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## Russia and the West

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IS RUSSIA A PARTNER of the West? This question has been repeatedly asked throughout centuries both in Russia and in the West. In the 13th century, German crusaders, with the Pope's blessing, invaded the Baltics and pushed further on to Russia, seeking political and spiritual domination. In Russia, this created a rift between those who wanted to draw closer to the West and those who saw it as a deadly threat to the unique East Slavic Orthodox civilization. The crusaders were pushed back, while Russia throughout three more centuries was learning, first unwillingly and later much more consciously, to associate itself with the Tatar-Mongol khans, the conquerors who came from the East.

### A Split That Could Not be Avoided

AT THAT TIME, Russians looked at the West as an enemy that refused to be discouraged by the first defeats and remained as determined as ever to convert Eastern Slavs into Catholicism. Helped by the Poles and Lithuanians, it finally triumphed in the western lands of the Kievan Rus.

By the early 1600s, the centuries-long confrontation and hostility had reached their highest point: Polish troops invaded Russia and brought a Catholic king to Moscow; once more the Russian elite and common people had to choose between the West and the East. The Westernizers lost; Russian patriots closed ranks to stand up to the occupants and push them out of the country.

Half a century later, however, it had become painfully clear that Russia was trailing behind the West in many fields and that it could and should learn from the West. The main role in the process belonged to Czar Peter the Great who transformed his country into a power with an important role to play in European politics.

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Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Russia remained immersed in what was going on in Europe. The privileged classes carried away by their enthusiasm for everything European – philosophy, literature, poetry, painting, architecture, sculpture, music, dances, drama, clothes, food, perfumery, design, landscaping, etc. – abandoned their native tongue for the French. The royals developed an addiction to the Côte d’Azur; the offspring of the nobility were educated in the West. Quite a few Europeans, on the other hand, made Russia their second homeland and remained actively involved in its life.

Europe, however, was unimpressed: very much as before Russia looked unfamiliar and even alien. In 1891, Rudyard Kipling shared his impressions of Russians: “Let it be clearly understood that the Russian is a delightful person till he tucks in his shirt. As an Oriental he is charming. It is only when he insists upon being treated as the

In the far from simple multipolar world, Russia’s trump cards (military might and geography among them) make it objectively a partner of the West; moreover, Russia’s importance to the West is steadily increasing.

most easterly of western peoples instead of the most westerly of easterns that he becomes a racial anomaly extremely difficult to handle.”

Russia was not merely avoided; it was treated as an opponent or even an enemy. In crises, European countries drawn into continental wars sought alliances with Russia only to be discontinued as soon as the danger had passed: the Eastern giant was not trusted, it was even feared.

The wounded national pride of the Russians coupled with political and ideological contradictions stirred up heated discussions about Russia’s relationships with the West. A considerable part of the Russian elite very happy to learn from the West remained loyal to the traditions when dealing with the home and foreign policy matters.

A split into Westernizers and Slavophiles was inevitable as it was inevitable in all countries which, having lagged behind tried to catch up with the most developed countries. China, for example, inherited the current struggle between the modernizers and conservatives from the latter half of the 19th century. Egypt and many other Muslim countries are similarly encumbered. The split can be clearly seen even in the recently backward countries which having moved to the fore socially and economically established close ties with the West. South Korea with two more or less

equally influential camps is the most obvious example. The left liberals favor socialist ideas; they somehow sympathize with the North and are very critical of the American policies on the peninsula. The conservatives look at the United States; they are devoted to the Western values and are very hostile to the North and communism.

In Russia, the contradictions between the Westernizers and Slavophiles reached an apogee in the 19th century: the latter wanted to see their Fatherland as far removed from the West as possible; they spared no effort to prove that because of their superior nature Russia and Christian Orthodoxy had a historic mission to play. Slavophiles and their ideas dominated in many spheres, up to and including the norms and methods of state governance.

When dealing with other countries the Russian authorities remained on the alert: the memories of the past, the logic of Great Power rivalry, fear of liberal and revolutionary ideas as well as real external threats made them suspicious of other countries and their perfidious plans. The German roots of the Russian czars and of a considerable part of their retinue notwithstanding, St. Petersburg was never quite enthusiastic about European tours of Russian subjects and always aware of the threat presented by European books and periodicals. The top crust was determined to quench liberal and revolutionary fervor no matter where and when it surfaced.

In 1917, the country was shattered by the Bolshevik revolution; Lenin and his closest allies, all of them confirmed internationalists, imported their ideology from the West and held forth about the need to liquidate all empires and to set up a classless society which would bring together all people on Earth. The failure was prompt and imminent. The capitalist West did not like what it heard from Lenin; this forced him and his cronies to drift back to nationalism and traditionalism. For geopolitical considerations sprinkled with Marxist ideology Communist Russia became the main opponent of the West; the global Cold War which came as a follow-up of World War II made Moscow and the West irreconcilable enemies.

Amazingly, the Russian émigrés of the first wave who had fled to the West to avoid Bolsheviks remained consistently anti-Western and gradually transformed their Slavophilic ideas into a new philosophy of Eurasianism. The most prominent of them insisted that Russia was not Europe, but Eurasia; they argued that it was superior to the West in many respects as purer, more humane, more collectivist, and more spiritual.

Their hostility to the West was balanced out by their tolerance of Asians, which, aware of their comparative backwardness, were prepared to accept Russia's leading role.

Stalin's death and an awareness that the Soviet Union had fallen far behind the West rekindled the debates between Westernizers and Slavophiles. Later, Mikhail Gorbachev, supported by the enlightened part of the Soviet elite, launched radical reforms of the communist system with Western prescriptions in mind.

It was necessary, first of all, to lighten the pressure of the military-industrial complex on national economy which needed cardinal restructuring anyway. The military-industrial complex and the Communist Party apparatchiks connected with it refused to retreat from their lucrative positions of power. Money and power, however, were not the only reason: they remained convinced that the old enemies of the Soviet Union would not miss a chance to capitalize on Moscow's newly found peacefulness and light-mindedness. There was a grain of truth in that: the West refused to retreat from the Cold War trenches from which it looked at what was going on in the USSR with a great deal of mistrust.

In 1987, in an effort to move aside the apparatchiks and the military-industrial complex which insisted on their anti-perestroika positions, Gorbachev launched a policy of democratization to inspire the nation. As could be expected this undermined the very foundations of totalitarian rule, launched centrifugal trends in the national republics and created a political and ideological opposition to the Communist Party. The political crisis crippled the country's economy still further. The communist regime refused to be reformed – it collapsed together with the multinational state.

### **Toward the Western “Zone of Co-Prosperty”**

THE SOVIET UNION'S DISINTEGRATION pushed the Russian Federation into a very different geostrategic context in which the old foreign policy principles and methods no longer applied. At first, post-Soviet Russia kept within Gorbachev's “new thinking” which presupposed closer partnership with the West, new approaches to the issues of disarmament, European security and unification of Germany. These shifts, the gradually retreating Soviet ideology and the mounting economic and other problems inside the country readjusted its policy in the socialist camp, the international communist movement and the Third World countries. On Gorbachev's initiative, the East European allies were set free,

relations with China restored, the Soviet military contingent pulled out of Afghanistan while the Kremlin abandoned its traditional friends in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America to their fates.

This meant that the Soviet Union moved away from everything that made it a “communist empire” bogged down in the ideological and geopolitical Cold War to become, instead, a partner of the West. From that time on, it embraced many of the Western values and was prepared to act together with the West to address the burning international issues. Gorbachev expected that the United States and its allies would finally accept the new world order based on changed realities and a clear understanding that the Soviet Union had become different.

The democratic forces inside the country embraced the idea of new thinking. On October 28, 1991 (that is, while the Soviet Union was still alive), speaking at a Congress of People’s Deputies of the R.S.F.S.R. Boris Yeltsin, the leader of democratic forces, spoke about the need to make public the strategic data necessary to join international organizations and reconfirmed Russia’s readiness to accept and observe the main principles of the IMF Charter. He suggested that Russia should invite Western experts to draw a roadmap of Russia’s economic reforms.

For some time, foreign policy of post-Soviet Russia remained within the scope of Gorbachev’s legacy yet its leaders were gradually moving away from it. In December 1991, at a meeting with the staff of the former Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., State Secretary Gennady Burbulis and Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev pointed to what made the foreign policy principles of the Gorbachev era and of post-Soviet Russia different: in the past, confrontation had been fed by the division of the world into a socialist and a capitalist camp; post-Soviet Russia was determined to seek the fullest possible partnership and even integration with the West.

The new people in power did not stop at that – they tried to translate the new principles into reality. Having launched a grandiose project of reviving Russia and being resolved to build a free society and a flourishing market economy in the shortest time possible they expected the West to become their main political and ideological ally. Boris Yeltsin said again and again that Russia and the United States, the leader of the Western world, had common interests and were maintaining stable and well-regulated relations based on partnership. The two countries, therefore, no longer needed a nuclear parity. On January 31, 1992, speaking at the UN SC Yeltsin pointed out: “Russia considers the United States and

other Western countries not only as partners, but also as allies. Moscow shares the main Western values, which are the primacy of human rights, freedom, rule of law, and high morality.”

The West invariably sided with Yeltsin and the democratic camp in their confrontation with the internal opposition; this fact cannot be overestimated. This happened during the August 1991 coup and the clash between the executive and legislative powers in October 1993 when the Russian president turned once more to the West for moral support. The democratic leaders in Russia believed that this would keep the forces of reaction from seeking revenge. Andrey Kozyrev pointed out that strategic partnership with the West inspired Russia’s move toward democracy and made it easier and recommended to keep “the too aggressive protection of national interests when dealing with partners” at a low key.

Seen from Moscow, the West looked like the main source of money and high technologies indispensable at the time of economic reforms. Early in 1992, all branches of power agreed that Russian diplomacy should concentrate at creating an efficient and dynamic economy; it should get access to money and markets and promote integration into the global system of production, consumption, trade, and labor. It was the time when even Ruslan Khasbulatov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the RF, later an uncompromising critic of Russian diplomacy, still agreed that “when dealing with the external world we should concentrate on the countries, cooperation with which will help us build up a real state potential.”

People in power looked at the Western countries for development patterns; they wanted to maximally “Westernize” Russia in order, to quote Kozyrev, “to achieve the historical task of transforming Russia from the dangerous sick giant of Eurasia into a member of the Western zone of co-prosperity.” The foreign minister called on the nation to learn from the “club of powers” the secrets of civilized living; to draw and realize joint programs in the sphere of economy, security and conversion with the direct participation of Western experts at all stages. Other prominent democrats offered more or less similar opinions.

This fully explains Moscow’s unconcealed pro-Western politics; it invariably agreed with everything which was done in the West, copied much of it and took into account American and West European opinions about Russia’s domestic developments.

The newly found pro-Western strategy taught the Russian democrats to stick to the principles of non-interference and cooperation “tested and

approved in Europe” when dealing with the post-Soviet neighbors; they willingly moved away from the Soviet practices in the relationships with Eastern Europe, the communist regimes and the Third World countries.

The new course proved to be short-lived: by 1993, it had become clear that the unfavorable external and internal contexts demanded its prompt readjustment.

The failure of the shock therapy of 1992 delivered a crushing blow at the camp of liberal reformers; no longer confident of what they were doing they split into rivaling clans. In the parliamentary elections of December 1993, they lost a large part of their electorate and came in third after nationalists and communists; in 1995, they slid even lower, while the opposition assured of popular support moved against the domestic and foreign policies formulated at the dawn of Russian democracy. The ruling team also changed: members of Soviet bureaucracy pushed the reformers out of the corridors of power.

The West and its Russian policy supplied the opposition with one of the strongest arguments which changed Moscow’s foreign policy. The Western camp was no longer seen as an ally; the Russian society became convinced that American and European politicians would have preferred to deal with weak and poor Russia. NATO’s eastward expansion looked like perfidy; it became clear that Russia was not trusted, that former hostility was revived and that the West wanted to push the Russians behind a new “iron curtain.” In short, this was perceived as a threat to Russia’s security.

The Russian political community described as hostile NATO’s unilateral actions in former Yugoslavia, its deliberate disregard of the infringements on the rights of Russian-speaking population in the Baltic republics, the attempts to prevent contacts of Moscow with Iraq and Libya, and the pro-Japanese position of the West on the issue of the South Kurile Islands. Russia was infuriated with the Western capitals which refused to accept reintegration of the former Soviet republics and “Russia’s special role and responsibility in the former Soviet Union.”

The Russians were badly disappointed with the meager fruits of economic cooperation with the West which was obviously unwilling to help to the extent it had helped other countries. Loans were relatively small and excessively restrictive; investments, inadequate. Many of those who came to Russia allegedly to do business were plundering the country’s natural riches turning the recent “superpower” into an “economic colony.” Valuable raw materials were paid for with rubbish or even haz-



ardous goods such as chewing gum, cigarettes or expired pharmaceuticals. Laws prevented full-scale transfer of technologies; the same applied to Russia's attempts to earn by selling its own technologies: cryogenic engines to India, warplanes to Malaysia, nuclear equipment to Iran, etc.

More and more people started doubting that Western prescriptions could be used in Russia; foreign advisers became an object of scathing criticism; they were accused of "irresponsibility" and the desire to adjust Russia's economy to the IMF patterns. Those who insisted on western patterns were ostracized; according to the popular opinion, the West, Washington in the first place, was looking down on Russia and Russians and was using Russia's weakness and its economic and partly political dependence on the West to make relations between them imbalanced and unequal.

Russia was increasingly aware of the losses it sustained on the international arena because of the pro-Western course in the post-Soviet space, Eastern Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

### **Multi-Vector Foreign Policy**

RUSSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY of the first post-Soviet years attracted vehement criticism and became the subject of wide-scale debates about the choice of priorities. From the very start, the critics were united in their opposition to the pro-Western course could not agree on many other issues. Conventionally speaking, all those involved in the debates could be divided into four camps.

The Westernizers who dominated the country's political scene in 1990-1992 formed the first camp; they insisted that confrontation between the Soviet Union and the West which had been going on for many years was a product of Bolshevik ideology and Bolshevik policy. They argued that the country should return to "the family of civilized nations" to escape possible technological and financial isolation and a gradual revival of military confrontation. The Westernizers argued that in 1993-1994 the West shifted accents since it and Eastern Europe simply lost faith in Russia's "shining democratic future."

The second, anti-Western camp did not believe that Russia and the West could be friends: the West had been working far too long to undermine Russia's strength and power. They reminded that Russia had stood opposed to the enemy to preserve its unique civilization and the Great Power status and insisted that the West, helped by the "traitors at the

helm” had nearly destroyed Russia as a Great Power. They blamed Washington for everything negative which was going on in the country and insisted that America was behind the plans of annihilation of Russia and their realization. Containment of the West was seen as the correct answer to the recipes ranging from seeking allies among the post-Soviet republics to drawing closer to Iran in the south and China in the east.

The third camp saw enemies everywhere – from Washington to Beijing – and recommended all-round defense.

The fourth camp, on the other hand, favored a multi-vector and well-balanced foreign policy; they insisted that Russia had no enemies; that it could cooperate with many countries, especially with its neighbors and avoid biases: its geographic location, size, might, and history doom it to balanced relationships with the West, the East and the South. A multi-vector and balanced policy offered excellent chances to address and resolve the main problems: security, the best possible external conditions indispensable for economic and social modernization, and Russia’s transformation into one of the centers of influence on the worldwide scale.

Starting with the mid-1990s, these ideas had been gaining momentum in Russia’s foreign policy; they became an official open, multi-vector and balanced foreign policy course in 2000 when President Putin came to power.

Moscow began restoring its ties with the former Soviet friends and allies in the Third World; it sought geopolitical understanding with the countries opposed to Washington’s diktat and was actively reintegrating the post-Soviet space.

Under these circumstances, Americans were compelled to think and act quickly since their plans to lure the former Cold War adversary into their camp fell through. Moscow was actively building up its own sphere of influence which interfered with the Western policy to pull former Soviet republics to its side. Washington doubled its efforts to prevent integration in the CIS, dampen the young states’ desire to ally with Moscow and push them toward Western structures.

From Russia this looked like an attempt to deprive it of its friends and resources, to encircle and “strangle” it. The remnants of former trust in Washington dissipated: Russia firmly opposed America’s plans in the post-Soviet space and outside it.

America, a self-appointed leader of the “free world” and the keeper of the world order, shouldered the mission of bringing the “persistent law-breakers” – Iraq, Iran and Yugoslavia – to order. Washington was con-

vinced that it defended the interests of its allies, friends and even all of humanity. Moscow, however, interpreted America's actions as a claim for unilateral leadership in the world and did not exclude a possibility that having taught good manners to Iraq and Yugoslavia America might imagine that it could punish Moscow for "disobedience." Washington, in its turn, was worried by this negative response to the use of force in Iraq and Yugoslavia: it feared that Russia was moving back to confrontation and that far from being America's strategic partner it was opposing its efforts to protect the interests of the "pivotal" camp.

Rekindled geopolitical rivalry forced the sides once more to seek strategic balance and oppose the efforts of the other side to gain military and political predominance. Russia opposed American ABM system in Europe, Washington's disdain of UN and international laws while the United States barely concealed its displeasure or even apprehension of the Russia-China tandem. Moscow and Washington could not agree on how to treat North Korea and the Assad regime in Syria: old partners for Moscow, they were dismissed as inveterate enemies by Washington. Moscow was suspicious of NATO; Washington had the same doubts about CSTO. Moscow approved of Latin Americans who challenged the northern giant; Washington had a soft spot for Georgia, Russia's recalcitrant neighbor. The Kremlin did not like international structures initiated by America to which Russia was not invited (Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Pacific partnerships) while Washington found it hard to stomach the fact that there was no place for it in BRICS, CIS and SCO. Europe demonstrates similar yet less passionate approaches.

Geopolitical disagreements revived ideological contradictions. At the early stages of reforms, people in power did not object to or even greeted the Western efforts to plant democratic values in Russia and teach the nation how to live in a "free state." Today, this looks like an effort to weaken power in Russia and to "force it to its knees."

This explains why in the humanitarian sphere the West is geared, in fact, against Moscow's independent and Great Power policy on the international arena and at encouraging the Westernizers in their struggle inside the country. In the face of consecutive pro-Western ("orange") revolutions dangerously close to Russia's borders the Kremlin became even more convinced that the West was sapping Russia's might. The West did not like the counter-measures and a stronger vertical of power in Russia. Americans and Europeans used all possible platforms, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the media to criticize the Kremlin for what they

describe as “rolling up democracy” and “rolling out authoritarianism.” Very much as in the past, today the West turns a blind eye to the violations of human rights and the rights of national minorities in the Baltic countries and by the friendly authoritarian regimes.

This is not another Cold War yet the bilateral relations between Russia and the United States are often in turmoil. After twenty years of empty talk, U.S. Congress repealed the Jackson-Vanik amendment which had limited the trade between America and the Soviet Union/Russia for ideological reasons only to replace it with Magnitsky Act. Russia responded with the Dima Yakovlev Law. This started a wide-scale ideological campaign: the United States was accused of all sorts of ideological discrepancies ranging from undemocratic presidential elections to the surveillance by the secret services of American citizens. Some of the Russian parliamentarians and TV commentators branded the U.S. as a hostile and reactionary state.

These ideological disagreements have fitted perfectly the centuries-old context of cultural differences and mutual prejudices. More than a century ago, Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov wrote: “The Russian people or, rather, a large part of Russian intelligentsia.... is a prisoner of false ideas bordering on superiority or even persecution mania.... They suspect neighbors of insults; they imagine that they fail to appreciate their greatness and are plotting against them.... In an effort to rescue the unfortunate we will try to persuade Russians that these suspicions are false and unfair. If they persist in their delusions, neither money nor medicine will help.”

These delusions about the West have survived at the genetic level and have spread to the religious sphere. The Western values – from liberalism to the rights of sexual minorities – and the Western institutions – from Catholicism and Protestantism to NGOs and comfortable prisons for murderers – cause suspicions, stupefaction and rejection. Uncle Sam and its cronies are held guilty of all troubles which have befallen Russia and the world: the color revolutions, tsunamis, drug trafficking, and the ailing world economy. The political scientist who in one of his recent articles assessed the gap between the West and Russia in social matters as 40 to 60 years was probably quite right.

Enmity is mutual and even much more pronounced in the West. Public opinion polls consistently confirm that at least half of the people in the West do not like Russia to some extent. This feeling is fairly strong among the closest neighbors – Germans, Poles, Italians, and French; in

the United States the share is slightly lower – from 40 to 45 percent. In Greece, on the other hand, 63 percent are on Russia's side. No longer afraid of Russia, the West looks at it as a backward, criminal and corrupt country; it is not free and is especially rude when dealing with neighbors. The political communities in the West are allergic to any manifestations of respect for the interests of Russia and equal cooperation with it.

Trade and economic cooperation between Russia and the West is not smooth either. Exhaustive negotiations for WTO membership for Russia took sixteen years. Now Russia is already in WTO, but the European partners still disagree with it over quality of goods and quality control, prices, customs taxes, ecological standards, etc. Russia is not ready, and is not invited, to join the European Union. Russian businessmen often complain about discrimination on European markets, while their Western colleagues, dissatisfied with the investment climate in Russia, are still hesitant to come to Russia with serious money.

Economic problems are coupled with social concerns: Europe is afraid of a flow of corruption and crime from Russia and trafficking of drugs and illegal migrants from the East across the Russian territory. This explains the strict visa regime for the Russian citizens.

Trade and economic cooperation with the United States is at the lowest possible level which does nothing good to the relationships between the two countries in other spheres. Here is a different example: the military, political and ideological disagreements apart, America and China are closely interconnected in the sphere of economy. Chinese Vice-Premier Wang Yang put it in a nutshell: "We cannot go for divorce like Wendi Deng and Rupert Murdoch have done. It would be too big a price to pay."

### **There Is Always Hope**

THE SITUATION, however, is not hopeless; a broad range of factors offer good chances to develop, widen and deepen cooperation between Russia and the Western world.

In the long-term perspective, deepening globalization is one of such factors: the majority of the former communist countries have switched to the market economy and integrated into the worldwide economic context. Those of the communist regimes which prefer to keep away from the market are, nevertheless, competing for foreign investments and high technologies, a tendency that has already liberalized the international eco-

conomic ties and intensified cooperation among national economies. Capital is growing more and more international; transnational corporations control over one-third of assets of all private companies. Globalization is whipped up by the revolution in the means of transportation and communication and in micro-electronics and by the mounting threats (terrorism, proliferation of WMD, organized crime, drugs, famine, illnesses, illiteracy, poverty, technogenic catastrophes, etc.) which demand concerted efforts of all nations. The United States and its partners cannot cope with these threats single-handedly in the same way as Russia which also needs cooperation with the West.

Russia and the West have a vast common agenda which includes the most urgent political issues. Involved in geopolitical rivalry and mini-arms race neither Moscow nor the Western powers have any reasons to maintain confrontation let alone fight each other. No wonder politicians from both sides admit that today the danger of an armed conflict in Europe is lower than at any time in the past. This means that the excessive money poured into the arms race is wasted; it could have been used to address social and economic problems and to defuse the real and mounting security threats.

Riots and interstate conflicts are raging in the Middle East and North Africa with no settlement or harmonization in sight. The region immersed in boiling passions will be producing crowds of refugees, religious extremism and terrorism for many decades to come, the conflicts spreading far and wide to other areas and regions.

Afghanistan, another volcano of passions, threatens Pakistan, the Central Asian states and Xinjiang in China. If the Taliban recaptures power (which cannot be excluded) the threats will multiply; the wave of fire will reach Russia, a polyethnic country with the chronically turbulent Caucasus. Today, the echo of Afghan troubles is clearly heard in Europe and the United States.

There is another seat of potential turbulence in the APR where China and the United States, as well as China and Japan, are being drawn into all sorts of disagreements; one of them, over the islands in the East China and South China seas, has already reached dangerous heights; the Taiwan problem is as alive as ever. Arms race and nuclear arms race in particular are gaining momentum. Also, none of the APR countries, including the rapidly developing China, are immune to domestic troubles.

This dynamic or, rather turbulent, landscape shapes the background against which Russia's security concerns in the East are mounting: it has

neither desire nor adequate potential to join the arms race in the APR which means that in this respect it will be lagging behind the region's leaders. The social and economic gap between Russia's eastern regions and its neighbors is steadily widening which means that sooner or later one of them might covet the vast and undeveloped chunks of Russian territory.

Despite the numerous and persisting problems Russia and the West can move further in trade and economic cooperation the potential of which has not been exhausted. In the post-Soviet years, Europe has already outstripped all other regions where the total trade turnover with Russia is concerned. European investments in Russia's economy and Europe's cooperation with Russia in science and technology are growing; the same can be said about interregional contacts; economic legislation and technological standards are getting closer. In the near future, however, Russia will need even more Western technologies, investments and commodities; without them an efficient market economy is impossible. Europe needs Russian energy fuels and the promising Russian market; many European countries regard Russian tourists and capitals as another asset. The scope of Russia's economy promises also some invigoration of its trade with the United States.

The ideological gap between Moscow and the Western capitals is not as deep as it looks: Russia's social model is not antagonistic to the West. The leaders of Russia are steering the country toward a democratic state with open economy; there are no alternatives: too many important factors keep Russia on the chosen road.

First, these are the lessons of the past and the pernicious effects of totalitarian regimes of the 20th century of which the present generations are fully aware. Second, the democratic principles universally accepted and registered in the UN Charter and other important documents. Third, the rising cultural level of the broadest masses: people who not only know how to read and write but have learned to appreciate their rights and freedoms will insist on democratization; modern economy can develop only in a democratic society. Indeed, totalitarian regimes stifle the desire to work, dampen initiative and prevent a free movement of ideas and people. In the Soviet Union, people could not start their own businesses, produce and sell goods or travel. They needed special permissions to go abroad, to read foreign books or to buy foreign commodities; technological innovations were regarded as security hazards.

Not infrequently the "four Asian tigers" (South Korea, Taiwan,

Singapore, and Hong Kong) and the “gigantic Asian tiger” (China) are cited as examples of economic progress in authoritarian countries. This is not quite correct. For many centuries, these societies had remained extremely backward; having armed themselves with liberal economic ideas they started moving higher. At a certain level of economic development, authoritarian regimes became a hindrance to the market economy and a much stronger middle class. Under pressure, some of them retreated on their own free will; in other countries, this process built up tension and caused minor earthquakes. China, the gigantic Asian tiger, has not yet reached the line beyond which large-scale democratization is inevitable. It is still travelling along this road.

In Russia, democratization will take much more time because of its previous experience, its size, its multi-ethnic and multi-confessional population, the unequal development of productive forces, etc. The West is gradually accepting this as inevitable.

I have already written that different cultural stereotypes interfere with mutual understanding between Russia and the West yet do not prevent Russians from enjoying trips to the West; they buy houses and educate their children in the West; they like Western pop stars; they root for soccer stars from NATO countries. Russians have developed a taste for Karlovy Vary even though the Czech Republic is one of the most active NATO members; in Britain, practically half of the historical castles belong to Russian oligarchs; Russians have become connoisseurs of French vines, perfumes and cheeses, Neapolitan melodies and Milanese fashions; they love hospitable Spain and well-organized and hard-working Germany. Dutch football coaches and Dutch tulips are beyond competition; Bulgarians are still brothers; religious and cultural ties with Greece which go back into history of both countries are still cherished while Turkish resorts look much more preferable than Sochi.

The United States, much less popular than the other NATO countries, has already lured hundreds of thousands of Russian citizens – hockey stars, computer gurus, composers, businessmen, singers, doctors, lawyers, cooks, political scientists, and journalists. Hollywood films head the popularity lists in cinema and on TV across Russia. Russia buys vitally important commodities from the United States and other Western countries; this means that Russia and Russians need these countries.

Why therefore does Russia treat the West as a friend and a rival? Why does it love and hate the West at one and the same time? There are several answers to these questions: the Cold War inertia; the wounded pride



of the Great Power enfeebled militarily and politically; the consistently widening social-economic gap between Russia and the developed countries; civilizational disparity and the West which does not trust Russia and treats it with disdain.

It has become a banality to talk about the civilizational confrontation between the West and the East; the Catholic-Protestant German-Romanic heirs to the Western Roman Empire and the Orthodox East Slavic heirs to the Byzantine tradition. It is argued that the Eastern campaigns of Napoleon and Hitler confirm the anti-Russian sentiments of the West. Those who say this prefer to ignore the fact that their “brothers in civilization” were the first victims which joined forces with Russia to defeat the aggressors. In World War I, likewise, Europe was not divided along the West-East line.

There is another very popular delusion: the West is annoyed with Russia’s might. Everybody knows that weak states are often annoyed with stronger ones; everybody knows that Europe is apprehensive of the rising might of Germany; that Britain and France, two European “whales,” were not overjoyed with the reunification of Germany and that today they are jealous of its successes. Europeans, and not only they, are irritated with America’s Great Power arrogance; in Asia, many countries are not happy with Japan, an economic superpower, and the rapidly mounting aggregate might of China. Less “muscular” neighbors look askance at strengthening India.

Neither Germany, nor other giants panic and become hostile to the rest of the world. The rest of the world, in its turn, does not plot against them. The giants and envious ill-wishers are living side by side; they cooperate and compete. Russians should finally admit that inter-state rivalry is a constant of our civilization which will survive at least in the near future; it should not cause panic let alone suicidal attempts.

Mounting problems both inside the West and outside it should push the West closer to Russia. Today, the American strategists have recognized that the international system is moving toward multi-polarity and that the world is witnessing “the diffusion of power among countries” and redistribution of wealth and economic might from the West to the East: “Megatrends.... largely reversing the historic rise of the West since 1750 and restoring Asia’s weight in the global economy and world politics. In a tectonic shift, by 2030, Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power, based upon GDP, population size, military spending, and technological investment. China alone will

probably have the largest economy, surpassing that of the United States, a few years before 2030.”

Europe is being pushed into a revision of its former opinions and positions; the world financial crisis caused contradictions inside the European Union. The Germans suspect that Greece, Cyprus, Italy and other “weaklings and lazybones” intend to live at their expense, while the “weaklings and lazybones” look at Germany as an “exploiter and blood-sucker.” Unsurprisingly, social problems have stirred up disagreements inside the Union: the north which is doing better than the rest protests against the flow of migrants from the Third World and also from the less lucky EU members.

Political inequality in the EU and the leaders, Germany in the first place, willing to impose their decisions on other governments cause protests. Brussels is under critical fire; the EU members are less eager to follow the instructions from the center; they are even less willing to transfer new powers to it. Practically everywhere across the EU nationalism is on the rise in the spiritual sphere; people are determined to protect their own traditions, language, faith, and culture. The memory of old conflicts and insults returns; there is no unanimity among the EU members in what they think about each other and the rest of the world. This is true of their ideas about Russia.

In the far from simple multipolar world, Russia’s trump cards (military might and geography among them) make it objectively a partner of the West; moreover, Russia’s importance to the West is steadily increasing. Its territory is vast and it is advantageously situated in the heart of contemporary civilization spreading across Europe and Asia. This means that the Russian Federation is inevitably involved in all developments in Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Far East; it has accumulated huge political potential; it is a permanent member of the UN SC with the right of veto. Moscow is indispensable when it comes to settling important international problems.

Russia’s unique resource potential is another component of its greatness. It is a treasure trove of resources in immediate closeness to the fast growing and capacious markets. There is an opinion that some time in future its natural riches (from gas and water to gold and timber) will make the Russian Federation a pivot of world development. On the other hand, Russia is a capacious market for high technologies and consumer goods. Its intellectual potential is another trump card: its current problems notwithstanding, science in Russia remains at the forefront of scientific quest.

Significantly, China, India, Brazil and tens of other big and small states (including those which had no friendly feelings for the Soviet Union at the best of times) hail Russia's diplomatic activity. Moscow stabilizes the vast post-Soviet space which otherwise would have been plunged in chaos. None of the former Soviet republics, probably with an exception of the Baltic states, can fit into different contexts: economic interdependence, mixed populations, cultural traditions and security considerations push them to Russia.

### **Let's Remain Realistic**

I HAVE DESCRIBED above the negative and positive factors responsible for the very contradictory nature of the relationships between Russia and the West; their future is still unclear. We all want the positive factors to prevail yet euphoria is premature and should be better avoided. A sober approach is strongly advised.

Indeed, the world, still divided into rivaling nation states which are building up their military might, is not free from the threat of force or even the use of force.

Why can't the states be peaceful? In the 5th century BC, Chinese philosopher Shang Yang wrote about war as a means of dominating and rallying people, strengthening power and enriching the state. "If the country is strong and a war is not waged, the poison will be carried into the territory," wrote he, "and the parasitic functions will arise." People rally around the ruler at the time of war. In the 21st century, that is 2500 years later, American political scientist Samuel Huntington wrote: "So long as Americans see their nation endangered, they are likely to have a high sense of identity with it, if their perception of threat fades, other identities could again take precedence over national identity."

Politicians, likewise, are not alien to a temptation to exploit external threats to strengthen the state and their personal power. It is commonly believed that totalitarian and authoritarian regimes rely on aggression to suppress protest sentiments. Democratic states have their own reasons to fan aggression. The opposition invariably puts on the table the trump card of national security; the government is accused of weakness and cowardice in the face of external threats. In the United States, for example, the Republicans hurl accusations at the president for his "undiscriminating concessions" to Russia. In fact, a Republican president in the White House would have been forced to follow more or less the same course.

Too frequently foreign policy is sacrificed to the game played on the fields of domestic policies. In Japan and India, the unsettled territorial issues are used to criticize the governments; in Italy, France and Germany, this role belongs to “aliens from other civilizations.” The military-industrial complexes which badly need enemies to justify their existence are especially active in fanning hysterics.

Hegemonic ambitions of states fed by their newly acquired might and the theories which justified unbridled expansion push them to aggression. Whether religious or atheist, Communist or Nazi, authoritarian or democratic, any state with newly found Great Power ambitions strove to realize them in practice.

Since time immemorial, the Chinese have been looking at their country as the Middle (Central) Kingdom which ruled the Celestial Empire with the Mandate of Heaven. Rome never doubted that it, too, had a mandate to rule other peoples for their own good. The Arabs who in the 7th century closed ranks under the banner of Islam remained assured that their aggressive wars were blessed by Allah and were therefore beneficial for all. The French united into a strong centralized state imagined that as the nation chosen by God and Fate they had to spread civilization far and wide.

The British, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese colonialists moved to other continents with similar ideas. Japan which had become stronger in the latter half of the 19th century boldly invaded other countries to fulfill its self-imposed duty to liberate the Asian peoples from the “white barbarians” and to teach them “higher morals and culture.”

The Germans who in 1871 united their principalities into an empire became a different nation. In 1870, Italians had restored their united state; in 1936, Mussolini having proclaimed Italy a new Roman Empire moved forward to capture lands in Europe and Africa. The Russian Empire carried the Slavophile and Orthodox banners to realize its expansionist designs; the Bolsheviks who came after the czars headed for a worldwide proletarian revolution.

The turn of the Americans came with the downfall of the Communist bloc: absolutely convinced that their all-triumphant ideology should be brought to all corners of the world they started building up Pax Americana. The failed “crusades” to Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and the financial and economic crisis have somewhat dampened the Great Power fervor. It remains to be seen for how long. There is another question: How will China use its rapidly swelling economic and military might?

Economies may also breed conflicts; today, rivalry for control over the sources of energy fuels and the routes along which they reach the markets has become highly dangerous and hard to cope with.

Ideological contradictions (which remained shelved for a couple of decades) might regain their former consequence. In united Germany, former citizens of the GDR look back into the past and speak with nostalgia about the lost social privileges and their status of first-rank citizens. Even in Western Europe which is more or less coping with the financial and economic crisis pessimists dusted the volumes of Karl Marx to learn more about his vehement criticism of capitalism. In the citadel of free market, people sent to the White House Barack Obama suspected of socialist biases.

Today, even the most successful states have developed an interest in left ideas; in this context a similar interest displayed by the rest of the world should not surprise. There is a state that might become the guiding star for the weak and the poor. This is China; if it continues building up its aggregate might under the socialist banners while deliberately posing as a Third World country, sooner or later it will become an ideal to be emulated.

The current state and trends of international relations bring to mind Thucydides who said that in the world where there was no central power “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” History has confirmed this.

The Ancient Greek historian looked for the roots of the conflict which remained aflame in Ancient Greece for a long time not in the different political and ideological systems of Athens and Sparta, not in mutual insults and faux pas of their leaders, even though these factors were also present. He went straight to the heart of the matter: “It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this inspired in Sparta that made war inevitable.”

It was the changed balance of power and the fear of it which triggered the war. Afraid of losing its domination in the Hellenic world Sparta increased its military might and mobilized new allies. Athens responded in kind: it strengthened its military-political positions. The result was painfully familiar: arms race, mutual containment, military alliances, diplomatic ruses, strategic theories, talks about the state’s honor and image, an analysis of the enemy’s strong and weak sides, and a drive toward a favorable balance of power. It all ended in a war which went on and on for over quarter of a century.

The world has already seen this many times. As soon as the leaders of

any state imagine that the balance of power was tipped in favor of a traditional opponent they hasten to restore it, their hectic activities stirring up fears in the opposite camp. What Thucydides said about Athens and Sparta fully applies to Britain and France in the 17th and 18th centuries; to Napoleon and the rest of Europe in the early 19th century, Germany and Great Britain after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871, the Soviet Union and the United States in the 1950s-1980s. In all these cases it was fear of the changing balance of power which triggered arms race and confrontation.

The United States capitalized on the downfall of the Soviet Union and the changed balance of power to expand its sphere of influence only to be opposed by Russia and China. Their opposition will become stronger together with their strengthening potentials which will increase fear on the other side. When I write fear I do not mean human fear but a category of international relations.

Being optimistic is great but let us remain realistic.

*Key words:* Russia, the West, the U.S., Europe, Westernizers, Slavophiles, a centuries-long history of world politics, geopolitical rivalry, common threats.