

ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT VICTORY AND THE TECHNICOLORED NATURE OF EXTREME DEMOCRACIES

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The heads of more than 50 of the world's nations, the U.N. Secretary General, and the leaders of many European and international organizations came to Moscow on 9 May to celebrate the Sixtieth Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). This day was a celebration not only for the war veterans, but also for all the nations of the former U.S.S.R. For at that time they all stood as one to defend and strengthen "the Soviet community of common historical destiny,"¹ as Nikolai Vert put it. But the destiny of these nations went on to develop in a way that made it impossible to consolidate their common victory over the Axis Powers. The Soviet Union, which at one time was considered one

of the two world super powers, fell apart before the "Soviet civilization" declared in the 1980s could develop and survive. But even after its collapse, interaction could still be observed throughout the entire former Soviet space between two reciprocal processes—at the state and social levels—which had been developing earlier. The so-called Color Revolutions which followed each other in close succession recently, first in Georgia and Ukraine, and then in Kyrgyzstan, as well as events indicating possible unrest in Uzbekistan, seem to be advancing throughout the entire post-Soviet space. They may also inflict Russia. But today, sixty years after the anti-Fascist coalition sustained its Great Victory over the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis, the common historical destiny of these nations is still being manifested. Admittedly, events today are developing within the frame-

¹ N. Vert, *Istoriia Sovetskogo gosudarstva*, Moscow, 1994, p. 171.

work not of a world war, but of a proclaimed “global” war against international terrorism. This same “war” has been going on longer than the Great Patriotic War and is not a prerequisite or consequence, but rather a background against

which these small or Color Revolutions are unfolding. In a conversation with the author of this article, well-known Kyrgyz writer, Chinghiz Aitmatov, characterized them in more precise terms as an explosion of “extreme democracy.”

The Deceptive Calm of Issyk Kul

In June 2004, on the initiative of Chinghiz Aitmatov and at the invitation of then Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akaev, an international conference called “Eurasia in the 21st Century: Dialog of Cultures or Conflict of Civilizations?” was held under the auspices of UNESCO at Issyk Kul, which is called the “Eye of the World” in Kyrgyz folklore. The sky above the lake was blue and cloudless during the three days this forum was in session, with no presentiment of either storm or threat.

Nevertheless, in his welcoming speech at the opening of the conference, Askar Akaev called for viewing the dialog of cultures not only in the inter-civilizational, but also in the social context. This dialog, he noted, seems to be going on at the edge of a “widening gap between the abundant wealth of some and the appalling poverty of others.” I recall how at a session of the workshop called “Eurasian Dialog: Common Values and Ethic Principles,” the moderator of which just happened to be the author of this article, its participants from Central Asian countries presented numerous examples showing the presence not only of a social “abyss,” but also of many ethnopolitical conflicts arising in the region. A speaker from Uzbekistan answered the question of whether this region feels itself to be an arena of the global antiterrorist war in the Greater Middle East as follows: “The fight against terrorism is a problem deriving from other more urgent problems which are no less important than those currently being dealt with in the Greater Middle East. But they are unlikely to be resolved by the forced advance of Western-style democracy. A multilevel dialog not so much of civilizational, as of political cultures is required here,” he said, agreeing with Akaev.

The negative perception of the reforms carried out in Kyrgyzstan by different governments during the years of Askar Akaev’s presidency obviously led to the Tulip or extreme revolution. This metaphor applied to the so-called Color Revolutions in the post-Soviet space reflects both the internal anatomy of maturation and the external motives promoting their advance in the republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia.

One Victory but Not For All

Among all the heads of state who came to Moscow on 9 May, 2005 to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War and World War II, probably only the leaders of the new independent Eurasian states of the Caucasus and Central Asia played several roles at the same time. At the state level, they represented both victors and liberators. In contrast to other CIS countries—Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states—their territory (then Soviet republics) was not occupied, remaining as though at a distance from the frontline. But the war did not leave them untouched, it affected almost every family, whether in Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, or Turkmenistan. War veterans, representatives of all the CIS countries, came to Moscow on this day, following the dictates of their hearts, to celebrate the Great Victory, regardless of the way

in which the heads of their states and official delegations participated in the celebration events. For by defending the then common Homeland, they laid the groundwork for the sovereignty now enjoyed by their independent states. Therefore, when welcoming all the heads of the CIS states who came to Moscow to celebrate the Victory, Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin reminded everyone of the greatest contribution and supreme price the people of Russia and other U.S.S.R. republics paid for it. This obviously also gave the veterans and representatives of all the Commonwealth countries the moral right to come forward with a joint initiative to mark 9 May every year as the day for celebrating their common Victory and reconciliation and remembering the victims of World War II. This remembrance of our common history, noted Vladimir Putin, can also be a common fulcrum on which to base the new history of the CIS countries.

Almost all the leaders of the world states present at the celebration in Moscow also considered it their duty to mention the huge sacrifices and enormous contribution the Soviet Union made to achieving Victory over the common enemy. Not only the presidents of the U.S. and France—member states of the anti-Hitler coalition—talked about this, but also the German chancellor, and the prime ministers of Japan and Italy, that is, the leaders of almost all the European and Asian countries admitted it. Everyone apart from Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, who all the same came to Moscow, and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, who ignored the invitation. We will remind you that he was the only one of all the CIS heads of state who refused to take part in these celebrations and in the informal meeting of the Commonwealth heads of state that preceded them on 8 May. Admittedly, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was also absent at the celebrations in Moscow. For this he was accused by the British mass media not only of losing his “sense of history,” but also his political flexibility. Georgian veterans could also have accused their young president of the same thing. His excessive “hot-headedness,” as U.S.S.R. ex-president Mikhail Gorbachev noted, would have been “more appropriate on the theatrical than on the political stage.”

No one was really surprised by the fact that Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga did not miss the opportunity on the eve of the celebrations in Moscow to repeat her evaluation of this Victory in the presence of George Bush as the beginning of Latvia’s new occupation (along with the other Baltic countries) and its communist repression. But the fact that at a mass meeting in Tbilisi organized for the “historical visit of the U.S. president to Georgia,” Mikhail Saakashvili placed Russia in the same ranks as all the conquerors, who “wanted, but were unable, to destroy the proud Georgian people,” could not help but arouse annoyance, to put it mildly. After all, several days before this, he himself mentioned the supposedly “huge sacrifices” made by the Georgians (admittedly keeping quiet in so doing about the Russians and other nations of the Soviet Union) in the fight against Fascism and Stalinist totalitarianism. It would seem that after such words, the Georgian president should have considered it his duty to place a wreath on the grave of the Unknown Soldier on this red-letter anniversary of Victory in the war with Fascist Germany, which ended in two Soviet soldiers—Russian and Georgian—hoisting the Banner of Victory over the Reichstag. After all, no one knows whose remains are buried in it, a Russian’s, Ukrainian’s, Georgian’s, or someone’s of another nationality, but we do know they are of a soldier who gave his life for the freedom and independence of a then common multinational Homeland. According to the assessments of military historian G. Krivosheev, based on generalized data about the numbers of each nationality in the Soviet Army and the U.S.S.R.’s total human losses in this war (they are currently assessed at almost 30 million people), approximately 8 million people died on its fronts. Of them, 5.75 million were from Russia, 1.37 million from Ukraine, 253,000 from Belarus, approximately 290,000 from the Central Asian republics, and more than 150,000 from the Caucasian republics.²

² On the religious-national distribution of military losses of the Soviet Army see also: L.I. Medvedko, *Rossii, Zapad, Islam: “stolknovenie tsivilizatsii?”* Moscow, 2003, pp. 321-327.

Politics without Historical Memory

During the years of the Great Patriotic War, Georgia and other Soviet republics of the Caucasus and Central Asia were not “allies” or “partners,” but part of the U.S.S.R. as a whole. So the Georgian leader’s pledges to George Bush that “Georgia will now be America’s partner in spreading democracy throughout the post-Soviet space” and the entire world, beginning with Belarus and ending with the peoples not only of North Korea and Cuba mentioned by Saakashvili, but also of the Central Asian countries, with which, as in Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, he swore to always “stand beside,” only arouse indignation.³ In a war against whom? Against Russia?

Many observers noted that Saakashvili made this pledge after U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Head of the Council of the European Union Javier Solana promised the Belorussian opposition in Vilnius to support its stance against “the latest dictatorship” in Central Europe. In this way, that is, indirectly, they made it understood that they would help the opposition against the “latest authoritarian regimes” in Central Asia and the Caucasus. This happened on the eve of the regular GUUAM summit in Kishinev. (Since Uzbekistan finds the orientation of this organization to be ambiguous and unacceptable for its national security, Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov refused to participate in this summit,⁴ so this structure, after losing one of its “U”s, is again known as GUAM). Later, after he returned from Tbilisi, George Bush reminded his fellow countrymen that during the past 18 months, everyone in the U.S. had “become witnesses of the Rose (in Georgia), Orange (in Ukraine), Tulip (in Kyrgyzstan), and Cedar (in Lebanon) revolutions.” He convinced the Americans that a special “active response corps” must be formed and called on them to promote the further “advance of democracy and freedom throughout the world,” offering as soon as next year to allot at least 24 million dollars⁵ for this purpose. The question again arises: for a war against whom?

Such statements and actions by the U.S. administration also gave Head of the Russian Federal Security Service Nikolai Patrushev grounds to announce in the State Duma that “certain political forces in Western countries are applying double standards to the Russian Federation in the worst traditions of the Cold War.” He reminded everyone that Russia’s partners in the fight against international terrorism were also acting as its opponents and deliberately trying to “weaken Russian influence in other CIS republics and on the international arena as a whole.” This is confirmed, noted Nikolai Patrushev, by the latest events in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. He explained this strategy of double standards by the fact that the West does not want to see Russia as a serious economic rival. He believes that such nongovernmental humanitarian organizations as the U.S. International Republican Institute are the most active here. Incidentally, even before George Bush made his speech at this institute, the United States allotted 5 million dollars for financing opposition movements in Belarus alone.⁶ There is not even an attempt to conceal what this money is to be used for—to overthrow the existing “authoritarian regime” in Belarus, where in addition to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, “worrying signs of authoritarianism” (we will remind you that Belarus has an alliance treaty with Russia) are being observed.

After the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the Russian and foreign press presented diverging facts about the assistance rendered by several nongovern-

³ *Politicheskii zhurnal*, No. 17, 16 May, 2005, p. 4.

⁴ See: *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 12 April, 2005.

⁵ *Izvestia*, 20 May, 2005.

⁶ See: *Gazeta*, 13 May, 2005.

mental Western organizations within the framework of the “democratic crusade the American president is embarking on throughout the world, not only in the Middle East, but also in Georgia, Ukraine, and the Central Asian republics,” as the French newspaper *Figaro* put it.⁷

Speaking on the same day as Patrushev in the State Duma, RF Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted that Russia’s relations with other CIS countries were still a top priority from the viewpoint of maintaining its security. The foreign ministry head said by way of reminder that Russian President Vladimir Putin noted more than once that “Russia is not claiming a monopoly in this space,” and he added, “and we do not believe that anyone has monopoly rights in this region.”⁸

Ethnographic History

The roots of the Color Revolution epidemic in the post-Soviet space should most likely be sought not so much in the coordinates of “geographic history” related to the unanticipated collapse of the U.S.S.R., as in the “ethnic geography” which arose of its own accord with the birth of the new state formations. In most cases, the borders between the Soviet republics (particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia) were established just as arbitrarily as the demarcation of their autonomous and internal regions. In Soviet times in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, the long-standing clan-regional principle of distribution was retained (and to a significant extent is still retained) in the power structures, whereby the population of some areas and regions feels it has been short-changed—with all the unfair consequences of privatization of former state and collective property ensuing from this unequal situation. Regardless of whether the Rose, Orange, or other upheavals are related to the outlays of post-Soviet “extreme democracy” or due to the “export of revolution” from the outside, the nature of this technicolored phenomenon is more likely of internal than external origin. This was graphically shown during the change in power in Kyrgyzstan, as, incidentally, in the events which occurred before and after the Color Revolutions in the Caucasus and Central Asia. To paraphrase Clausewitz’s well-known definition of war, they are an extension of that “extreme” policy which led to “revolutions” not only using “velvet,” but also forceful means.

Inheritance and Heritage of a “Civilized Divorce”

The anniversary celebrations in honor of Victory Day were accompanied by many important political events: bilateral and multilateral summit meetings; and official and unofficial summits in Moscow, which were organized within the CIS framework and Russia-European Union format. Whereas Javier Solana called the first Russia-EU summit held in Moscow on 10 May “a field for historical reconciliation,” many observers gave pessimistic forecasts in advance about the meeting of CIS heads of state held the day before, saying that it would supposedly be the completion of a “civilized divorce process,” as Vladimir Putin put it, which had been going on for 12 years. But this time too, the rumors about the end of the CIS were overly exaggerated. The divvying up of the heritage of the Soviet Union, the collapse of which Vladimir Putin called “the greatest geopolitical catastro-

⁷ *Russian Newsweek*, No. 17, 2005, p. 12.

⁸ *Gazeta*, 13 May, 2005.

phe of the century” in his message to the Federal Assembly, did not put a stop to the simultaneous disintegrating and integrating processes in the post-Soviet space. Although it was undoubtedly a “real drama” for the Russian, as incidentally for the other peoples of one of the two world super powers that ceased to exist. During the past years it became clear that the policy of isolation conducted by some of the CIS countries, particularly the Central Asian states which, by partially distancing themselves from the Russian Federation, were hoping to achieve greater magnanimity from the West, has not justified itself.

Independent Uzbek researcher Bakhtier Rashidov rightly states an obvious fact: “America will never invest in any country unless it is sure of high economic and political dividends.” This author goes on to note that “. . . the Russian factor is still preserved in the independent Central Asian countries due to the common information expanse; large Russian-speaking diasporas and pro-Russian elites; inertia of public thinking; and cultural and economic ties with Russia.”⁹

The participants in the anniversary celebrations held both in Moscow and in the capitals of other CIS countries could also be convinced that, in addition to everything else, another extremely important sphere of the common post-Soviet space has been retained—the humanitarian, in particular, the shared historical memory of common sacrifices and joint victories sustained in the most extensive, but not the longest war of the 20th century. The keepers of this memory of “the Soviet community of common historical destiny” are primarily the veterans of the Great Patriotic War still alive today. Almost none of them will probably still be alive when the next “even” anniversary of Victory Day comes around. It is very unlikely that the succeeding generations of their descendents will be able to keep this memory in the total mayhem of the market economy. This feeling is sustained by the inertia of political consciousness and the trends toward isolationism, as well as by the unjustified expectation of the benevolent attitude from the West that is characteristic not only of the population of the Central Asian countries, but also of many representatives of the former and current political elite of both Russia and other CIS countries.

Forecasts and warnings of the dangerous consequences of such trends in society and in the policy conducted by the leadership of the U.S.S.R., national republics, and autonomous formations were made at the end of the 1980s. They were contained in a secret analysis sent to the leadership of the International Relations Department of the C.P.S.U. Central Committee not long before the Soviet Union collapsed. It noted in particular that the “democratic processes which are developing under national slogans in the Union and autonomous republics are increasingly moving toward nationalism and separatism. This is all fraught with new social, national, and religious conflicts. Their diffusion could have the effect of a terrible explosion with consequences no less dangerous than even the loss of central control over nuclear weapons.”¹⁰

Over 12 years later, after the Rose and Orange Revolutions, the participants and scientific leaders of the School of Young Orientalists at a seminar held in the Moscow Region made not classified, but open, bolder forecasts based on data of field studies they carried out in the Central Asian republics. In particular, they predicted alarming consequences of the situation developing in the Ferghana Valley and around it in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. For example, a graduate student, Gulnara Ustobabaeva, reminded everyone that the foreign debts of each of these republics exceed hundreds of millions of dollars. Despite the new loans and assistance they are receiving from the West and Russia, which are calculated in tens of millions of dollars and euros, the situation there is not improving. Outside support does not guarantee the retention of both the former and the new state structures in these republics, which is fraught with new conflicts and crises, particularly in the Ferghana

⁹ B. Rashidov, “Russia in Central Asia: A Shift to Positive Foreign Policies,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (32), 2005, p. 114.

¹⁰ “Priorityty i perspektivy,” *Bezopasnost Evrazii*, Moscow, No. 1, 1992, p. 43.

Valley, which is divided between Uzbekistan (60% of its territory), Tajikistan (25%), and Kyrgyzstan (15%). There are at least 200 disputed points and sections there. The irrigation channel system, which was integrated in Soviet times, also remains a crisis-prone “bone of contention.” After all, the Fergana Valley is one of the most densely populated regions in the world with more than 360 people per sq. km. But it also has the highest unemployment rate and lowest standard of living. The average monthly wage of one worker, usually the only breadwinner for a large family, is much lower than 50 dollars.

C o n c l u s i o n

Prospects in Retrospect

Prominent Russian scientist V.I. Vernadskiy called World War II a continuation of the unfinished World War I. In retrospect, the main result of both of these wars is considered the fact that they put an end to the colonial and, in general, all empires claiming world dominance in the 20th century. This fate was met first by the tsarist and then by its successor, the so-called “Soviet empire.” The “greatest geopolitical disaster” which subsequently befell not only Russia, but the entire post-Soviet New Eurasia, led to the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

- Despite all the difficulties and many obstacles on the path to the development and strengthening of the CIS, its appearance made it possible not only to “arrange a civilized divorce” among the former Union republics, including the Caucasus and Central Asia, but also create several new regional structures, the purpose of which was to advance toward economic, military-political, cultural-scientific, information, and different-level integration of its member states. Under the conditions of the “global war” launched against international terrorism, it is no accident that the new independent states of the Caucasus and Central Asia found themselves included within the borders of the “Greater Middle East,” becoming its extension on the path of the forced “advance of democracy and freedom” according to the Western model. After waking up, as George Bush put it, to the “prospect of great changes” in the wake of the Color Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, they became test grounds for various trends in “extreme democracies” with the incorporation of criminal and terrorist groups, as well as Islamist organizations.
- The new process is reeling out of the control not only of individual CIS structures, but also of the U.S.-led antiterrorist coalition. All of this is complicating the further advance of the Caucasian and Central Asian countries along the path of both regional integration within the Commonwealth and preventing the introduction of different models of “democracy and freedom” into these countries. As a result, the Caucasus and Central Asia are becoming increasingly drawn into a new round of the Cold War and are becoming one of the most crisis-prone regions of the world.
- With this breakdown in forces, the CIS could meet the fate of the empires, confederations, and unions (like the Third Reich, Empire of the Rising Sun, various alliances and commonwealths of nations) which most likely disappeared from the political map of the world over the past century because none of them had either national-ethnic self-identification or a specific “geocivilizational location.”
- The retention of state integrity and sovereignty is apparently becoming the main priority not only of the national, but also of the state-national security of the new sovereign mono-ethnic or multinational state formations of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Russian Feder-

ation.¹¹ As the unequivocal experience (positive and negative) accumulated over the years the CIS has existed shows, this problem can be most effectively resolved within the framework of regional cooperation on a bilateral or collective basis within the borders geo-civilizationally designated by the New Eurasian Union (NEAU).

- One of the possible formats for this cooperation could be not a return to the former Soviet Union on strictly ideological or social-class grounds, but initiation within this Union of a process for restoring the former and looking for new vector ties and “co-links” with different levels of integration. This is primarily expedient in the humanitarian, and later in the economic and military-political spheres as a necessary condition and guarantee for maintaining the national-state and regional-collective security of the member states.
- For Russia to be able to continue its historical mission as main integrator (and not disintegrator, as its role was defined by several participants of the “Development Strategy” seminar held at the end of May in Moscow) must become an attractive player of world politics, primarily in the post-Soviet space of New Eurasia, which also will include Russia’s southern neighbors, of course, with their desire and consent. Although world history does not know examples of the restoration of vanished empires to their former geographical dimensions, the creation with their participation and the strengthening of integration structures (like the SCO, EurAsEC, or SES) will be assessed not as “some manifestation of the post-imperial syndrome,”¹² but as an integral link in the globalizing world of new entities of international relations in the post-Soviet space. As an expert of the World Bank said at the above-mentioned seminar, it is high time Russia and the Caucasus and Central Asia “turned away from dear old Europe” and step boldly toward South Asia—China and India—where a new center of power is arising.
- The Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, the events in Uzbekistan (the latter are called an “abrasive revolution” due to the bloody repression of the rebellion in Andijan), in which in both cases the American and Russian bases located close by were not involved, almost synchronously coincided with the arduous talks on putting an end to Russia’s military presence in Georgia. Nor did the Russian bases deployed in this country interfere either in the Rose Revolution or in the events in Ajaria. Nevertheless, the new outbreaks of violence in the Fergana Valley and around it, that is on both sides of the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border, could not help but arouse the concern of Russian parliamentary deputies and the American senators visiting Uzbekistan at the end of May 2005. None of them hid their concern not so much about “democratic freedoms,” as about the fate of the military bases of the former super powers located there.

Commenting on the situation involving the U.S. and Russian military bases in the post-Soviet space, well-known American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, who heads the Brodell Center at Birmingham University, deliberately reminded everyone that the U.S. is expressing its willingness to “force Russia to withdraw its troops from Georgia,” but not from Central Asia. “In the final analysis,” he predicts, “Saakashvili will have to find a common language not with George Bush, but with Vladimir Putin.” The American president, Wallerstein is confident, will “always continue to place him before Saakashvili,” for this is a question of priorities.¹³ The example of Uzbekistan, wrote *The Financial Times* during those days, alarmingly showed the borders of the alliances entered by the U.S. within the framework of the “fight against international terrorism.” Washington suddenly found that along

¹¹ See: *Evrasijskie tetradi*, No. 2, 2005, pp. 138-146; *Vestnik*, No. 3 (23), 2005, pp. 1-2.

¹² *Nezavisimaja gazeta*, 27 May, 2005.

¹³ *Politicheskij zhurnal*, No. 18, 23 May, 2005, p. 43.

with the “free world” and “axis of evil,” there is also a primarily Asian axis passing not only through Pakistan and Central Asia, but also partially through Russia.¹⁴ Russian New Eurasia was and still is the link between this “Asian axis” and not only Europe, but also America, through the icy waters of the Bering Straits.

As for China, which is already considered a future “super power,” it had an entirely different reaction to the outbreak of “extreme democracy” in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan neighboring on the PRC and, in particular, decisively denied the rumors not only about the presence of Chinese bases in these countries, but also about its intention to create them.

The results of the recent referendums in France and the Netherlands regarding the Constitution of the European Union show that even if Ukraine and Georgia, as initiators of the Color Revolutions, join the EU, Russia, and particularly the Central Asian countries, are not welcome there. The European Union might fall apart even before Turkey joins it. But this does not mean that the CIS countries have to listen to Europe and possibly even adapt themselves to it in some way. But whatever the case, they cannot help but feel themselves to be part of that Homeland of all currently “living civilizations,” which is sometimes called Greater Eurasia. From the geopolitical standpoint, it is hardly worth restoring the “Soviet empire.” Probably after the “civilized divorce” is over, we will have to give more thought not to military bases, but to cooperation markets and unhurried different-level integration processes. For even when during the course of a long life together more was suffered than gained, divorced couples often come together again, drawing up or not drawing up a new marriage contract.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 17.