

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

INFORMATION AND PRESS DEPARTMENT



32/34 Smolenskaya-Sennaya pl., 119200, Moscow G-200; tel.: (095) 244 4119, fax: 244 4112  
e-mail: dip@mid.ru, web-address: www.mid.ru

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**'Russia in Global Politics' Article of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, Published in the Newspaper Moskovkiye Novosti, March 3, 2006**

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The heading of the article reproduces the title of the journal, published by the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. As in the journal's case, it is not fortuitous, being the theme that continues to agitate the minds in Russia itself and beyond. Perhaps in recent months even more than previously. For which the reasons do exist. The international situation continues evolving, and along with it, the role of Russia in global politics too. Moreover, it can be judged that the process of crystallization in world politics has markedly intensified. Certain realities have now shown up clearly that have a determinant significance for the emerging new architecture of international relations, to which belongs the significance of the Russian factor in the main flow of international life. This raises a multitude of questions. To some of them I will try to give an answer. The starting point of Russia's analysis of the international situation is the statement of the fact that in recent years events have been developing in the mainstream of our ideas and assessments - towards democratic multipolarity. Inter alia, such a phenomenon as the acquisition by globalization of an "Asian face," and the expanding practice of striking up "strategic dialogues" is indicative of this. Under today's conditions, the underlying principles of our foreign policy - pragmatism, multivectorness, a consistent, but without sliding to confrontation, promotion of national interests - have been proven right. Having been formulated in the first year of Vladimir Putin's presidency, they are gaining ever wider currency in the foreign policy practice of other states, including leading powers in the world.

Contemporary international relations are difficult to grasp, unless you consider that they are in transition, which by definition precludes any status quo (excepting the tenets of international law). But one gathers that certain of our partners would like to secure their dominance in any new world order. I am convinced that such an approach is antihistoric, simply a utopia and is predicated on one of the myths, of which a multitude arose immediately after the end of the Cold War, including that of "victors and vanquished." The "winners" syndrome is not merely a psychological problem. It ever more often manifests itself in practical matters of world politics, when the proposed methods to tackle them do not rest on an objective analysis of the situation, not on the general principles of international law, but on "political expediency" in their own understanding. In accordance with such logic it turns out, for example, that independence can be sought for one former autonomy while demanding that it be denied to others.

Russia cannot cooperate on the basis of such a view on the world. Our criteria for cooperation in international affairs are uniform for all of our partners, including the CIS nations, China and India, the US and Europe and other leading states of the world. They are complete equality and mutual engagement from the very beginning, that is the joint analysis of threats, the joint elaboration of decisions and also their joint implementation.

Evidently it has to be clearly said that Russia from its past history well remembers the infatuation with obsessive ideas of changing the world and cannot identify itself with the similar projects now being put forward, whatever they are called - the promotion of freedom and democracy everywhere or "transformational diplomacy." The world is undergoing a profound transformation, and an ever greater number of countries are looking for their own ways to join the space of democracy, but to try to speed up this process would be irresponsible. We are making a choice in favor of the adaptation of our foreign policy aspirations, as well as of our internal development, to the conditions of globalization, which already engenders too many real problems to artificially create new ones. I think that this is one of the basic distinctions between the foreign policy philosophy of Moscow and the approaches of some Western capitals.

The stand of "constructive uncertainty" on differences of such a cardinal nature is hardly appropriate, particularly in view of the current landslide development of events, creating a force majeure in global politics. Under these conditions, as never before, maximum responsibility and far-sightedness are needed in responding to crises and conflict situations. I am convinced that there is no reasonable alternative to their resolution by politico-diplomatic methods.

One cannot but note that the overwhelming bulk of events is occurring in the Near and Middle East and has -whether we like it or not - an intercivilizational dimension. This concerns tension in Middle East settlement on account of the advent of Hamas to power in the Palestinian National Authority as a result of democratic elections. It concerns also the continuing serious problems in Iraq and Afghanistan, the exacerbation of the situation around Syria and the intra-Lebanese conditions, and the current maelstrom of attention about Iran's nuclear program. Do events need to be speeded any further? Any settlement (if that's what we're striving for) is only possible on the conditions of engagement rather than isolation of the respective states, regimes or political forces, which, naturally, presupposes also criticism of what one dislikes in them. There's only one choice: either further tension buildup towards a "conflict of civilizations," or the achievement of a compromise, which is going to require of all the international factors a renunciation of outdated prejudices and oversimplified unilateralist world views that in no way square with the emerging reality of multilaterality as an optimal method of conducting world affairs.

Russia by virtue of its history, geography and culture and the multinational and multifaith character of Russian society cannot take anybody's side in a global intercivilizational conflict being unleashed as a result of, among other things, extremist manifestations, provocations and violations of international humanitarian law. Neither does Russia intend to take the position of a detached onlooker. The only admissible approach for us is to pursue an enterprising foreign policy strategy, directed at the maintenance of international stability and the reduction of tension for the sake of reaching lasting negotiated settlement options acceptable to all. Russia is ready to play that role, one of a "bridge" - it is this kind of cultural and civilizational bridge that our country has been practically throughout its

existence.

We can be part of efforts for achieving a compromise, which always requires time and patience, but cannot join diktat and ultimatums, which would drive us all into a dead-end. In this direction go our proposals for the internationalization of the provision of nuclear fuel cycle services, the initiatives to find solutions around the nuclear program of Iran, and our contacts with Hamas, which are designed to help lead this organization toward acceptance of the conditions of the Quartet of international mediators. Britain's experience in Northern Ireland suggests that this won't be an easy task, but a good beginning is half the battle. In this case one should be fully aware that any compromises are solely possible in a legal field, without detriment to international security and with absolute respect for obligations under international agreements, including the regimes for the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Russia will not let anybody set it at loggerheads with the Islamic world, a point repeatedly made by President Putin. Speaking at the recent credentials delivery ceremony, the President of Russia said that "in dealing with any, even the most acute issues in world politics we invariably and consistently adhere to a line on resolving them by politico-diplomatic methods and means, on searching for compromises and agreement."

Russia cannot and will not play the role of a "frontline state" in a new "cold war" - now among civilizations. Nor is Europe likely to be ready for this role, where they have not yet fully realized that they have also become a part of the Islamic world.

Russia cannot be on the side of a narrow, blindfolded view of things, alien to a creative search for a compromise as the main product of the art of the possible and predicated on the notorious postulates among us like "I cannot waive principles " or "those who are not with us are against us." With the end of the Cold War dogmatism and ideologized approaches to the issues of international life lost their attractiveness. We cannot identify ourselves with a strategy at the core of which lies somebody's striving to uphold their prestige. History offers a mass of confirmations that madness can be collective. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century Russia allowed itself to be drawn into the confrontationist logic of European politics that led to the tragedy of the First World War and a national catastrophe for Russia itself. The whole experience of the 20th century shows that it is a sacred duty of each state to think for itself, not entrust its destiny to an uncontrolled development of events. The more so the foreign policy of our country cannot be hostage to electoral cycles in other countries.

The increased significance of the energy factor in global politics is on the mind of many. Those who have got used to thinking in terms of geopolitics even assume that such development changes the equation formula of strategic stability, reducing the specific weight of nuclear deterrence. Anyway, all agree with the validity of Russia's choice of the theme of energy security as a priority of Moscow's G8 Presidency. It is about the responsible international leadership of our country at a crucial stage in the development of the global situation. At the same time it is obvious that any sustained development of the energy sector of Russia excludes for the foreseeable future the possibility of factoring Near and Middle East resources out in a global energy balance. So that the imperatives of global energy policy dictate the need for a moderate and respectful approach towards any problems of this region, including its social, economic and political modernization. In the final analysis it is necessary to choose between world energy stability and the policy of "controlled

destabilization" and "transformationism," whoever this may concern.

The energy theme is urgent in the CIS space too. Changes occurring here clear politics of the past legacy and fit well into the logic of consensus that has become a general unifying element for a globalizing world since the end of the Cold War - notably, consensus that there is no alternative to democracy and market as fundamental bases of social development. Providing, of course, that the pace and forms of implementation of the appropriate change must be the function of the specific conditions in each country taken separately.

It is strange that not everybody wants to see that market prices for gas within the CIS mean the end of the "old, nostalgic" Commonwealth and the commencement in the post-Soviet space of a realistic, mutually beneficial policy, when all countries of this region are being viewed as truly sovereign. We urge our international partners to take an identical approach. I can well believe that those do not want to notice the new quality of the situation in the Commonwealth who counted on "restraining" Russia in global politics through its getting stuck in a viscous confrontation within the CIS space. The market reaction, including that to the liberalization of Gazprom shares, is seen by us as a vote of confidence in our actions by business, which seems to have got tired of the politicization of energy issues.

Fifteen years ago Russia gained freedom and a right to look at things, including those in international affairs, broadly, with an unblindfolded eye. Those who are professionally concerned with the study of Russia (and not only "Sovietology") and work out a policy towards it cannot but see that it would be naive to expect of us a readiness to be content in the world with the role of one being led. We are ready, moreover - we do want to play in the team, be open for well-argued debates, for persuasion. But where there is a shortage of far-sighted leadership, Russia will not shrink away from responsibility, will offer its own analysis of the situation, its own vision of possible solutions, acting, of course, within the framework of multilateral diplomacy and collective efforts. Many of our partners expect this from us, and we have no right to deceive their expectations, especially when there's so much at stake for the entire world community.

We are far from trying to impose our approaches on whomsoever. But it has to be realized that Russian authority, like authority in any democratic country, is accountable primarily to its own people and has to defend their interests. The present foreign policy course of the Russian leadership - for all the critical discussions of its particular aspects (as it should be in a democratic society) - enjoys broad support in the country. We regard this as one of the bases of the social consensus that has taken shape in our country - the key achievement of Russia's development in recent years.

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