

Understanding Common History Ideas for Discussion

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDEPENDENT STATES that emerged following the disintegration of the Soviet Union has predictably prioritized the issue of the national-political identification of the former Union republics. However, the trend toward building national history concepts by radically revising the common experience at the expense of the former "big brother," which has been gaining momentum in a number of post-Soviet states, was less predictable - taking into account the proactive role played by Russia under Boris Yeltsin in dissolving the Soviet Empire, as well as the pledges that were made in 1991 in Belovezhskaia Pushcha.

It turns out that it is possible to delete from history textbooks objective assessments of Russia's role in the formation of Ukraine's territorial and ethnic core in the 17th through 20th century or in saving Christian Georgia from the threat of Persian and Turkish assimilation. It is possible, for example, to "forget" how Kurlandia became as part of Latvia; how the Crimea, as well as the Trans-Dnepr region for that matter, became part of Ukraine; what Polish, Prussian or Belorussian lands (incidentally, in accordance with the notorious Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and a secret protocol thereto, which was condemned by the Congress of People's Deputies) J. Stalin and the subsequent Soviet leaders used in designing Lithuania in its present borders, including the transfer to it of the capital and the Vilna Province (*Vilniaus krastas*), which had previously been seized from the Lithuanians by Poland. It is difficult, but as it turns out, quite possible, after that, to make claims to Russia over the "occupation" of Lithuania, put Nazi symbols in Latvia on par with Soviet symbols, elevate Mazepa and Shukhevich to the status of national heroes, proclaim Orlik, a semi-literal Cossack chief who, after the Battle of Poltava, took refuge in Constantinople, as the author of Ukraine's first democratic Constitution, and cast the 1932-33 national famine as "the Holodomor," i.e., as the genocide of the Ukrainian people.

Understandably, the formation of national statehood is closely linked with the development of national identity, which presupposes overcoming the

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Soviet and pre-Soviet ideological stereotypes, analysis and, if necessary, review of the common past with regard to the changing historical conditions. Something else is disturbing: The natural process of the self-identification of newly independent states often proceeds according to designs borrowed from the Cold War era, with the attempts to cast Russia as an inherently aggressive and expansionist power, which forcibly annexed the adjoining territories and trampled on the rights, culture and traditions of its ethnic minority provinces. As a result, one set of stereotypes is being replaced by another, while their authors become hostage to their own illusions.

Meanwhile, it is risky and extremely short-sighted trying to build the present and the future of one's own peoples by destroying the basis of the collective identity that has evolved over centuries. The trouble is not only that lurking behind such myth-making is always, or almost always, the political egoism of new political and economic elites, which at the stage of the primary accumulation of capital are by definition unable to act in accordance with the notions of public interest and are therefore, attempting to divert public attention from real problems (for example, re-division of property, which affects the interests of broad sections of the population) to illusory ones. What is even more disturbing is that the attempts to consolidate society by promoting politically motivated "mythologems," which reduce the entire complex of challenging problems confronting newly independent states to the "imperial ambitions" of the former empire, sooner or later lead to a situation where we start looking at one another through the sight of the rifle.

In this context, it is indicative that the process of rewriting history in accordance with short-term and, therefore, dubious political goals has especially gained ground in countries that have inherited from the Soviet era latent or overt national-ethnic conflicts. In evaluating this trend, it is not enough to address only the excesses of aggressive nationalism or the fact that the areas traditionally populated by ethnic minorities do not coincide with the new dividing lines in the post-Soviet space. The administrative borders, which turned into interstate borders virtually overnight, also need legitimization not only on the level of bilateral treaties, but also collective perception and understanding of the geopolitical changes that have occurred. Do the former Soviet republics have the moral right to join NATO within their Soviet-era borders? If they do, what about the principle of "undivided security"? How is it possible to effectively ensure the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty amid the extremely difficult situation in which about 30 million ethnic Russians have found themselves, ending up outside Russia not of their own choice?

There are no simple answers to these questions, but it is even more dangerous to ignore them. The recent crisis around South Ossetia shows that the post-Soviet world has approached a critical point. Tshinval witnessed not only a confrontation of tanks and Grad multiple rocket launching systems. It was also a clash between immature perceptions as to how the post-Soviet world should be

built - perceptions that were imported from across the ocean, on the one hand, and the harsh reality of national self-determination, on the other. The sooner we understand that it is impossible to build one's own freedom and national interests on disregard for the freedom and interests of others, the less will be the risk of getting stuck in squabbling and intrigue, as well as of losing control over our own future, becoming nothing but pawns in important regional and global processes. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that the epicenter of geopolitical turbulence is shifting from Iraq and the former Yugoslavia to the Caucasus and the Transdnestr region, closer to Iran and the strategic oil and natural gas reserves. With or without NATO, the region is in for a difficult time. In these conditions, a consensus with regard to the lessons of our common past would probably be crucial to achieving a better understanding of the essence of the present-day challenges, which is equally important for all post-Soviet states. This foundation could also be used (before it is too late) to agree on principles of relations during the transition period - principles excluding dictate, the use of force, and attempts to ensure one's own security at the expense of others.

It is an extremely difficult goal, but, it seems, a realistic one, provided that the expert community and members of the diplomatic corps pool their efforts to gain an in-depth understanding (on the conceptual level) of the underlying general logic of the evolution and development of the foreign policy of the multi-ethnic Russian state. An objective, creative analysis of the lessons of the past and the subsequent action to counter the efforts to politicize history for considerations of expediency is becoming a high priority now. This was noted by Russian President D. A. Medvedev at a conference in the Foreign Ministry in July.

In this context, I would like to propose (in brief, by way of just raising the issue) some approaches toward this subject.

I will have to start with the obvious. The evolution and development of Russia's foreign policy during the imperial and post-imperial era proceeded in close, organic interconnection with the formation of the European and subsequently global system of international relations - moreover, it was increasingly predetermined by that interconnection. From the geopolitical perspective, the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 brought to an end a long cycle of modern and recent history (the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia could be conveniently assumed as its starting point), during which Russia and then the Soviet Union took a very active - sometimes crucial - part in creating the political map of the modern world.

Why the year 1648? The fact is that the Treaty of Westphalia went down in European history as a landmark, a turning point. By signing the peace treaties of Osnabruck and Munster on October 24, 1648, the European states not only put an end to the Counter Reformation wars. For the first time ever, Europe demonstrated a striving to ensure collective security based on an array of generally acceptable norms of international law. As a politico-diplomatic system, built on the balance of interests of its principal guarantors - Austria under the Habsburgs

and France under the Bourbons, the Peace of Westphalia proved to be short-lived. As early as the first quarter of the 18th century, as a result of the War of the Spanish Succession and the Great Northern War, the Utrecht and Hannover "subsystems" emerged in the western and northern periphery of the Westphalian system with the function of ensuring stability on the continent amid the constantly changing lineup of forces. The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) drew a line under the Westphalian system, although the Westphalian guarantees to the German states were periodically used before the Vienna Congress and even before the German unification of 1871. Having formulated the precedence of "the force of law" over "the law of force" and having declared the recognition of "nation-states," the Treaty of Westphalia for years determined the content of foreign policy processes and the vector of their development, including in Eastern Europe. In addition to that, by finalizing the institution of permanent diplomatic missions, the Treaty of Westphalia, became - in Alexander I's expression at the Vienna Congress - the "first code of modern democracy." In this respect, its importance is comparable with such landmarks as the Vienna, Paris or Berlin Congress in the 19th century, the Versailles or Yalta-Potsdam systems, which brought to an end World War I and World War II respectively, and the All European Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki, 1975).

The signing of the Treaty of Westphalia to a very large degree also predetermined Russia's own fate. In an apt remark by A. Rambaud, a French historian, the participants in the Congress of Westphalia "were stunned" when Queen Christina of Sweden insisted that the text of the Peace Treaty of Osnabruck include a reference to Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich as a guarantor of the Westphalian system as "a Swedish ally" under the Treaty of Stolbov (1617). Such a reaction becomes perfectly understandable if one recalls that on the unofficial list of European states mentioned in the peace treaties of Osnabruck and Munster, Russia was in the 49th, i.e., the last but one position, before Transylvania.

Meanwhile, it is hardly accidental that geopolitical goals came to the fore during the reign of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich. By that time, the foundations of a multiethnic Russian state had to a very large degree been put into place. The ongoing movement toward markets along all lines expanded Russia's foreign policy horizons. In 1648 - a "Westphalian" year - 100 years after Yermak's conquest of Siberia, Semyon Dezhnev discovered a strait between Asia and Alaska and entered the Pacific Ocean. In 1659, when Georgian Tsar Teimuraz swore allegiance to it, Moscow, which had previously been wary of establishing ties with the Persian vassals, drastically reviewed the nature of its Caucasus policy. The entire context of the Moscow mode of life, the mentality of the Russian people changed as a result. It would not be a big stretch either to see a connection (needless to say, an indirect one) between the Counter Reformist Movement in Europe and the Nikon schism.

Ukraine's unification with Russia in accordance with the resolution of the Zemsky Sobor on October 1, 1653, which was subsequently approved by the

Pereyaslavl Rada on January 8, 1654, played a decisive - and it seems, as yet insufficiently appreciated - role in establishing Europe as the principal vector of Russia's foreign policy. Amid the harsh reality of the post-Westphalian era - with the endless Turkish wars and the political cynicism of the Partitions of Poland - Ukraine could only preserve its self-consciousness and ethnic borders under the wing of Russia, not Catholic Poland, let alone the Muslim Ottoman Empire, which continued to press its claims to the whole of Ukraine's Podolia through the end of the 18th century.

Diplomatic backing for the unification of Ukraine and Russia required, for the first time ever, the pooling of Russian and Ukrainian diplomatic efforts. Despite the upheavals following the death of B. Khmelnytsky and the signing of the Treaty of Hadiach (Hadziacka), Russian and Ukrainian diplomats managed to make quite an effective use of the situation then prevailing in Europe, including direct contacts with the guarantors of the Peace of Westphalia, to successfully achieve the national goals of the Russian and Ukrainian people. For the first time in the history of domestic diplomacy, the Treaty of Andrusovo, which in 1667 put an end to the Russo-Polish War, was given the status of an all-European act, since in the event of the failure of subsequent negotiations on "eternal peace," "Christian tsars" were to be called in as "mediators." According to Z. Wojcik, a Polish historian, in its political significance, the Treaty of Andrusovo was in the same league with the most important international European treaties at the time, establishing a new lineup of forces on the continent.

Rapprochement between Russia and Europe became an essential element in the "new lineup of forces." It was to a very large degree predetermined by Russia's growing economic and military power as well as its political influence in the context of the emerging system of international relations in Europe. Without going deeply into history, it should only be said here that by the second half of the 17th century, there were main three factors in Russia's military-economic and political status:

- geopolitical, predetermined by the natural movement of the Russian state from the Volga to the old Dnepr line; being as it was nationally, sometimes nationalistically motivated ("the consolidation of Russian lands," "the return to the Oleg and Svyatostlav lines"), that process was objectively aimed at restoring the ethnic population areas of the Eastern Slavic peoples.

Hence the considerable potential for conflict and the conflicting nature of relations between Russia and Europe. At different stages, European states or groups of states were interested in using Russia's military-political and natural resources to attain identical goals (containing the Turks as well as Swedes in the Baltic region during the Northern War, Vienna's ambitions with regard to the Principalities of the Danube and an outlet to the Adriatic). However, when the interests of Russia and the great European powers diverged, which invariably happened once Europe attained its goals (a classic case in point, the diplomatic history of the Crimean War), the collective reflex of containing a strong com-

petitor came into play (some of the recent examples: the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, including in the context of the struggle against international terrorism);

- economic, related not only to the struggle by the "maritime powers" (Great Britain, the Netherlands, the Hanseatic League, and Denmark) for access, via northern and Baltic ports, to markets and sources of raw materials and agricultural produce in Russia, but also the possibility of transit trade with Eastern countries via the Volga River, the Caspian, and later Black Sea ports (with the participation of pre-revolutionary France). It was a fundamental level that to a very large degree predetermined the scenario of political events in the geopolitical realm. A good case in point is the "Eastern question" in the 18th-19th century, compounded by the striving of Great Britain and France to protect their Levantine trade against Russia's accessing the Eastern Mediterranean via Black Sea straits. British-Russian contradictions in the Near East and Russo-Japanese contradictions in the Far East followed the same pattern;

- religious-civilizational. The openness and exposure of Russia's ruling circles to European culture and the European lifestyle was in constant conflict with European cultural and Catholic missionaryism. The ingrained mutual distrust between Orthodoxy and Catholicism (to a lesser degree, Protestant confessions) augmented the potential for conflict on a broader level - between the Western and Russian (Eurasian) models of state and socio-political order. The issue of the rights of religious minorities in Rzeczpospolita in the 18th century became a cause for the first partition of Poland, while inter-religious rivalry in the Holy Land in the 19th century (the issue of keys to the Nativity Church in Bethlehem) provoked the Crimean War. In the 20th century, the advance of Western approaches to the issue of human rights played a decisive role in the outcome of the Cold War.

The difficulties of Russia's integration into the realm of European politics were predetermined by the fact that the system of post-Westphalian guarantees and therefore, of the redistribution of generally acceptable legal concepts only extended to Central Europe (mainly to the German states). Wars were raging on the periphery of the "Westphalian space": the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), the War of the Polish Succession (1733-1735), and the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748). Europe's political map was being born in the throes of war. In the middle of the century, the continent was shaken by the all-European Seven Years' War (1756-1763) - the first global conflict of the New Era (military operations were conducted not only in Europe but also in the Americas and India, in seas and oceans). Feudal Europe was giving way to bourgeois Europe, in which the interests of nation-states started to define borders and assert the principles and norms of relations.

In Eastern and Southeastern Europe - from Liflandia and Estlandia, seized by Peter the Great from Sweden, to Turkey's possessions in the Balkans - a vast *res nullis* emerged, a kind of "Westphalian periphery," where, for a num-

ber of objective reasons, the new legal norms had not as yet taken effect. That region of an acute confrontation of the three empires - Austro-Hungarian, Turkish and Russian (with the periodic involvement of Prussia and such "maritime powers" as Great Britain and the Netherlands) - became for two centuries a sphere of the predominant application of Russia's military and diplomatic efforts, and subsequently also its geopolitical responsibility. It came about through the struggle for space and wars in which we fought for our own, not some abstract interests. On the one hand, that facilitated Russia's deep involvement in European and subsequently world affairs, and on the other, formed stereotypes of Russia as a potential aggressor, a barbaric country from a different civilization, hostile to Europe, affected by the instinct of imperial expansion. As a result, mutual claims were accumulating, periodically causing conflicts.

With regard to the 18th century, the goal was to overcome the so-called Eastern Barrier - the Ottoman Empire, Poland, and Sweden - that had evolved historically within the framework of France's "rearguard policy" of isolating the Hapsburgs, and then reoriented toward the containment of Russia. That historical goal was to be addressed by Catherine II (Catherine the Great), whose era played a special role in formulating strategic priorities for Russian diplomacy and means of attaining them. This refers not only to the brilliant military and diplomatic results of her glorious reign (an outlet to the Black Sea coast, the annexation of the Right-Bank Ukraine, the North Black Sea area, Belorussia, the Crimea and Kurlandia, and the expansion of the borders in the Caucasus). A major shift occurred in the perception of Russia as a full-fledged member of the "concert" of leading European powers. Under Catherine the Great, Russia's foreign policy was oriented toward maintaining the European balance as a method of ensuring the attainment of its goals.

At the same time, one cannot fail to see the deep contradictions and lack of harmony in Catherine II's diplomacy, which was noted by V. O. Kliuchevskiy, among others. The vector of movement that she chose - i.e., to the south, in the direction of the Black Sea and then the Mediterranean Sea, access to which was required by Russia's burgeoning trade - predetermined the main priorities of Russia's imperial policy for the subsequent one and a half centuries. However, the maximum program - i.e., the liberation of Greece and the Balkans and the restoration of the Byzantine Empire with the capital of Constantinople, in accordance with the well-known "Greek Project" of Catherine the Great and Austrian Emperor Joseph II - proved to be a geopolitical nonstarter, since it affected the interests of a broad circle of European states that feared an excessive strengthening of both Russia and Austria.

Geopolitically, the three partitions of Poland, which were carried out by Catherine the Great in 1772, 1793, and 1795 in conjunction with Austria and Prussia, were a fairly pragmatic scheme aimed at ensuring a reliable "European rear" before decisively switching Russia's foreign policy course to the south. However, in the longer term, the Polish question, as well as the desire to take

control of the straits, became the main irritant in the relationship between Europe and Russia. Of course, one can hardly blame Catherine the Great for the partition of a fraternal Slavic state, which she had carried out together with the two German states, or the "Greek Project," in the implementation of which, incidentally, she displayed prudent realism, became an end in itself for her successors, resulting in the tragedy of the Crimean War, the suppression of Polish uprisings in 1830 and 1863, the humiliation of the Berlin Congress, where aging Chancellor A. M. Gorchakov diplomatically lost the 1877-88 Russo-Turkish War, which had been won by the military, and ultimately the demise of the empire. Here is just one fact: Two months before the February 1917 Revolution, already standing on the brink of disaster, Nicholas II, in an order issued to the army and navy on December 12, 1916, said that the time for peace negotiations had not come as yet, since "the attainment of Russia's goals set by the war, taking control of Tsar'grad and the straits or the creation of a free Poland by consolidating the three separate provinces, have not been ensured."

There was a deepening crisis in Russia's imperial thinking between a great power ideology and pragmatic state interests, as well as between the abstract intransigence of nationalism and reasonable geopolitical considerations. However, in our references to history today, we should not forget that the virtual reality between principles and interests, between the struggle against the Catholic fanaticism of the Polish gentry and the destruction of the Polish state provided breeding grounds not only for what Europe would subsequently call Russian imperialism but also the future independent states of Ukraine and Belarus. Also Lithuania, with its present capital of Vilnius, as well as Klaipeda and Suwalki, and also Latvia (with Kurzemia) in its present ethnic borders. Their freedom was paid for with Russian blood, while their statehood - whatever might be said - was fertilized with Russian intellectual and financial resources. As for Poland, if it was not for Catherine the Great in the 18th century and Stalin in the 20th century, it could hardly have counted on a border with Germany along the Oder-Neisse, Stettin, the Gdansk corridor, the east Prussian lands, and many other things.

With the start of the 19th century, amid the devaluation (under the influence of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars) of the principle of the balance of forces with regard to the leading powers in a complex paradigm that predetermined the logic of Russian diplomacy, new specifics appeared. The conflict of principles and interests, inherited from the Age of Enlightenment, mutated into a collision between a pragmatically understood national-state interest ("laissez-faire" policy) and legitimacy - a conservative ideology of monarchical solidarity in the face of the growing revolutionary movement. The last mentioned strangely went along - due to the duality of Alexander's character and his political thinking - with remarks about "the sacred human rights."

Nevertheless, some of the ideas with which Alexander armed domestic diplomacy proved essential in the evolution of our diplomatic style. In the fall of

1805, three years after ascending the throne, the Russian emperor invited British Prime Minister W. Pitt to draw up "a new code of international law" that would "guarantee the rights of neutrality and include the obligation never to start wars without first exhausting all avenues of mediation." The Holy Alliance, signed after the Vienna Congress on November 8, 1816, was permeated with his pet ideas of "a united Europe" and "eternal peace." A year later, on March 21, 1816, in a confidential letter to British Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh, Alexander II formulated a proposal about "a simultaneous reduction of all armed forces" as a measure that would guarantee the maintenance of peace and stability in Europe. However, the first approach toward diplomatic "perestroika" (the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1802) and new thinking, initiated by the young emperor's liberal-minded friends, was cut short by Austerlitz, which was followed by the routing of the Great Army of Napoleon in 1812 and the entry of the Russian army into Paris in 1814.

From the present-day perspective, it is not entirely inappropriate to consider the similarities between the geopolitical imperatives of the patriotic wars of the 19th and the 20th centuries. The division of the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe (the Baltic region was still part of the empire), which was discussed by Napoleon and Alexander in Tilsit in June 1807, was essentially the same as that recorded in the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The remark that Alexander made after Tilsit, specifically that "an alliance with Napoleon is but a different method of fighting against him," could have been uttered by Stalin. The only difference was that unlike Alexander, he formed not a secret alliance but a neutrality pact with a potential aggressor, including an agreement on the division of spheres of influence and interests, which fitted quite well into contemporary European diplomatic practice. The 1813 discussions as to whether to stop near the borders or move further to liberate Europe were repeated in 1944. In both cases, the choice was made in favor of Europe, which, however, came at a heavy price the Russian army both in the last and the last but one century, but was viewed in Europe with great suspicion.

After the Vienna Congress and the signing of the Holy Alliance (November 8, 1815), Alexander's "European idea" lost its abstract nature and acquired a protective one. The Congresses of Troppau (October 1820) and Verona (1822) agreed upon the so-called right to intervene (I am greatly tempted to use modern US political jargon and say "humanitarian intervention"), which legitimized outside interference in the internal affairs of European states with the aim of suppressing revolutionary movements. In the 20th century - first, within the framework of the Trotskyite export of the Communist Revolution (Poland 1921-22), Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's legitimist trends (Hungary 1956 and Czechoslovakia 1968) and then the US export of democracy (Iraq) - such intervention became common practice, but was definitely invented not at this time. This anomalous trend in the evolution of the system of international relations in Europe should be taken into account by those in the process of rewriting

history.

Nor is there anything essentially new in the opposition between the principles of a unipolar world order (Napoleonic wars) and a multipolar world order. From the time of the Vienna Congress, the multipolar Europe of the 19th century was gravitating toward dualism with the so-called active powers grouping into two opposite camps. The defeat in the Crimean War, largely caused by Nicholas I's gross diplomatic miscalculations, showed the danger of entering into an armed conflict without allies, predetermining Russia's subsequent maneuvering between the alliance of the three emperors and the Entente, and generally Europe's imminent movement toward World War I.

There is still considerable controversy about the results of Russia's foreign policy by the start of the 20th century. In connection with the first peace conference in the Hague in 1899, F. F. Martens, a great Russian lawyer and diplomat and founder of modern humanitarian law, said quite sincerely, albeit somewhat histrionically: "There is no civilized nation known to history that would make so many attempts to ensure a peaceful settlement of outstanding issues of international law and order."

At the same time, a critical view of the effectiveness of national diplomacy was always present in the Russian elite. "If Russia is poor and weak, if it is far behind Europe, that is mainly due to the fact that it has often taken a wrong approach in dealing with fundamental political matters," N. N. Obruchev, former chief of the General Staff of Russia, wrote at the turn of the 20th century in a memorandum to His Imperial Majesty. And he went on: "Peter the Great waged wars with a brilliant insight; Catherine the Great also waged them with great wisdom, but why did we have to go to Switzerland with Suvorov in 1799? Why did we have to fight at Austerlitz in 1805 and at Preussisch-Eylau and Friedland in 1806-07? Why, after repelling Napoleon, did we, in 1813-14, have to go to liberate the Germans near Leipzig and Paris? Who directed us in 1849 to go save Austria and in 1852-53 to stop it from fighting with Prussia? What understanding of Russian interests caused us in 1870-71 to applaud the defeat of France and the restoration of the formidable German empire? Why did we once again stop them from going to war in 1875? Finally, with what Russian goal in mind did we move into Bulgaria in 1877? With the benefit of hindsight, all of these facts should be seen as the product of political bias or misunderstanding rather than well-thought-through decisions.

"Taking a one-sided view, even they can be justified. Sometimes they maintained Russia's dignity and influence in the world. But after all is said and done, by endlessly waging wars, Russia only sank deeper and deeper into debt, spending for the benefit of others the reserves of forces and resources that were necessary for its own development, finally ending up all but humiliated by those that it had tried to save or helped. Austria showed its gratitude with the Treaty of Paris, and Germany with the Treaty of Berlin; Greece, Romania and Serbia, liberated at the cost of its blood, switched to the opposite camp, and even Bulgaria,

which had just been resurrected by it, had started being weighed down by its gratitude to it."

Nevertheless, being historically as far away from imperial Russia as we are today, we cannot help recognizing this: The main outcome of the pre-October 1917 period of national history is that, albeit inconsistently, with huge human, economic and moral losses, often understanding its real goals when it was too late, Russia fulfilled its historic mission - i.e., drawing up a political map on the periphery of the Westphalian space - Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the modern CIS states. The Constitutions of Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania (the statutes of Moldavia and Valahia) were written by Russian diplomats, whether or not some people want to acknowledge this today. Russia's military might, the multi-vector diplomacy of A. M. Gorchakov, and then G. V. Chicherin and A. A. Gromyko ensured geopolitical stability in the huge region, which had repeatedly been an arena of great social upheavals, local wars, and armed conflicts.

Nor should one forget that Russian diplomacy was multiethnic not only in the Soviet but also in the imperial period. Not only the power of the empire but also the rights of its peoples to live within their natural ethnic borders were created through joint efforts. Instead of the ethically dubious process of rewriting history to suit the short-term, time-serving interests of the new political and economic elites, one should remember the contribution made by major Ukrainian (not only such hyped up figures as I. Mazepa and F. Orlik, but also A. Bezborodko, A. Razumovsky, and V. Kochubei, who by right are a source of pride for both Russian and Ukrainian diplomacy), Belarussian (I. Goshkevich, the consul on Hokkaido and author of the first Russian grammar of Japanese), and Kazakh (Ch. Valikhanov, a historian, ethnographer, and military intelligence officer) diplomats. The list of Baltic officials in the Russian diplomatic service features V. N. Lamzdorf, the Russian foreign minister in 1900-06; ambassadors Kh. A. Liven, O. M. and E. G. Stakelbergs; Ambassador I. A. Korf, president of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and many others. It would be a good idea, while airing dirty linen in public, not to forget about the victories. Our common victories.

An objective study of the Russian foreign policy agency's involvement in the domestic processes of democratization could be a great benefit in gaining a better understanding of the problems that are currently plaguing the newly independent states. The reforms spearheaded by A. M. Gorchakov, A. P. Izvolsky, and S. D. Sazonov, which adapted the Russian Foreign Ministry to the large-scale transformations of the Alexander II era and the 1905 Revolution, as well as the multiethnic diplomacy of the Soviet era, are highly relevant for the evolution of national diplomatic services.

With some provisos, one could also say that in the 1917-91 period Soviet foreign policy was formed under the influence of the same fundamental geopolitical imperatives as in the pre Revolution period. The radical change of the socio-political system only brought about a different ideological substantia-

tion (changing from the slogan of the world revolution to the peaceful coexistence of the world's two systems) of the USSR's regional and global responsibility for the maintenance of peace and stability.

I would like to believe that our posterity, freed from the complexes of the transition period, will be able to speak more frankly and accurately about the role that this country played in the history of the 20th century. This is not only about the global importance of the achievements in space, science or education: The decolonization of the 1960s, the attainment of nuclear parity with the West, and the multi-tier system of collective security system based on the UN - here is a far from complete list of our contributions to ensuring a global balance in the past century.

In this context, it seems that the organic integration of the Soviet era into the general pattern of the evolution of Russian geopolitics over the past three and a half centuries is of fundamental importance. During those years, Russia's geopolitical mission - specifically, to provide guarantees of independent development to dozens of states in Asia, Africa and Latin America, form a postwar political map of Europe and the Balkans, and after 1991, also in the periphery of the USSR - was effectively completed. A crucial point here is that in the late 1980s - early 1990s, the Soviet Union and then Russia in effect initiated the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and then of the USSR. The huge positive value of this interpretation of the events for building a positive image of new Russia in the world is obvious.

Objective and comprehensive analysis of this complicated process still lies ahead. Understanding and explaining the patterns and anomalies of what has been happening with this country is probably the main area where scholars and diplomats should concentrate their efforts. Without answering this question or the question about what exactly the Russian Federation has inherited as a successor state to Russia at its pre-imperial, imperial and Soviet stages of development, we are doomed either to reproduce the old delusions and miscalculations or to tacitly accept the image of Russia that is being formed in the world - i.e., as a perennial rogue, with all the ensuing consequences for its international status.