security Council, BRICS, the Eurasian Economic Union and other international organizations, and the global significance of Russian cultural, scientific and technological achievements form the basis for Russia's growing soft power potential.

Armed confrontation that, in addition to conventional weapons, involves special technologies, information resources, and cyber networks, has received the name "hybrid warfare."

The 2010 Arab Spring upheavals represented classical hybrid warfare scenarios.

Russia's legitimate and consistent foreign policy, leading positions in international alliances, reliability as an economic partner, continuously improving military infrastructure, and increasingly efficient efforts to maintain national and public security ensure effective government and guarantee social and political stability in the country.

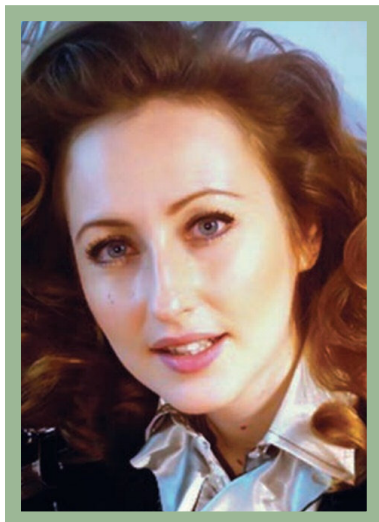
This is essential due to the ongoing sectoral sanctions against Russia, increasing anti-Russian subversive activities by Western intelligence services, the deployment of NATO's military infrastructure near Russian borders, the creation of a "belt of hostility" - a group of U.S.-controlled nations, - and the cultivation of terrorism in countries that are territories of controlled chaos.

Russia should unquestionably continue the classical form of soft power policy that it pursues and that is based on the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. This policy is supported by the population of Russia, by Russian-speaking communities abroad and by friendly foreign nationals, and forms the basis for a prospective trend in the development of the world community.

Global Anti-Corruption Strategy: New Trends and Priorities

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CORRUPTION is a global threat. In any country, no matter what its political system and level of economic development are, corruption threatens stability and public well-being, deprives people of their rights and makes them defenseless, and inevitably and heavily undermines national security and sovereignty.

Efforts are underway in various international formats, primarily at the United Nations, to find the most effective ways to combat corruption. There exists a whole series of international and regional anti-corruption conventions, and there are mechanisms for the assessment of compliance with these accords. However, no country has been able to completely eradicate corruption.

Russia has been active in international anti-corruption efforts in re-

cent years.

Putin has repeatedly insisted that anti-corruption activities in Russia should be a comprehensive endeavor. Russia on the whole has sufficient legislation and an adequate organizational framework to fight corruption. In addition to the Federal Law "On Action against Corruption" and National Anti-Corruption Strategy, every two years the Russian president approves national anti-corruption plans that map out specific tasks. In fulfilling its commitments under key international anti-corruption conventions that it has signed, Russia has revised its laws on state and municipal service, criminal, criminal procedure, civil and labor laws, and Code on Administrative Offenses. By taking part in the London summit, Russia once again demonstrated its determination to collaborate with other countries in a variety of formats, including the UNCAC system, APEC anti-corruption working groups, and the G20. International anti-corruption action must undoubtedly be a collective, coordinated effort based on clear rules.

According to what was said at the summit, there is an obvious trend to strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms and enhance international cooperation in combating corruption. Institutions, forms of cooperation, and ways of information exchange are reformatted. Traditional organizations and forums are, perhaps, not abandoned but a kind of "parallel reality" is coming into being - more mobile, resourceful, and efficient associations are emerging that are open for anyone to join. At the same time, participation in them can only be fruitful for countries that are proactive, generate constructive proposals, and defend their interests but simultaneously are open to combining forces with other countries to look for solutions. There may practically be no solution that has benefits limited to one country. The character of a solution to a problem largely depends on the way the problem is presented.

All this means that, to fruitfully cooperate with other countries in fighting corruption, a country needs appropriate logistic, professional, and expert resources. Efficient coordination between government authorities involved in anti-corruption measures is probably the main condition of success.

The Eastward Vector of Yevgeny Primakov

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IN RECENT YEARS, Russia's foreign policy has been swinging eastward, toward Asia-Pacific, with unprecedented rapidity and confidence. But nothing would be further from the truth than the idea that this is a reaction to the Western sanctions.

By the time Primakov became foreign minister, the ideas underlying Kozyrev's foreign policy course had largely got depreciated. Alas, the good intentions recorded in the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation had failed to stand the test of time, being smashed against the severe reality of post-confrontation international politics. By the mid-nineties, it had become obvious that Russia needed to seriously revise that concept and its foreign policy practice.

At the dawn of new Russian statehood, Moscow declared as one of the central tasks of its diplomacy to build "equitable partnership with leading neighboring democratic and economically developed countries on the basis of defense of our values and interests through practical interaction rather than rushing from confrontations to Utopias."

IT WOULDN'T BE an exaggeration that Primakov made a huge contribution to Russo-Chinese relations. During his tenure as foreign minister, Russia and China made a leap in their relations by becoming strategic partners. In those years, solid legal foundations were laid for Russian-Chinese political interaction.

AS AN INSIGHTFUL ORIENTALIST, Primakov was aware of the role of Japan in the modern world and believed Russia needed closer ties with that country, relations with which are so important to us.

As part of Primakov's revision of its Asian policy, Moscow began to pay more attention to its relations with Japan. Japan was one of the chief and most economically developed members of the Group of Seven, and it was obviously unnatural that Russia, which attended G7 summits, had less developed relations with it than with any of the other six nations.

Primakov argued that, by and large, such joint activities would be important not only economically but also politically and would take the two countries closer to a compromise in their sovereignty dispute over the South Kuril Islands.

LARGELY through the efforts of Primakov, dialogue partnership between Russia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a relationship Primakov attached great importance to, received an unprecedented boost. Behind this was, firstly, Moscow's conviction that ASEAN was a key regional organization with a philosophy and interests that were objectively similar to those of Russia and, secondly, ASEAN's desire for closer cooperation with our coun-

try.

PRIMAKOV came up with his first initiatives for multilateral diplomacy in Asia-Pacific when the first few regional structures were still trying, rather timidly, to get to their feet. I think he foresaw what great future awaited Asia-Pacific multilateral organizations and forums.

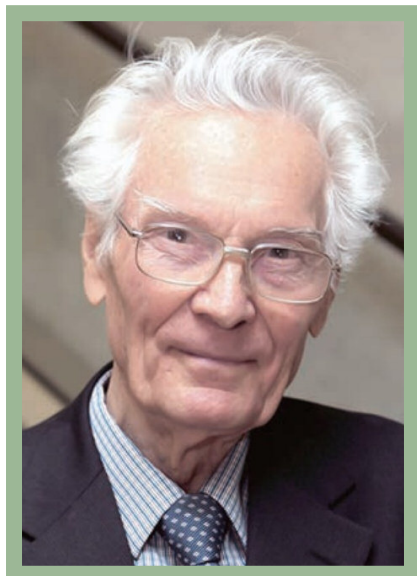
PRIMAKOV has left behind a large theoretical legacy, and his farsighted predictions are beginning to come true.

YEVGENY PRIMAKOV was a wise and sober-minded politician. In pursuing his pro-Asia Pacific line, he realized the need for Russia to adopt a balanced strategy in its foreign policy and foreign economic activities.

On Pope Francis' Addresses

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The last centuries have revealed the fact that the distance between the great religious teachings and their followers is increasing. This is especially obvious in case of Christianity: in the past, the peoples of Europe were actively involved in religious life; today, churches in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and other countries are empty even on great religious holidays; some of them are closed or even sold. Sects of all sorts and atheist associations are mushrooming; the flock is growing more and more disgusted with the behavior (homosexuality, pedophilia, etc.) of some members of the clergy. Many European countries have already legalized gay marriages very much to the detriment of the family, the cornerstone of human society and the state.

These and many other facts of the same sort testify, to a certain respect, that religion, culture and human society are steadily disintegrating while the intervals between the shattering financial and economic crises are growing shorter. There is no need here to dwell on the causes of local wars and armed conflicts, revolutions and counterrevolutions as well as terrorism: naturally, it is a subject that concerns all and everyone.

No wonder, the sober-minded politicians, clerics, scientists, and cultural figures are worried by the gradually worsening economic, political and, last but not least, moral environment. They point to the obvious deficit, not to say complete absence, of fairness in contemporary society: the deep and deepening precipice that separates the rich and the poor, an onslaught of militant amorality in the relationships between people, nations and states.

In his address to the deputies of the European Parliament, Pope Francis pointed out: "My visit comes more than a quarter of a century after that of Pope John Paul II. Since then, much has changed throughout Europe and the world as a whole. The opposing blocs which then divided the continent in two no longer exist"; Europe became different politically and economically as well as anthropologically and geographically; the entire world changed a lot. As the interconnections between nations were developing and growing more and more complicated and European Union was expanding the world was growing less and less 'Eurocentric'. Despite a larger and stronger Union, Europe seems to give the impression of being somewhat elderly and haggard, feeling less and less a protagonist in a world which frequently regards it with aloofness, mistrust and even, at times, suspicion."

The Pontiff pointed out that despondency was not the right answer to these serious problems - the Europeans should close ranks so that to arrive at the best possible solutions.

In fact, the Pope has pointed to total loneliness or alienation of man in the contemporary world. Today, we can all see, with a great deal of regret, that Europe has not yet pondered on these

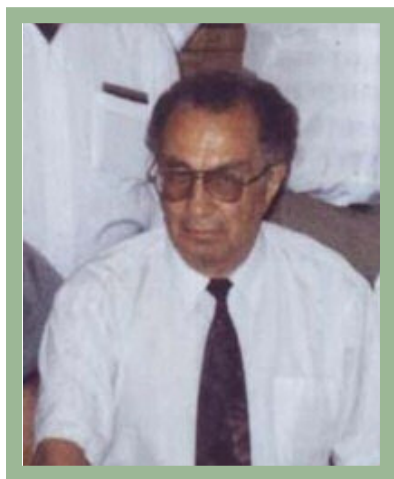
questions because of its arrogance, in the first place: it still looks at itself as the most civilized, cultured, developed, and, in the final analysis, elite part of mankind.

Pope Francis is the only one among the Popes in more than a century who said kind words about the Eastern Churches that conserved the beautiful liturgy: "They conserve it. They praise God, they adore God," they are preserving the teaching of Jesus Christ in its original form. This is in fact the first positive assessment of the Eastern Churches; this is signally important since it opens the prospects of deeper mutual understanding between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and much closer cooperation between them.

The Pontiff condemned the formal, lukewarm and conceited Christianity as the gravest of sins. He has called on the Christians to move away from this and listen to the Word of God so that to take the path of the righteous and stop amassing material wealth, indulging in machinations and robbing other people. We should become deeply faithful Christians. This position of the Pontiff invites profound respect, kindles faith and breeds hopes that contemporary man and the world society as a whole can reform themselves.

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AT ALL TIMES, the best minds were talking about a world free from wars, conflicts and bloodshed. In modern history, market economy and political democracy made this ideal even more tempting. The demolition of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 bred hopes that Europe and the rest of the world were entering a period of universal harmony and order based on a firm and gradually strengthening conviction that stronger democracy in the steadily increasing number of state and regions would finally change the nature of domestic and foreign policies on the global scale.

Much have been written about the future without interstate and other conflicts and wars that would retire into history as the Western model of political democracy would be spreading across the world.¹ Some of the false prophets hastened to announce the final victory of the Western liberal values on the worldwide scale and, hence, the end of history of sorts.

Globalization was expected to consolidate the world on the principles of liberalism, market economy, freedom of trade, and the Washington Consensus; to push national sovereignty out of sight or even eliminate it altogether; to denationalize nations and make national identity a relic of the past. The European Union started talking in earnest about European citizenship and European identity as an alternative to national citizenship and national identity.

In real life, however, globalization and information technologies expected to spread political democracy on a global scale, intensify cultural interactions and also cultural fragmentation and diversification as the reverse side of globalization.

Today, there is an illusion that there are no reasons to resolve interstate and international disagreements, to protect national interests and ensure national and state security through conflicts and wars since the main actors of world politics are no longer locked in a frontal systemic, ideological and military-political confrontation.

Any war can be described as a result of political decisions taken to achieve certain political aims. Hybrid wars differ from the traditional type of wars: they rely on the entire range of military and non-military forms, means, methods, and technologies of ideological, information, cultural, economic, geoeconomic, political, geopolitical, etc. confrontation. Scandalous cartoons are part of hybrid warfare; they are products of the unlimited freedom of speech and are, in fact, one of the outcrops of propaganda of racism, xenophobia and other forms of political and ideological fundamentalism that differs but little from radical Islamism.

In this context, soft power has become one of the key elements of the state's potentials and might.

The ideological and information-ideological foundations of hybrid warfare are of crucial importance.

The strategy of export of democratic revolutions and hybrid warfare cannot be realized without threats or use of hard power. At all times, ideas supported by power invariably prevailed; those of the armed prophets won who could draw force to their side to realize their ideas. Today, real hard power has not lost its importance; it remains the key resource of any state willing to confirm its geopolitical status and influence in the world. This has become even more obvious in the last few decades when the factor of hard power is gaining momentum in new forms and new manifestations.

The wars unleashed by the West, the Arab Spring and color revolutions have changed the geopolitical picture of both regions, parts of Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus beyond recognition.

The Islamic Challenge in the 21st Century: The Russian Dimension

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FIFTEEN independent states were formed in place of the dissolved Soviet Union, with Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, all Central Asian republics getting this status for the first time in their history. They quickly established political and economic relations with the outside world, while the Muslim republics forged especially close relations with Turkic Muslim world. The Russians, who lived in Azerbaijan and Central Asia, and with them representatives of other nationalities not professing Islam, started hastily leaving the above countries.

About four million square kilometers of former Soviet territory have been almost cleansed of Christian inhabitants, as joyfully reported by the world mass media - particularly by representatives of Islamic, primarily Turkish, clergy and national intellectuals.

After the breakup of the USSR, when the whole world was waiting for what will follow next, stunned by such an unexpected event only comparable to the end of World War II in its global implications, Turkey immediately started an active dialog with the Islam-oriented former Soviet republics and autonomous republics which remained part of the Russian Federation.

One and a half million Russians who lived in Azerbaijan left its territory in just a few years because of the fast Islamization of all spheres of social and political life and a lack of prospects in that country.

A wave of de-Russianization and de-Christianization also rolled across all Muslim republics of the Russian Federation.

The city of Grozny, which was founded by Russians and served as Russia's stronghold in the North Caucasus, was abandoned by the Russians and all other people, who were not professing Islam, after the start of violent unrest. All those who stayed there were robbed blind, deprived of any property, and expelled from the republic at gunpoint by the armed "militia."

A huge amount of Muslims numbering 8-10 million people, who in all respects differ from the indigenous population, have settled in Russia - from the south border areas to its northern capital.

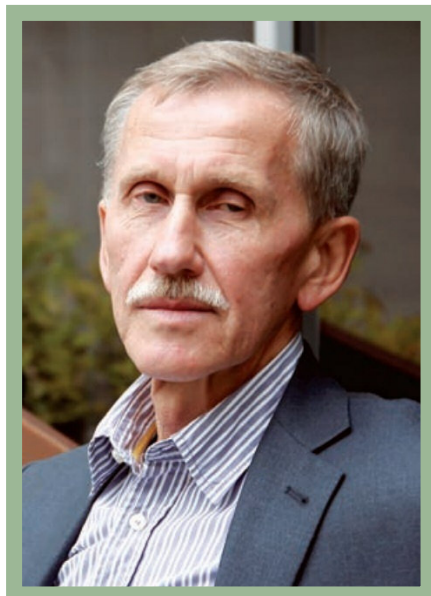
RUSSIA has the largest territory among major military and political powers, which extends across a broad expanse of two continents - Europe and Asia. Turkey also lies on two continents, but the territory it occupies in Europe is insignificant and it does not rank among the world leaders.

In Russia, for many centuries, the titular Russian nation, which is mostly Christian, has been living together with representatives of Islamic culture residing within their historical boundaries. However, the collapse of the USSR and a multimillion-strong migration of Muslims from former Soviet republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan to central regions of Russia, including Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as an upsurge of radical Islam across the entire perimeter of the Muslims' settlement area, have created new political realities.

Russia and the Baltic Countries: Contours of a Concept of Bilateral Relations

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A FEW POINTS need to be clarified before pursuing any study of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from the Russian perspective. One should avoid extremes such as looking down on the three Baltic countries or exaggerating their international role as a group. Secondly, for much of their history, those nations not only had close ties with Russia, but were parts of it - which means that all they possess today is based on resources granted by Russia. In view of all this, the Baltic states are a permanent and integral part of Russia's foreign policy agenda.

Today, Russian and international public opinion mainly perceives Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as permanent anti-Russian irritants. Their governments and propaganda machines aggressively portray Russia as the main source of threats to regional and global stability and propagate the thesis that the former Soviet Union is

to blame for the Baltic nations' current development problems.

IT IS A POPULAR THESIS in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania that their acquisition of independence in 1991 was solely the result of their internal development. This disregards the fact that the independence drive in the three countries was just one of public movements triggered by the renewal policy in the Soviet Union that is known as perestroika.

As newly independent countries in the early nineties, the Baltic states vacillated between two options - retaining and prioritizing their historical ties with their neighbors Russia and Belarus and building closer relations with Western Europe. Eventually, they opted for Western Europe, and this, in fact, became their exclusive choice.

Today, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have their own joint role in both the EU and NATO. In the North Atlantic alliance, they represent themselves as "frontline" states in reference to their borders with Russia. This position is inspired by NATO's leadership, which has plans to deploy U.S., British, and German armed forces in the Baltic countries.

The foreign threat factor is also actively exploited in the domestic politics of the Baltic states, for example in struggles between political parties. In the EU, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania ally with Britain and Poland on two key issues - the migration problem and the anti-Russian sanctions. The Baltic countries are also deeply involved in the Eastern Partnership program by generating initiatives for its promotion. As for other EU activities, the Baltic nations chiefly contribute to the Union's policy toward Russia and by and large take a coordinated line in this capacity.

Russia is naturally concerned about Russian speakers in the Baltic countries and helps them de-

fend their rights, fight discrimination, and act against the atmosphere of discord generated by the Baltic governments and radical groups.

AFTER THE COLLAPSE of the Soviet Union, both Russia and the Baltic states came up with concepts for bilateral relations. Russia put economy above politics and built up investments in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the expectation that growing inputs of Russian capital would convince those countries to boost their relations with their eastern neighbor. The Baltic nations focused on a thesis that their former close ties with Russia could make them become a bridge between Russia and the West.

THE STATUS of the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania is a special concern for Russia. There are Russian-speaking communities in many countries, but the Baltic states are exceptional in the sense that they have legalized ethnic discrimination against their Russian speakers, in other words, their governments legally divide their people into native population and Russian speakers and sustain this division.

One shouldn't underestimate the inevitable growth of national self-awareness in the Baltic nations and hence increasing power ambitions on the part of Baltic politicians who base their programs not on dictums from abroad but on what their own population wants without dividing the latter into native and non-native communities. Sooner or later, genuinely independent politicians may come forward in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, people who would be able to resolutely champion genuine national interests. This may quickly and drastically alter the situation in the Baltic countries and change their international role, enabling them to restore their former regional and international prestige and making them more attractive as independent partners.

The Role of Israel in Obama's Mideast Policy

Author: A. Polyakova

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THE MIDDLE EAST is one of the strategic priorities of U.S. foreign policy due to economic, political, military, demographic, and energy factors. Israel has been the United States' main partner and outpost in that important region for many years. The determinants of the United States' Middle Eastern policy include trade in weapons and energy, economic cooperation, the Iranian nuclear program issue, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis, and combating interna-

tional terrorism.

The United States' arms sales to hostile neighbors of Israel do not affect American-Israeli relations. Firstly, Israel buys weapons of the same kind as neighboring countries do. Secondly, being an ally of the United States gives Israel a military edge over other Middle Eastern countries.

The United States also seeks to boost its economic cooperation with Middle Eastern nations in a bid to ensure development, peace, and stability in the region. The region mainly buys aircraft, vehicles, industrial machinery, computers, electric, sound and television equipment, and component parts from the United States.

The special American-Israeli relationship, which is based on shared interests and values, makes Israeli interests one of the factors in Washington's planning of its Middle East policy.

The Iranian nuclear program issue has been a serious factor in the Obama administration's Middle Eastern policy and a priority on its general agenda. From the very start of his presidency, Obama was determined to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iran problem and avoid military measures.

There was more friction between the United States and Israel after moderate reformer Hassan Rouhani became president of Iran in 2013. Rouhani shared Obama's principle of seeking a negotiated solution to the nuclear problem. This deepened the rift between the United States and Israel as the latter was opposed to any concessions to Iran on the nuclear issue and was against any mitigation of the sanctions.

After the long-awaited agreement with Tehran was clinched, the White House tried to convince the Republicans and Israel that the United States remained determined to defend its Middle Eastern ally. But Israel was adamant, still claiming that the deal could not stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

The Arab Spring with its upheavals has had a direct impact on the United States' Middle Eastern policy as a whole and on American-Israeli relations.

Radicalization processes in the Middle East have forced the United States to take account of new threats and challenges in its Middle Eastern policy planning while Israel has tightened security measures, including by buying more U.S. weapons.

In summing up, one can draw the conclusion that American-Israeli relations have a direct effect on the United States' Middle Eastern policy. They do not hinder Washington's policy in the region or the United States' arms or energy trade with Middle Eastern countries or economic cooperation with them. Moreover, they quite often help the United States establish new forms of cooperation with regional countries. The interests of the United States do not directly clash with those of Israel even over the Syrian crisis, though the two countries are divided on the Syrian issue.

Cultural Diplomacy as a Tool of Russia's Current Foreign Policy

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IT IS GENERALLY KNOWN that any state's international reputation depends on a variety of factors, including, among other things, its political weight, economic strength, and also its cultural potential. Promoting its cultural heritage in other countries, encouraging language learning, and expanding cultural exchanges are among any state's highest priorities, being an integral part of its foreign policy strategy.

This obviously also applies to Russia's current cultural diplomacy. Yevgeny Shmagin, Deputy Director of the Department on Cultural Affairs and Ties with UNESCO of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underscores in his article "Culture and Diplomacy" published in *International Affairs* the importance of cultural diplomacy

in implementing the state's foreign-policy strategy, maintaining, in particular, that "the union of diplomacy and culture has at all times served Russia's national interests, over and over again demonstrating its vitality at different stages in our history.

The Russian state has been undertaking a number of comprehensive measures designed to advance Russian culture abroad.

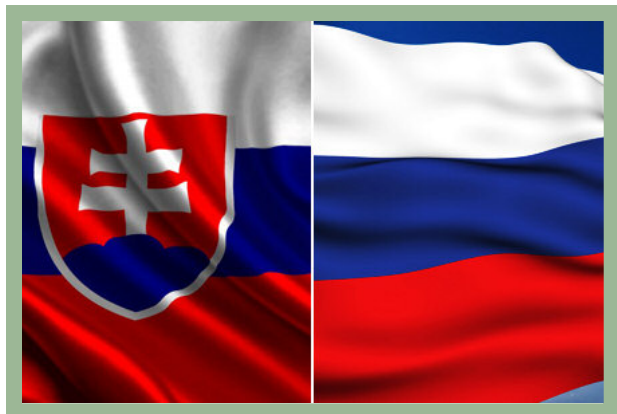
Russian media's international broadcasts is yet another key instrument of our cultural diplomacy, allowing people around the world not only to view Russian-language programs, but also to get access to firsthand information about Russia's policy. Russian TV channels, radio broadcasting, and printed press not only provide our compatriots with a reliable information about Russia, but also serve as a kind of a communication line linking them to their home country and allowing them not to feel disconnected from all what is going on in Russia.

Special importance is attached to studying Russian abroad, which is among our major foreign policy goals.

Cultural centers of the Russian Federation operating abroad exercise a full range of foreign policy functions relating to cultural diplomacy and actively promote Russia's positive image worldwide.

When analyzing the role of cultural diplomacy in Russia's foreign policy strategy, we should focus, apart from bilateral agreements in the sphere of culture, on the countries' multilateral interaction. Being a multinational and multi-confessional state, the Russian Federation aims at furthering dialogue and partnership relations among different cultures, religions, and civilizations, and has been taking successive steps to implement the goals set by such international and regional organizations as the United Nations, UNESCO, OSCE, and the Council of Europe.

This material was prepared with support from the A.M. Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund and the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Slovakia.



THE FIRST Russian-Slovak discussion forum, organized by the A.M. Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Fund together with the Slovak Foreign Policy Association and with assistance from the Russian Embassy in Slovakia and the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, took place on May 26, 2016 in Bratislava.

The forum was opened by Russian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Slovakia A.L. Fedotov and State Secretary of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Lukas Parizek.

The event was attended by diplomats and experts from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, the Centre of International and Regional Policy (ENGIN) (St. Petersburg), and the Institute of Energy and Geopolitics. Slovakia was represented at the forum by the heads of the relevant departments of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, experts of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and the Slovak Security Policy Institute, as well as by independent foreign policy and international relations analysts.

The forum addressed the current aspects of bilateral and multilateral relations, in particular the status and prospects for Russia-EU collaboration in the context of the Slovak presidency in the European Council, energy cooperation, European security and the fight against international terrorism, the Ukraine crisis, and Russia-NATO relations.

Experts discussed the causes of the cooling in Russia-EU relations and prospects for the resumption of dialogue.

It was noted that the vacuum of mutual distrust led to the quick destruction of the apparently solid foundation of our relations. At the same time, the EU's programmatic documents, which described Russia as its "natural strategic partner," have not been reviewed yet. However, the lack

of a "basic agreement" between Russia and the European Union and the freezing of sectoral cooperation formats do not make it possible to break the deadlock.

Alexei Fedotov, *Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Slovakia*

How does Moscow see the current status and prospects for the development of cooperation with



the EU? With regard to the general principles of our foreign policy doctrine in relation to the EU, I can say the following: We believe in strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation, harmonizing integration processes on the continent and in the post-Soviet space and creating an open system of equal and indivisible security in the Euro-Atlantic region which will be based on a clear-cut legal framework.

We do not seek confrontation with the West. On the contrary, Russia is open to the broadest possible engagement with its Western partners.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that despite the difficulties in Russian-EU relations collaboration between Russia and Slovakia continues to develop successfully.



Lukds Parizek, *State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic*

Russia plays an extremely important role in the context of European architecture. The potential of Russian-EU relations was not fully realized after the achievement of the main strategic agreements.

Russia and EU member states clearly expressed their sincere interest in developing their relations. The wonderful "four common spaces" slogan and the signing

of the Partnership for Modernization program were suspended due to the escalation of the conflict in southeastern Ukraine.

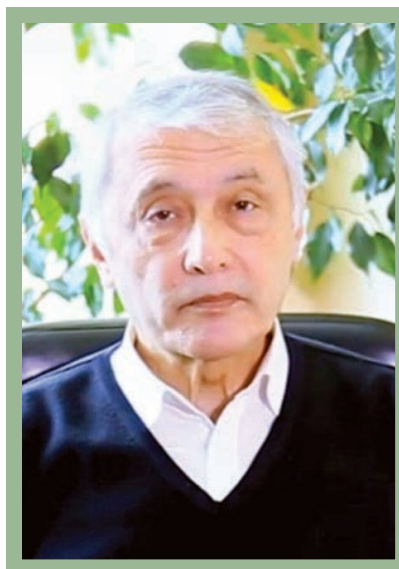
We are faced with the challenge to overcome the present complicated situation in EU-Russia relations. The path forward lies through the maintenance of a political dialogue and close attention to the opinions of both sides. It should be pointed out that the information environment and the way it is formed by both sides are not conducive to improving the situation.

I commend Russia's constructive approach and its contribution to the signing of a nuclear agreement with Iran. I also value its contribution to ensuring the removal of chemical weapons from Syria, as well as to ending the civil war on Syrian territory. Russia is an important geopolitical player, and we are interested in improving relations between our countries. It takes two partners to resume pragmatic cooperation - partners who not only speak the same language but to paraphrase a politician from the "thaw" era in Soviet-U.S. relations, also use the same explanatory dictionaries. This discussion forum is an opportunity for our dictionaries and languages to draw closer together.

The World Order: Problems of Transformation

Author: Sh. Shakhalilov

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THE WEST, shocked by Crimea's voluntary re-unification with Russia, qualified the latter's actions as an undisguised challenge to the world order and started talking about it as one of the gravest threats to international security. There are appeals to the Western community to close ranks to stop Moscow's aggression against the East European countries even though nobody in the Baltic states, none of which is favorably disposed to Russia, believes that this scenario might be realized.

In fact, the West unfolded its anti-Russian campaign to prevent Russia from becoming an influential power center with an independent foreign policy and to avoid the inevitable crumbling of the world order followed by chaos and anarchy. Russia, in its turn, believes that the complicated international situation is a product

of an unfair world order and destroyed political balance, both the doings of the only superpower. This means that the destroyed balance of power should be restored: the world needs an efficient system of global security or, to put it differently, a new world order.

In this article, I have discussed the circumstances potentially conducive to such transformations and identified the obstacles.

For the first time in human history, a state that does not fit all the parameters of world power center and has not cobbled together a military coalition of its own has announced for everybody to hear that the domination of a sole superpower is a threat.

THOSE WHO REPRESENT the school of realism doubt the sustainability of the unipolar world and assert that the multipolar world will take shape sooner or later. These authors emphasize that, as history shows, when the balance of power is tipped by one power it is inevitably restored later.

The neoliberals, on their side, doubt that the international conditions are conducive to a traditional response in the form of balance of power. They prefer to think that the already existing and new centers of power will try to contain the United States and its power yet an anti-American coalition will be hardly possible because of very different strategic interests of its potential members. Indeed, the EU, Russia, China, and Japan will hardly pool forces to contain the United States.

It is commonly believed that the strategic responses to the unipolar world of the United States will depend on whether Washington continues to address the world problems single-handedly or will engage other states and international institutions.

Russia presents itself as a center of power that stands opposed to the superpower determined to ignore Russia's interests. If this happened in the nineteenth or even first half of the twentieth century, the dominant power would have responded with the use of force to punish the impudent state. Today, in the twenty-first century, a direct military confrontation between the U.S. and Russia is hardly possible. How can the U.S. and its satellites respond?

Today, the situation is unique: for the first time, Russia is showing the road toward a new order without wars, which invariably accompanied the past changes of the world order. This task can be resolved if the claimants of the status of new centers of power are strong enough to persuade the dominant center of power to resist the temptation to smash the potential rivals by force.

Fighting for Our Share in the Oil Market

Author: Yu. Shafranik

Chairman of the Union of Oil and Gas Producers of Russia



This interview was conducted by Elizaveta Antonova, International Affairs' head of department, and commentator Sergey Filatov.

Reducing oil production to ensure higher prices is an objective that is publicly declared at events such as OPEC summits and other meetings. However, what did almost all OPEC countries and the world's major oil companies, including Russian companies, do in 2014 and 2015? They increased production! Let us take 2016. What did they do again? They increased it again!

Why? Because everybody's main goal is to ensure market control. Maybe no one talks about it openly but everyone pursues it. Meanwhile, competition has intensified to the highest degree possible.

Of course, everyone wants high oil prices but they are vying to increase (at least to preserve) their share of the market.

It is also important to understand that over the past six to eight years the energy world has changed - not drastically, but quite considerably. Yes, oil is a staple energy commodity. Nevertheless, renewable energy sources, among other things, are already making themselves felt. Thus, Japan plans to begin industrial production of methane from gas hydrate.

I believe that it is too early to talk about Iran's "dangerous return." This subject may become relevant in two years or so. Today, it is more important that Saudi Arabia and other Middle East and OPEC countries have become aware of the changes that have occurred.

The U.S. has focused on an array of measures in the energy sector - from renewable sources to new energy generation projects, including nuclear fusion. As a result, a major technological breakthrough was made.

There was a two-year downward trend - in fact, a plummeting trend: from over \$100 per barrel to almost \$30. This is due to an array of factors, including the unstable situation in the global economy. Many countries are experiencing a downturn. The United States is seeing economic growth. The situation in India and China is apparently stabilizing, but there are also plenty of difficulties there. Against this backdrop, the global financial system has begun to play an increasingly visible role. I believe that in the long run - between 2010 and 2020 - the average price could be put at \$80, not higher. This year, it is \$40-\$50.

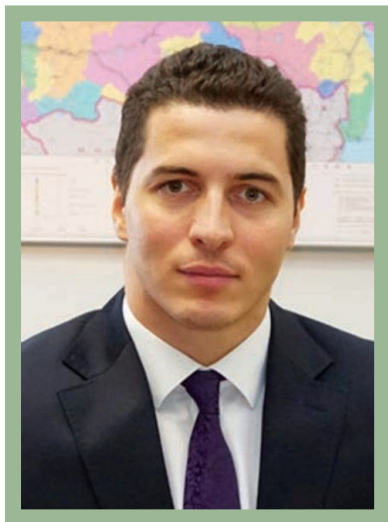
Our president has repeatedly stressed that Russia's oil and gas complex should be stable because it remains the backbone of our economy. It is impossible to change an economic system overnight, not even within a decade. Nevertheless, normalization processes are well in evidence. In this context, the main task for the oil sector is to cut costs and enhance efficiency plus to ensure comprehensive development of services and maintenance of investment programs.

No matter what, production must not be reduced.

Gazprom vs. Competitors in Europe

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RUSSIAN GAS sold abroad has always competed with pipeline and liquefied commodities from other suppliers. The United States announces that liquefied natural gas (LNG) will soon be exported on a large scale not only to Asia, but also to Europe.

Turkey and Europe stake on Azerbaijan in the hope of reducing their dependence on Russian resources.

It is rather questionable that Azerbaijan and other players, which can join the project in the long term, will be able to fully meet Europe's additional natural gas requirements because of a whole range of political, military and economic risks.

Supplying gas in the Asian direction is more beneficial for Iran as this is a premium market convenient in terms of infrastructure. A section of

Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline has already been constructed, running through the Iranian territory. In the current conditions, it would be difficult for both Turkey and the EU to receive the quantities of natural gas required for their industrial enterprises and households without the participation of our country.

Gazprom should not be afraid of competition in Europe, but it needs to take into account the ambitions of its counterparts.

Gazprom and the relevant Turkish ministry have also agreed that Gazprom will get a permit to carry out surveys in the Turkish economic zone and on the Turkish shore in order to build a coastal infrastructure, in particular, a receiving terminal of the Turkish Stream project.

During the G20 summit held in China in September 2016, Vladimir Putin and Recep Erdogan once again discussed the prospects of the joint gas transmission project. As Dmitry Peskov, press secretary of the Russian President, said on the results of these negotiations, to accelerate the project the Russian side needs to get the relevant documentation from the Turkish side.

According to information from Alexander Novak, the project's roadmap is at the approval stage with Turkish partners, and we expect that it will be approved no later than October this year.

So far the only result of protracted negotiations over gas prices with Turkish firms is that the state-owned BOTAS company, partly due to a warming period, reduced its purchases from Russia in February-March 2016, while private importers to whom Gazprom is cutting down the deliveries, are negotiating a consortium to change over to LNG purchases.

Theoretically speaking, Ukraine has a potential for developing gas production, but it takes financing, technologies, and personnel. Regrettably, the independent Ukraine is lacking all this now. Loud statements about rejecting Russian gas will not last long.

By way of a conclusion: neither Ukraine, nor Turkey nor Europe can do without the Russian natural gas, because alternative suppliers do not have sufficient gas volumes and the appropriate infrastructure for launching large-scale exports.

The Romanovs and the Jewish Question in Russia

Author: Yu. Bulatov

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IT WAS UNDER KIEVAN PRINCE Igor (912-945) that Jewish traders and artisans settled in Kozary, the lower part of his capital. Merchants whose business interests had regularly brought them to Kiev formed the core of the new colony. Russian chronicles contain no information about the newcomers: merchant colonies were common or even everyday facts of life in Rus.

IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY known in the history of Russia as the century of riots, the Jewish question emerged, for the first time, in Russia's domestic policies. During the Time of Troubles, the adepts of Judaism reappeared on the agenda

of Muscovites.

The first Romanovs who ascended the Russian throne in 1613 were of the same opinion. The border guards and the customs officers were instructed to keep the Jews, including Jewish traders, away from the Moscow State. The authorities declined all requests of the Jewish merchants to let them temporarily stay in Muscovy to tune up wholesale trade. Those ready to abandon their faith for another, however, could count on an official residence permit. The royal authorities were especially well-disposed to those who wanted to be baptized.

The Romanovs banned Jews from the Russian state not only because they wanted to consolidate Christianity and the morals of their Orthodox Christian subjects; social peace in their possessions, in Malorossiya in the first place, was their prime concern. According to the Moscow rulers, "the second advent of Jews to Ukraine after its reunification with Russia (1654) was fraught with clashes between the local population and these 'aliens'." Indeed, people still remembered how Ukrainians had been humiliated under Poles and how Jews had insulted their religious feelings. It should be said that the Russian Jews had obtained civil rights even before the French Revolution wrote on its banners *Liberie, Égalité, Fraternite*. The autocrats Romanovs outstripped their time. The Russian Empire, not France, was the first European state that proclaimed equality between Jews and other peoples. This consolidated Catherine II's international authority as an enlightened ruler; she was appreciated not only by the Jews inside her own country but also outside it.

There was only one little thing left. Having proclaimed the equality of Jews, the czarist authorities had to decide how this fairly closed and large group could be integrated into Russian society. The top officials knew next to nothing about the Jews now living in their country, while the choice of means and methods was fairly limited. First of all, it was necessary to qualify the Jewish question either as a national or a social issue.

Why the Jews in the Russian Empire were dissatisfied? As distinct from all other non-Russian peoples within the borders of the Russian state, the Jews could live only in the governorates within the so-called Pale; the right to settle temporarily or permanently outside these borders was limited to certain groups of the Jewish population.

The shortsightedness of the Romanovs (granddad Alexander II, son Alexander III and grandson Nicholas II) buried the regime: first, the Russian public regarded the Pale as an instrument of subjugation of the Jews and an arbitrary treatment of this population group bred protest sentiments in Russian society; second, the Jewish population inside the Pale was an inexhaustible source of revolutionaries, Zionists and opposition of all hues. In fact, the leading radical political parties that challenged czarism appeared within the Pale, including the Bund (Vilno, 1897) and the RDLP (Minsk, 1898).

AT THE TURN of the twentieth century, the Jewish question acquired political dimensions and became a factor of domestic policies in many countries; anti-Semitic manifestations swept countries and continents.

The Russian emperor deliberately avoided any opportunity to play the anti-Semitic card. Having discussed the Report on the Situation in the Country after the Revolutionary Events of 1905-1907, the government informed the emperor that the armed uprisings in both capitals, big cities and industrial centers had been stirred up by Jewish revolutionaries who had also set up organs of Soviet power. Nicholas II, however, did not instruct the law and order bodies to single out Jewish cases for separate proceedings.

It should be said that the Romanovs failed to learn from failure of Catherine II's project of settling Jews in Russia and organizing their lives. Until the last day of the Russian Empire, the ruling dynasty remained riveted to her instructions and her assessments of the Russian Jews as a social stratum. This explains why the autocrats staked in their legislative efforts on the "Jewish trade and industrial class," the visible part of the iceberg of the Jewish community.

Nine Days in One Year: The 60th Anniversary of Yukio Hatoyama's Visit to Moscow and the Signing of the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration

Author: A. Ilyshev-Vvedensky

Head of the Japanese Division, Third Asian Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation



THE HISTORY of Russian-Japanese relations is over 300 years old. There have been dramatic pages in it, as well as positive pages, attesting to friendship, trust, and genuine neighborliness between the Russian and Japanese peoples. This was evidenced, among other things, by the rescue of the Japanese merchant Murayama Dembei off the Kamchatka coast and his meeting with Peter the Great in the village of Preobrazhenskoye near Moscow in 1702; the cordial reception of Soza and Goza, who founded the first Japanese language school in Russia 30 years later in St. Petersburg; and the outstanding mission of Vice Admiral Yevfimy Putyatin to Japan in 1853-1855. In the course of this mission, Russian sailors heroically helped the residents of the Japanese city

of Shimoda during a major earthquake, and when, as a result of that disaster, their ship *Diana* sank they built an eponymous schooner together with the Japanese from the town of Heda, teaching them European shipbuilding technology in the process.

This brings to mind, among other things, the amazing story of St. Nicholas of Japan, whose Orthodox Cathedral is among the main sights in Tokyo, and his associate, Japanese artist R. Yamashita (the icon she painted, which was presented to Nicholas II, was first displayed during the opening ceremony of the recent Festival of Russian Culture in Japan in June this year), as well as the saving of Japanese children from a polio epidemic with the vaccine provided to Japan by the USSR in the 1960s.

In October, there is reason to recall another event that came as a high point in post-war relations with Japan. This refers to the landmark visit to Moscow by Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama from October 12-20, 1956.

In the course of the visit, a document was signed - a document that up to now remains a legal basis for current Russian-Japanese relations: the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration of October 19, 1956.

Putting aside the political aspect and relevance of the declaration, I would like to consider its historic significance, as the document's potential for trust has been and will remain the most valuable asset in the process of building a genuine partnership between Russia and Japan.

The Japanese prime minister arrived at the Vnukovo airport on October 12 and immediately stated that he intended to do his best to ensure "a positive decision on the issue of normalizing relations."

Yukio Hatoyama stayed in Moscow for nine days, an unprecedentedly long time for visits of that kind.

In his remarks, Yukio Hatoyama said: "Now Japan will completely return to the international family and will be able to contribute even more to strengthening peace, which I and the entire Japanese people welcome with deep satisfaction."

The results of the Moscow talks showed that with goodwill and a correct understanding of reality a great deal can be achieved in the interests of the peoples of both countries.

According to Japanese tradition, 60 years is a special date in a person's life. It marks the end of one life cycle and the beginning of a new one. By this logic, Russian-Japanese relations are beginning a new life. Recalling the past, a hundred years ago, in 1916, the signing of the political convention with Japan in front of the Russian Embassy in Tokyo was followed by a massive manifestation of friendship with Russia, the largest in the history of bilateral relations. Over 20,000 people took part in it. At the time, for various reasons, the hopes for a great partnership failed to materialize. I would like to wish they do come true this time.

Author: V. Berezko

Member of the Union of Russia's Writers, Candidate of Science (History)



STUDIES of the problems of modern civilization hold a special place in the recently published monograph by one of Russia's prominent legal scholars, Doctor of Law, Professor Robert Yengibaryan.

Engibaryan not only examines the above issues in his research papers and books, but he also raises them in his literary works. In his novel *Oh, Mart!*, he wrote: "Radical shifts affecting the essence of man, all his inner world and behavior, occur when a culture built on the basis of certain religion undergoes a change."¹ It should be emphasized that such a research paradigm determines all of Professor Yengibaryan's work. In a broad sense, the author views culture as a factor shaping

human nature, which has an impact on the individual's attitude to such commonly known things as love, family, and social responsibility.

Professor Yengibaryan notes that Christianity has started to lose its influence as a world religion. "The Christian religion laid the groundwork for the emergence of modern civilization which discovered the new worlds and continents, explored outer space, and harnessed nuclear and hydrogen energy for the peoples' good. Now, however, Christianity has been shrinking like fertile lands and disappearing in various parts of the world."

In the opinion of Yengibaryan, a country's successful development should be judged by "human dimension, index and potential of the population's intellectual development."

Professor Yengibaryan already wrote in his earlier works about the benefits of the mutual influence that different cultures exert on each other.

Professor Yengibaryan justly indicates that the radicals have been trying to juxtapose two world religions - Christianity and Islam, which is really the Devil's scheme, as both religions carry the idea of Good. Regrettably, however, many organizations are aimed at radicalizing inter-confessional relations.

The author believes that "international Islamic religious, political, financial and economic, and educational organizations created at different times, have been exerting a strong negative impact on the development of Islamic civilization and seeking to coordinate and control the Muslims' internal and external life in individual countries and worldwide."

One more aspect should also be mentioned which Professor Yengibaryan examines throughout his work, namely, the policies of leading nations of the world, primarily the United States, that have ultimately been contributing to a growth in the numbers of radical Islamists.

In conclusion, we would like to point out the following: it is obvious that Robert Yengibaryan's new book will get mixed reactions and evoke a whole range of various opinions and judgments. But it is also clear, however, that this monograph will not be left unnoticed.

On the United Kingdom's Eternal and Perpetual Interests

Author: Ye. Osipova

Candidate of Science (Philosophy)



RUSSIAN-BRITISH RELATIONS have been recently going through a period of deep recession. Sometimes one can even hear assertions to the effect that Russophobia exists in Britain at the genetic level. But are the British so irrational and emotional to be guided by their chemical reactions at a biological level?

It appears that an answer to the above question can be found in the fundamental work History of British Foreign

Policy.

It is obvious from the book's name that its content is much broader than the problem we have outlined above. The authors examine a global nature of the British foreign policy over a long historical period, which allows understanding the reasons behind the perpetual ups and downs in our bilateral relations. The history of the British foreign policy is by no means a matter of purely academic interest - it also provides an opportunity to define Russia's place and role for Britain in time and space, against the backdrop of Britain's relations with other countries.

Let the reader not be confused by a "textbook" format. A textbook would contain a didactic history of the United Kingdom's foreign policy. However, what is awaiting the reader is not only a consistent account of historical events, but also the history of formation of the British foreign policy ideology, an analysis of changes in priorities and the continuity in the operation of the highly accomplished British diplomacy, its successes and virtues, its miscalculations and serious failures ensuing from the extent to which the nation's political elite would realize its genuine strategic interests.

Narrating a fascinating story about the twists and turns in Britain's relations with various countries, the authors demonstrate how life itself forced the country to break with some outdated dogmas and ideologies for the sake of pragmatic national interests and security.

The authors analyze three fundamental miscalculations in Britain's foreign policy of 20th century: "appeasement of aggressor" in the 1930s, participation in the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956 (the Suez Crisis), and an erroneous assessment of the initial stage of the West European integration (Britain's late entry into the EEC). The monograph examines the inter-party and inner-party strife on foreign policy issues at different historical periods, and describes forces in the British ruling class which forestalled the objective tendencies of world development or acted contrary to them.

The authors hope, however, that "sooner or later a pendulum will swing in the opposite direction and a considerable cooling of bilateral relations will ultimately be replaced by their inevitable warming".

The Fifth Republic and Détente

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THE PROCESS of international detente in the latter half of the twentieth century, which included such important events as the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), the establishment of political and economic relations between some Western and Eastern countries, and negotiations on disarmament and nuclear security, largely determined the further course of world history.

The French Republic was among the major actors participating in the aforementioned events. A new monograph by EA. Osipov, *France and the Evolution of Detente (1965-1975)*, focuses on France's role in the process of easing international tensions.

Chronologically, the monograph covers the period from 1965 to 1975 - the second presidential term of Charles de Gaulles and the presidency of Georges Pompidou. The author emphasizes the key role of General de Gaulle in France's modern history, indicating that the ideas of Gaullism prevailed in the conception of the country's foreign policy for many years to come.

Osipov notes that the change of the country's leader did not bring about any substantial shifts in the foreign policy course, although under Georges Pompidou special emphasis was laid on the detente's economic dimension. Among a broad range of issues analyzed in this research, particular attention is paid to bilateral contacts of the French Republic with the U.S.A., the USSR, the People's Republic of China, and the FRG, and a number of multilateral aspects of international relations, including the issue of Berlin, the problems of disarmament and nuclear security, economic cooperation, and the preparation for and the overall results of the CSCE.

The monograph also deals with the specifics of the French-American economic cooperation, including in reforming the international monetary system, and also contains a profound analysis of the world economy during the period of detente. According to the author, an obvious failure of negotiations in the follow-up to the Azores summit and the signing of the Smithsonian Agreement became the determining factors in adjusting the economic policy priorities under Georges Pompidou in favor of the European Economic Community in order to oppose American pressure.

The author pays special attention to French-Soviet contacts, characterizing them as a main factor in the relaxation of international tensions.

The monograph dwells on the main stages in the development of French-Soviet ties, the procedures for signing bilateral documents and their content, appraises multiple official visits at dif-

ferent levels, focusing specifically on the economic cooperation of the two countries. A monograph by E.A. Osipov covers a broad range of issues relating not only to the relaxation of international tensions in 1965-1975, but also touching upon various aspects of bilateral and multilateral contacts on the world political arena involving the participation of the French Republic. Analyzing events of the aforementioned period through the prism of the French politics, the author relies on a multitude of sources (some of them originating from the French foreign ministry's archives), which have for the first time been introduced into scientific discourse; he also provides an insight into the reasons behind certain changes in the format of world politics. Osipov's monograph is a fundamental work on the history of the French Fifth Republic and the system of international relations in these years of the key stage of the Cold War.

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