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On March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill delivered the Fulton speech, which was one of the most symbolic events of the Cold War.

Two weeks earlier George Kennan's famous "long wire" was received in Washington, the Iranian and Turkish crises were developing in parallel, the Truman doctrine, the Marshall plan and much else were shortly to be announced. But it was the speech by the former British Prime Minister that is generally thought to have introduced clarity into the development of events that had been brewing and eventually came to be named "the Cold War". It provided the most succinct definition of the new paradigm of international relations. The date is so close to another date, May 9, 1945, that they cannot be analyzed without close interconnection, although it is obvious that they symbolize two totally different eras -- different in content, the view of the world and the very nature of international relations, different in terms of their consequences for European and world politics.

It would seem that now, 60 years on, when even the "post-Cold War period" has acquired a history of its own, it is possible to assess that turning point in world development with a measure of objectivity, if not with total disinterest. But the sources of the Cold War still remain obscure in many ways. That is why it is necessary to sort out what had happened then, how the pragmatic policy that united the anti-Hitler allies came to be replaced with a different policy, a policy of confrontation based on ideas and principles that could not but be divisive.

I am convinced that too much in present-day international life calls for a critical review of the history of the Cold War, and a renunciation of the apologia of that complicated phenomenon of international life. The world is again at a turning point. And the conclusions we draw will go a long way to determine the future of the planet, and each individual country, including Russia. One cannot replay history, but one can figure it out in order to try not to repeat mistakes. If a sharp transition from allied policy to ideological confrontation was inevitable and justified, then such an interpretation of history will shore up similar approaches to problems in our times. If the Cold War was an aberration in the development of international relations, that logic can and must be reversed in the politics of today.

The Cold War was essentially about rivalry of the two systems led by the USSR and the US, which had not only a political-ideological, but also a social-economic and other dimensions. The origin of the Cold War is not confined to the scheme prevalent in Western countries: the USSR renounced cooperation with the Western allies and reverted to "communist expansion" and the West responded to the challenge of the Soviet threat. The slide toward the Cold War, as confirmed by archive documents and studies by objective historians, was at least a two-way process for which the US and Britain bore much of the blame. The choice they made, based on premises that for the most part have not been justified, in reality initiated the creation of a new bipolar world order.

The policy of the USSR throughout the second half of the 1940s, for all its toughness, was in many ways defensive and in its own way had a consistent and predictable character. Mindful of the lessons of the Great Patriotic War, it was aimed at creating a protective belt of friendly states along the western borders, gaining access to the World Ocean and ensuring maximum defense depth all along the perimeter. Likewise, one should not forget that the Soviet Union, which had made the decisive contribution to victory over Nazi Germany, was stretched to the limit at the end of the war. Moscow was physically unable to come up with any initiative of confrontation with yesterday's anti-Hitler allies.

During the war, the US and Britain showed a tolerant attitude to the geopolitical claims of the USSR, recognized the legitimacy of its security interests and adhered to the course of integrating the USSR into the Western community. The Victory dramatically changed the attitude of the Allies to the Soviet security interests.

Joint occupation of German territory should have remained a unifying element for the anti-Hitler coalition. But it did not happen. Ideology came into play. Otherwise, it is hard to explain the Anglo-American slogan of "containing" the Soviet Union, a strategy that envisaged not only blocking "Moscow's expansion", but breaking up the Soviet system as the ultimate goal of the Cold War.

The factor of ideology, of course, could not be content with foreign policy alone. The course for isolating and wearing down the USSR through arms race, on which the West embarked, visited severe hardship on the Soviet people and extended the existence of the Stalinist system. The conditions of a "hostile encirclement" and a constant threat to the country's security provided a justification for total control of the authorities over society and economic inefficiency of the system. The Cold War with its militarization and conformism exacted a stiff price from the American people, distorting national priorities and the standards of democracy for a long period for the sake of countering an "external threat". Local conflicts during the Cold War carried away millions of human lives.

Soviet-American rivalry for influencing the world was apparently inevitable, but it could have assumed other, less confrontational and less dangerous forms. Especially since the West had a clear edge over the USSR in the whole spectrum of military, economic, scientific-technical and other components of power, and hence, greater freedom of choice, and it could afford a far more moderate policy with regard to the USSR. Perhaps, Churchill's speech had a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy about it: the Soviet Union could not threaten the West at the time, but as the Cold War unfolded, it acquired such a potential. Instead of political settlement of differences, as the main architect of the "containment" strategy, George Kennan later admitted, what was expected from the Soviet Union was unconditional

capitulation, but it was too strong to accept it.

"After the Second World War, we perceived Stalin's Russia as an expansionist and aggressive force and we replied in kind, wrote Henry Kissinger. We recognize that thereby we probably gave the Soviet side the impression that we were trying to force the USSR into a permanently losing position. We were not sufficiently well aware that the security needs of a continental power differ substantially from the needs of a power surrounded by oceans on all sides, as ours. Our history of absence of foreign invasions from 1812 made us impervious to the problems of the country that had repeatedly been invaded." Completing the picture was demonization of the rival and a black-and-white vision of the world.

One cannot but note the obvious haste of the Anglo-American decisions to unleash the Cold War. These decisions, so fundamental for the destinies of the world, were taken within a very narrow circle of two powers and on a very shaky basis that proved to be a short-lived factor, namely, the monopoly on nuclear weapons. I believe that it is not only in hindsight that such an approach can be described as irresponsible. All the subsequent developments, the vicissitudes of geopolitical rivalry and the nuclear arms race, when the USSR and the US alternately gained the lead, provide ample grounds for such an assessment. But eventually the world passed on to detente, which marked, in effect, the West's recognition that there was no alternative to a policy of engaging the Soviet Union. A policy, let me note, which may have been chosen back in 1945-1946.

It appears that a crucial test for the policy of engagement was the issue of continued mutually beneficial trade, economic and financial ties between the US and the USSR in the post-war period. Moscow counted on it very much. The economy could have exerted a stabilizing impact on political relations. By putting forward a range of political conditions, the US effectively renounced negotiations on Soviet proposals of credits that could have helped find a positive joint agenda.

Although Moscow did not entertain particular illusions, it still hoped that confrontation would not acquire such a total character. In the face of the policy pursued by the allies, Moscow had no option but to bow to the inevitable, albeit for its own ideological reasons.

History does not tolerate the subjunctive mood. But it is hard not to assume that the USSR, which had paid such a horrible price for the common victory whose fruits, though to varying degrees, were used by everyone, was ready to play by the rules and make compromises. Moscow provided considerable evidence for that. This is also borne out by the sequence of events, and their development in Asia in fact depended on the US choice that was prompted by ideological motives. The price of cooperation may well have been a more moderate policy of Moscow with regard to Central and East European countries. But a sense of confrontation and pressure from all directions, lack of reciprocity and incentives for coming to an agreement ruled out such an option.

I see the reluctance to draw conclusions from the experience of the Cold War and honestly and critically analyze its consequences as a manifestation of dangerous intellectual and psychological inertia that poses a real threat to international relations in our times. It is not about answering the seemingly trivial question as to who won and who lost the Cold War. The main thing is that everyone gained from its end because everyone has been freed from its shackles.

The policy of the Cold War shackled the UN by becoming a virtual alternative to genuinely multilateral diplomacy. The discipline of blocs, political expediency, and the interests of saving ideological "face" prevailed. I am convinced that it is precisely now, after the end of the Cold War, that the Organization can fully reveal its potential. To be sure, it needs to be comprehensively adapted to the modern conditions, which is the aim of the unanimously adopted decisions of the 2005 summit. A solid basis for this exists, including the bedrock principles of the UN Charter. And if the UN managed to serve the interests of the world community in the worst of times, it is even more capable of doing it effectively today, given the good will of all the states.

Today, nobody needs to be persuaded that the world is faced with a real threat of a chasm between civilizations. It is provoked by terrorists, but not only by them. Playing into their hands are extremists on the other side, as is more than convincingly demonstrated by the "cartoon crisis", and the ideological approaches to international problems as a whole. Direct parallels with the experience of the "fight against communism", slogans that smack of Islamophobia, and relapses into the policy of double standards in the field of democratic development and defense of human rights leave little room for any other interpretations.

The logic of the ideological approach to international affairs is diametrically opposed to the imperatives of globalization. Not only the opportunities, but the threats are becoming global. This suggests only one conclusion: the new challenges and threats to security and sustainable development can only be effectively opposed together, through collective efforts of the whole international community. The fact that security and prosperity are indivisible gives us no sensible alternative. In turn, it requires a common denominator to enable us to distinguish practical policies based on legitimate interests of states and a commitment to values whose interpretations inevitably differ.

The question of the sources and meaning of the Cold War is too important for us to be content with a "vague" understanding. There must be a maximum of clarity here. And one should not shut down the archives: the remaining issues cannot be cleared up without authentic documents. Russia is ready for joint research on a balanced basis, without a selective approach to history (and such attempts were made at the dawn of the Cold War also), its events, facts and phenomena. We call on our international partners, above all former allies in the anti-Hitler coalition, to exercise this approach.

New conditions dictate a new formula of leadership in the modern world. Russia is convinced that the choice should be made in favor of responsible leadership in order to form common approaches with all the leading powers. Today it is possible: the international community has the political will for this. Our common overarching task should be to strengthen multilateral, collective principles of world policy.

The Cold War offers lessons that are common for all of us. They are the disastrous nature of the complex of infallibility and the wish to bestow happiness on other peoples against their will, the danger of militarization of international relations and the temptation to rely on military methods of solving problems instead of settling them by political and diplomatic means.

Russia, having resolutely stepped out of the Cold War, ceased to be an ideological, imperial state. The liberation of Russian forces and resources can be only fruitful for the interests of

Europe and the whole world. Russia has acquired a freedom to behave in accordance with its historical mission, that is, to be itself and hence, to make its full contribution to the common cause of maintaining international stability and harmony between civilizations at the critical stage of the formation of a new architecture of international relations.

The current situation in the world, for all its challenges, differs radically from the Cold War period. In spite of the relapses into old approaches, there is still a growing awareness of the common tasks facing all the countries. Russia, the US and other leading states are interacting closely on a broad range of problems, including the fight against terrorism and the spread of WMD, in bilateral and multilateral formats, including at the UN Security Council, the G8 and the Russia-NATO Council. Diverse trade and economic and investment links are developing between us, thus laying an objective foundation of inter-dependence and mutual interest that were so lacking before. Together we are tackling the problems of global energy security, protecting people's health from epidemics and providing access to modern education. Joint understanding of our common past will only strengthen mutual understanding and trust and enable us to finally overcome the legacy of the Cold War in world politics.