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EDITORIAL

FIFA’s own goal

The Federation International de Football Association (FIFA), the international body that runs world soccer, has long operated as a world unto itself. Headquartered in Zurich, it enjoys loose oversight from Swiss authorities as well as those of the European Union; its watchdogs, such as they exist, are largely internal. Judging from the report on the bidding process for the 2018 and 2022 FIFA World Cups and the way that report is being handled, those dogs are sleeping.

FIFA considered 11 bids for the two World Cup finals; in some cases the bids were for both tournaments. By the time of the decision, the 2018 options included England, Russia, and joint bids from Belgium and the Netherlands, and Portugal and Spain. The 2022 bidders were Australia, Japan, Qatar, South Korea and the United States. Russia and Qatar prevailed. In both cases, the decisions were heralded as expanding the game’s turf: Russia was the first Eastern European country to host a World Cup, while Qatar was the first Middle Eastern country to enjoy that honor.

Almost immediately, controversy erupted. Two members of the FIFA Executive Committee had their voting rights suspended after they were accused of offering votes for money. Media in losing countries bitterly complained that political and personal concerns outweighed the interests of the game. Allegations of vote-buying, typically in the form of financing for executive committee members’ pet projects, were rampant. The head of England’s 2018 bid committee told the House of Commons that four Executive Committee members offered support in exchange for various things, including, in one case, a knighthood.

Amid mounting complaints, FIFA President Sepp Blatter conceded that parties had tried to fix the bidding process but those efforts failed. Nevertheless, the cascade of scandals convinced Blatter that FIFA needed a more robust internal investigatory mechanism and appointed former U.S. district attorney Michael Garcia chairman of the investigative branch of the FIFA Ethics Committee; simultaneously he named Hans-Joachim Eckert, a German judge, as chairman of the Ethics Committee’s adjudication chamber.

Garcia for two years investigated the 2018 and 2022 bids, and released his final report earlier this month. That 18-month investigation yielded a 430-page report, of which only a 42-page statement and summary produced by Eckert was released. That short document concluded that there were no grounds to reopen the bidding process — despite evidence of improper conduct in eight of the nine bids — a conclusion

that triggered a protest by Garcia just three hours after the release of the summary. Eckert’s statement, said Garcia, “contains numerous materially incomplete and erroneous representations of the facts and conclusions detailed in the Investigatory Chamber’s report.”

Incredibly, Eckert’s summary appears to blame the losing bids for the most significant misbehavior. England was accused of accepting “inappropriate requests” from one Executive Committee member and Australia appeared to direct development funds in Africa to projects that would benefit committee members there.

Russia’s bid was reportedly given the OK, although, remarkably, Garcia’s report notes that the Russian committee was unable to provide correspondence because the computers that it used for the bid were leased, returned to the owner and subsequently destroyed. Nor was Garcia able to get access to the committee’s email accounts. Still, the investigation decided that any gifts bestowed by Russia appear “to have been in line with the relevant FIFA rules of conduct” and were only “of a symbolic and incidental value.”

Mohammed bin Hammam, a Qatari who is former president of the Asian Football Confederation, reportedly “made several different improper payments to high-ranking [Confederation of African Football] officials” before Qatar was awarded the World Cup but the report concluded the investigation’s findings do not “support the conclusion that the purpose of these payments was to promote the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup bid.”

Eckert’s conclusions were roundly derided; British Football Association Chairman Greg Dyke called them pointless and “a bit of a joke.” Garcia will appeal the decision to accept Eckert’s conclusions to the FIFA Appeal Committee and called for publication of his report. That can only be a first step.

FIFA’s culture of impunity is ruining “the beautiful game.” Stripped of meaningful oversight, scandals have long been a part of the FIFA bureaucracy: No one blinked when 26 executive committee members received \$15,000 worth of luxury watches in goody bags at the World Cup in Brazil. FIFA must get serious about reform or external regulators should take over. FIFA enjoys immunity from much international oversight; that should end. Transparency International recommends term limits for senior positions, along with independent investigations of those individuals. Finally, sponsors of the World Cup must demand more from the organization. FIFA listens to money, giving those companies an outsized voice in FIFA deliberations. They should use it.

Putin has plenty of non-crazy friends in Europe

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BLOOMBERG

Now that Europe is digging in for a protracted economic war on Russia, President Vladimir Putin desperately needs his sympathizers in the European Union to lobby for his interests. This “fifth column” is often assumed to be made up of radicals on the extreme right and extreme left, but mainstream politicians and intellectuals are also involved, and their arguments are of a pragmatic rather than an ideological nature.

The radicals, of course, are most vocal. Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP, the U.K.’s anti-immigrant, anti-EU party, has demanded that the West stop opposing Russian actions in Ukraine and ally itself with Putin in the fight against Islamic extremism. Marine Le Pen, leader of France’s ultranationalist Front National, is another Putin admirer. And Heinz-Christian Strache, the leader of Austria’s far-right Freedom Party, has praised the Russian leader as a “pure democrat.”

On the far left, Gregor Gysi, leader of Germany’s Die Linke, the successor party to East Germany’s Communists, has condemned Putin’s Crimea land grab but has strongly backed a compromise on terms advantageous to Russia.

European right- and left-wingers recently took part in a ludicrous “observation” mission to the rebel republics in eastern Ukraine, which held an election not recognized even by Russia. Some of these supporters would like Putin to become even more assertive: They see him as a powerful ally who could help them do better in their own countries.

These relationships could become mutually profitable if the marginal forces make headway domestically. They have a lot going for them already: UKIP recently won its first seat in parliament, the Front National triumphed in European Parliament and municipal elections, the Freedom Party made gains in last year’s Austrian parliamentary election, and Die Linke has just won the right to form its first federal state government, in Thuringia, Germany.

The problem that all these political forces have, however, is that if they ever amassed real power, their countries’ political elites would see it as disastrous and would unite against them. That doesn’t mean they can’t eventually win, but compared with mainstream parties they’re playing with a handicap.

If Putin could lean only on the radicals, his influence in the EU would be marginal. Yet he has mainstream allies, too. One is Matthias Platzeck, who served as the prime minister of the German federal state of Brandenburg and



the chairman of SPD, the second party in Germany’s ruling coalition. A long-time ally of former Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, who is friends with Putin, Platzeck now heads the German-Russian Forum. He argued last week that the annexation of Crimea should be “legitimized under international law so it’s acceptable to everyone.”

Platzeck is as mainstream as they come, not a member of the Putin fan club. But his home state of Brandenburg, like other regions in eastern Germany, has strong economic ties with Russia, and Platzeck, 60, a Russian speaker like Chancellor Angela Merkel and many other East Germans of his generation, is just being pragmatic:

Putin, and perhaps all of Russia, have a different value system, which is not necessarily compatible with ours. But a nation’s past should not be the only criterion by which to judge it. He is at least a rational person, a sober and realistic politician. And what will come after him, we do not know.

Le Monde is publishing a series of articles on “Putin’s network in France,” the first of which centered on “business diplomacy” and featured some prominent business leaders. Christophe de Margerie, CEO of the oil major Total who recently died in a plane crash near Moscow, was not the only influential patron in favor of business as usual with Russia. Jean Francois Cirelli, head of the energy company GDF Suez, admits to being “pals” with the Russian ambassador in Paris and argues that politics should not interfere with business. As for the Crimea land grab, he says, that was just “a little naughty.” Executives of other French businesses with a big presence in Russia, such as the bank Societe Generale and the retail chain Auchan, are also not interested in leaving Russia.

They are not without allies in France’s

center-right opposition party, UMP. Thierry Mariani, a UMP legislator and the biggest Russia booster in the French parliament, told le Monde, “Europe only has two great heads of state, Merkel and Putin — a man who thinks of his people when he sets out policy.” Mariani, a former transport minister, is no radical pariah, and his advocacy of Putin’s Russia is not a marginal pursuit: He has allies both within and outside his party.

The views of Platzeck and Mariani echo those of Czech President Milos Zeman, who has said that Russia has a claim on Crimea and stressed Ukrainian nationalists’ historical Nazi connections, just as the Kremlin does. Zeman, too, is a mainstream politician, and he gets a lot of flak for being too soft on Russia. Platzeck, for his part, received a rebuke from Frank Walter Steinmeier, a ranking SPD member and Germany’s foreign minister, who said the Crimea annexation was “a clear violation of law which we cannot endorse nor recognize.” Mariani’s views aren’t officially backed by his party either.

Still, these perfectly serious politicians persist in their support for normalizing relations with Russia. Regardless of whether the Kremlin does anything to keep them interested, they are making a serious reputational bet on pushing an unpopular appeasement policy. If the EU cannot agree on further sanctions that have a serious effect on the Russian economy, Putin’s friends will have won that bet, even if other politicians never admit it. Whether the current Western leaders like it or not, pragmatism in relations with Putin is part of the political mainstream in Europe, not the domain of fringe crazies.

Leonid Bershidsky is a Berlin-based writer and Bloomberg View columnist.

opinion

Russia remakes history over NATO’s eastern expansion

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THE GLOBALIST

The Russian invasion of Ukraine poses a fundamental challenge to the post-Cold War order, which has kept Europe relatively stable and at peace for the past 25 years. With his policy of aggressive nationalism and hegemonic aspirations, Russian President Vladimir Putin openly challenges the principles of sovereignty, self-determination and democracy on which this order was built.

Putin’s world view — and indeed that of many members of Russia’s elite — is premised on a perceived need to restore Russia to its former position of influence and greatness in the “near abroad” and — by extension — in the world.

Russia and the West have competing narratives to explain Putin’s action. Putin and those seeking to “understand” him now often argue that the United States has violated a deal made with Russia about not expanding NATO.

And they maintain that Russia’s actions today can be explained by the fact that NATO’s 1999 enlargement threatens Russia.

There is only one little problem with this wonderful saga — it is just that, a saga, but not a fact of diplomatic or political life. The two key facts are these:

1. There are no agreements or treaties that prohibit NATO from accepting new members.

2. There also were no secret assurances not to expand NATO eastward, which are now hinted about.

It is now alleged that promises were made to then-Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in 1989-1990. The purported proof is offered in now declassified reports of the Kohl and Baker talks with Gorbachev.

Baker, speaking at the American Academy in Berlin on Oct. 7, dismissed the claims as baseless.

On Oct. 16, Gorbachev confirmed Baker’s assertion, saying that the “topic of ‘NATO expansion’ was not discussed ... not brought up in those years.” Likewise, Hans Dietrich Genscher, former German foreign minister, also affirmed Baker, “This was never the subject of negotiations, and most certainly not a negotiation result.”

The now declassified reports show that U.S. President George H.W. Bush, Kohl and Gorbachev shared their concerns — and resolve — about three developments:

1. The disintegration of the East German SED regime.

2. The Soviet leader’s decision for a united Germany to remain in NATO.

3. Uncertainty about the status of the 380,000 Soviet soldiers in East Germany and understanding that only the Bundeswehr, not foreign forces, would be stationed in the territory of the former East Germany after unification.

Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in 1989-1990 also fought against a catastrophic Soviet military intervention that would deny East Germans the right to decide their own fate, as Gorbachev promised.

The reason for that was largely economic: The Soviet Union simply could not afford to continue policies that cost 25 percent of the Soviet GDP.

Eventually, Gorbachev agreed to German unification and its membership in NATO. Putin has scorned Gorbachev’s refusal to use the 380,000 Soviet soldiers in East Germany to keep control over the country.

Gorbachev agreed that nations could decide which alliances to join. The issue of NATO taking new members in 1990 was not on the agenda. After all, the Warsaw Pact still existed in 1990.



The West did not disappoint Gorbachev for his support of Germany. He did not come away empty-handed. He achieved agreements for:

1. A new German-Soviet treaty.

2. A CSCE Conventional Forces in Europe treaty reducing the number of military forces in Europe.

3. A German-Polish treaty settling the Oder-Neisse border, which established stability on the Russian border.

4. NATO also assured Russia repeatedly that it was not a threat to the Soviet Union.

5. NATO changed its strategy to make nuclear weapons truly of last resort, minimizing the principle of “first use.”

6. The Allies changed both “forward defense” and “flexible response” concepts that had been against Eastern European and Soviet territory.

7. NATO also extended a hand of friendship to establish diplomatic liaison with NATO and later signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

Furthermore, Bush also instructed that, as far as the U.S. was concerned, there would be no “dancing on the Wall” — i.e., no triumphalism over the end of the Cold War.

Despite all of these facts, the argument of new NATO members as a threat to Russia continues. It is true that the West’s discussion of a Military Action Plan for Georgian NATO membership in 2008 provoked Russia. However, German Chancellor Angela Merkel intervened to block that effort.

But what about offering NATO membership for former Warsaw Pact countries? The first efforts in that direction, which occurred in 1992-93, were sidelined into an effort of “Partnership for Peace.”

I participated in the U.S.-German bilateral talks with Frank Wisner and Richard Holbrook with Germany’s then-defense Minister Volker Rühle in 1993. At that time, the U.S. government deflected Poland’s and the Baltic countries’ early request.

During the breakup of Yugoslavia, U.S. President Bill Clinton then did lead the effort toward NATO enlargement in order to bring peace and stability to Europe.

His first priority in that regard took place in Bosnia, to end the bloodshed there — an effort that found Russian support. Clinton pursued a dual-track policy of NATO enlargement for Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic — but only in 1999, 10 years after the unification of Germany.

Russia’s diminished sphere of influence

The internal Russian crisis, and the consequent withdrawal from international politics, left Russia on the periphery of post-Cold War Europe, not NATO.

Clinton also agreed to the NATO-Russia Founding Act that declared: “NATO and Russia do not consider each other

WORD DETECTIVE

Evan Morris

Dear Word Detective: I was hoping you could explain the origins of the word “livery” which, as far as I can tell, has nothing to do with organ meat best served grilled with onions. What it DOES seem to have something to do with is a place to keep and care for horses in old western towns and, even more strangely (to me), the design of the paint and branding on airplanes. Are these words the same “livery”? Am I right that they have nothing to do with liver?

— Fernando.

That’s a great question, but you lost me with “organ meat best served grilled with onions.” All I could think of was Samuel Johnson’s declaration: “It has been a common saying of physicians in England, that a cucumber should be well sliced, and dressed with pepper and vinegar, and then thrown out, as good for nothing.” Speaking as a cucumber lover, I think Johnson must have

been thinking of liver.

You’re absolutely correct that “livery” has nothing to do with “liver,” a fact for which we should all be grateful. The origin of the word “liver” for the organ once considered the seat of emotions in humans (go figure) is a mystery, but it may derive from ancient Indo-European roots meaning “fatty or greasy.” Yum. Of course, “liver” can also mean “a person who lives,” as well as being the informal name of the sea bird (“liver bird”) that appears on the official seal of the City of Liverpool (which is, I think we can agree, a fairly appalling name for a city).

The word “livery” entered English around 1300 from French and has been spewing out new meanings at a rabbits-in-Australia rate ever since. The Old French source, “livere,” meant generally “to give, deliver,” and can be traced back to the Latin “liberare,” to free (also the source of “liberate” and “deliver”). All of our senses of “livery” in English carry some sense, albeit often diluted, of “giving.”

One of the biggies is “livery” in the sense of “identifying marks or color schemes,” such as your example of designs and color schemes on aircraft. This

as adversaries.” The act led to cooperation with Russia and Clinton brokered a deal with President Boris Yeltsin to have Russia participate in the United Nations IFOR Mission to secure peace in Bosnia.

In 1999, when NATO bombed Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic’s army to end ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, Russia’s leader at the time, Yeltsin, indeed objected.

This Kosovo military action led to the U.N. principles on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in cases of ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ironically, Putin tried to invoke R2P in defense of ethnic Russians in Ukraine in 2014, but R2P principles would only allow intervention in cases of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, none of which were occurring in Ukraine when Putin invaded the country.

The following annexation of the Crimea also violates international law. However, in Crimea no one was killed — not one of the R2P criteria were addressed. Protecting ethnic Russians in a peaceful Ukraine was not a basis for its annexation.

Finally, it is important to understand Putin’s responsibility. As a KGB officer in Dresden, he personally witnessed the demise of Russia’s power. He obviously drew his own lessons from his experience.

Ukraine is essential for Russia and its security mindedness. However, the precursor of Kiev’s street demonstration around the Maidan in 2014 is found in the streets of Moscow, when Yeltsin led the street demonstration that forced an end to the coup against Gorbachev.

For Putin, street protests are the greatest threat to the Russian Federation yet — and they must be stopped.

When Viktor Yanukovych crushed the Kiev street demonstrations that were an expression of public rejection of his decision not to sign the EU agreement and when Putin subsequently invaded and annexed Crimea, they undermined historical sympathy in Germany for Russia.

German “understanding” of Russia does emanate from strong emotions against war and what Nazi Germany wrought on Russia in World War II.

Merkel, despite these deep-seated concerns that dominate the talk shows here in Germany, has won approval for sanctions against the invasion and continuing presence of Russian soldiers in Ukraine.

Let’s hope sanctions help bring Putin back into the international community of peace-making countries.

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