

# Foreign Minister Lavrov: 'Russia in Global Politics'

*Moskovskiye Novosti (Moscow News), a weekly Russian newspaper, on March 3, 2006 published this article by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. An unofficial translation issued by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is published here. Subheads have been added.*

The heading of the article reproduces the title of a journal published by the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. As with the journal, the title is no accident; it is this topic that continues to disturb minds, both in Russia itself, and beyond its borders—perhaps more so in the last few months than before. And for good reason. The international situation continues to evolve, and with it Russia's role in global politics. Moreover, the process of crystallization in world politics has intensified noticeably. Certain realities are becoming clear, that have a defining significance for the emerging new architecture of international relations. Among them is the significance of the Russian factor in the mainstream of international life. This gives rise to a number of questions, some of which I shall attempt to answer.

The Russian analysis of the international situation begins from the assertion that in recent years, events have been developing in line with our ideas and assessments, that is, in the direction of democratic multi-polarity. Also pointing to this are phenomena like globalization's acquisition of an "Asian face," and the expanding practice of engaging in "strategic dialogues." In today's conditions, the correctness of our foreign policy's founding principles—pragmatism, multi-vectoriness, and the consistent advancement of national interests without sliding toward confrontation—has been confirmed. Formulated in the first year of Vladimir Putin's Presidency, these principles have spread more and more widely to the foreign policy practice of other states, including the world's leading powers.

Contemporary international relations are difficult to understand if one does not bear in mind that they are in a transitional state, which by definition excludes the possibility of there being any kind of status quo (other than the fundamental principles of international law). However, one does get the impression that some of our partners are trying to secure their own hegemony in any new world order. I'm convinced that an approach like this is anti-historical, an out-and-out utopia, and is based on one of the myths of which so many arose immediately after the end of the Cold War, including the myth of "victors and vanquished." The "winners" syndrome is not



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*Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov: "Russia cannot take anyone's side in the global, intercivilizational conflict that is unfolding, even if it is the result of extremist actions, provocations, and violations of international humanitarian law. However, Russia does not intend to take up a position as a detached observer."*

simply a psychological problem; it has been showing up more and more frequently in practical issues of world politics, when the methods proposed to solve them have derived not from an objective analysis of the situation, or from the general principles of international law but from "political expediency" per se. By this logic, you can apparently endeavor to win independence for one former autonomy, for example, and demand its refusal for others.

Russia cannot cooperate on the basis of this view of the world. Our criteria for cooperation are the same for all our partners, including the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] countries, China and India, the United States and Europe, and other leading world states, which means full equality and joint action from the very outset, that is, joint analysis of threats, joint elaboration of solutions, and their joint implementation.

Evidently it has to be precisely stated that Russia well remembers, from its own past history, the infatuation with obsessive ideas about changing the world, and cannot identify itself with the similar projects being put forward today, no matter what they are called—whether "the universal advancement of freedom and democracy" or "transformative diplomacy." The world is undergoing a profound transformation, and more and more countries are searching for their own ways to engage in democracy, but it would be irresponsible to force this process. We have chosen to adapt our own foreign policy aspirations, as well as our domestic development, to the conditions of globalization, which is engendering too many prob-

lems as it is, for us to be creating new ones artificially. Herein lies one of the radical differences between Moscow's foreign policy philosophy, and the approaches of certain Western capitals.

The position of "constructive indeterminacy" is scarcely appropriate when it comes to such cardinal disagreements, especially in view of the headlong development of events which are creating a force-majeur in global politics. Under these conditions, as never before, maximum responsibility and far-sightedness are needed in reacting to crises and conflict situations. I am convinced that there is no reasonable alternative to their resolution by political-diplomatic means.

## **Avoid 'Conflict of Civilizations'**

It must be noted that the majority of events are occurring in the Near and Middle East and have an inter-

civilizational dimension. This concerns the tension in the Middle East settlement ever since Hamas came to power in the Palestinian National Authority as a result of democratic elections. This also concerns the serious lasting problems in Iraq and Afghanistan, the exacerbation of the situation around Syria, the internal Lebanese situation, and the current development around Iran's nuclear program. Must events really be pushed further? Any settlement (if that's what we're striving for) is possible only on conditions not of isolation but by involving the states, regimes, and political forces concerned, which also assumes criticism of what we don't like. There is one choice: either further coercion that escalates to "a conflict between civilizations," or a compromise, which would require that all international factors reject outmoded prejudices and simplistic, one-sided views of the world, which do not mesh with the new reality of the multilateral approach as the optimal method for conducting world affairs.

By virtue of its history, geography, and culture, as well as the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional nature of its society, Russia cannot take anyone's side in the global, intercivilizational conflict that is unfolding, even if it is the result of extremist actions, provocations, and violations of international humanitarian law. Neither does Russia intend to take up a position as a detached observer. The only permissible approach for us is to implement an enterprising foreign policy strategy aimed at maintaining international stability, and reducing tension in the interests of arriving at negotiated settlements that are acceptable to everyone. Russia is prepared to

play the role of a bridge; our country has been just such a cultural-civilizational bridge throughout virtually its entire existence.

We can be a part of the efforts to reach a compromise, which always takes time and patience, but we cannot support dictates and ultimatums, which will drive us all into an impasse. This is the direction in which our proposals to internationalize services for the nuclear fuel cycle are going, as are our initiatives to search for an outcome around Iran's nuclear program, and our contacts with Hamas, which are intended to help lead this organization to accept the terms of the "Quartet" of international mediators. Great Britain's experience in Northern Ireland suggests that this is not easy to do. Compromises are possible only if they keep within the realm of legality, without damage to international security, and with unconditional respect for obligations under international agreements, including 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 a recent credentials presentation ceremony, the Russian President said that "in dealing with any, even the most acute issues in world politics, we shall unwaveringly and consistently strive to settle them by political-diplomatic methods and means, and by searching for compromises and accords."

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

### **Dump Cold War-Style Dogmatism**

Russia cannot take the side of a narrow, blindfolded view of things that is alien to a creative search for compromise as the main product of the art of the possible, and that rests on postulates, sadly famous here, such as "I cannot renounce my principles" or "Whoever is not with us is against us." Since the end of the Cold War, dogmatism and ideologized approaches to issues of international life are no longer attractive. We cannot adhere to a strategy at whose base lies someone's desire to defend his prestige. History confirms that madness can be collective. Thus, in the early twentieth century, Russia allowed itself to be drawn into the confrontational logic of European politics, which led to the tragedy of World War I, and a national catastrophe for Russia itself. The experience of the Twentieth Century demonstrates that it is every state's sacred duty to think for itself, and not to entrust its fate to events outside its control. Our country's foreign policy, especially cannot be held hostage to electoral cycles in other countries.

Many people are troubled by the mounting significance of the energy factor in global politics. Those who are used to

thinking in geopolitical categories even think that this development alters the equation for strategic stability by reducing the proportionate weight of nuclear containment. Nonetheless, everyone agrees on the soundness of Russia's choice of energy security as the priority for Moscow's chairmanship in the Group of Eight. This is a matter of our country's responsible international leadership at a critical stage in the global situation. At the same time, any consistent development of Russia's energy sector obviously excludes for the foreseeable future the possibility of taking the energy resources of the Near and Middle East out of the equation on the global energy balance-sheet. The imperatives of global energy policy dictate the need for a moderate and respectful approach to all the problems of this region, including its socio-economic and political modernization. On the larger scale, we have to choose between stability in world energy, and a policy of "controlled destabilization" and "transformation," no matter what it affects.

The energy topic is also relevant in the CIS. The changes going on here are purging policy of its legacy of the past, and falling in with the logic of consensus, which has been the universal unifying principle for the globalizing world since the end of the Cold War, and specifically, the consensus that there is no alternative to democracy and the market as the foundations for societal development, assuming, of course, that the rates and forms of the transformations' implementation are a function of the specific conditions of each individual country.

Oddly, not everyone is willing to see that market prices for natural gas within the CIS mean the end of the "old, nostalgic" Commonwealth, and the beginning in the post-Soviet dimension of realistic, mutually advantageous policy, wherein all the countries of this region are regarded as genuinely sovereign. We call on our international partners to adopt this approach as well. I admit that those who were counting on "restraining" Russia in global policy at the expense of drawing it into a sticky confrontation in the CIS have been reluctant to notice the new quality of the situation in the Commonwealth. In the market's reaction, including to the liberalization of Gazprom shares, we see a vote of confidence in our actions from business, which is apparently weary of the politicization of energy issues.

Fifteen years ago, Russia won its freedom and the right to view things broadly and without blindfolds, including in international affairs. Those who study Russia professionally (and not just Soviet studies), and are working out policy toward it, must understand that it would be naive to expect from us a readiness to be content in the world with the role of one being led. We are prepared and want to be a team player, and are open to well-argued debates, and to being convinced. However, wherever there is a blatant shortage of far-sighted leadership, Russia is not going to shy away from its responsibility, and is going to offer its own analysis of the situation,

its own vision of possible solutions, while acting, naturally, within the framework of multilateral diplomacy and collective efforts. This is what our many partners expect from us, and we have no right to cheat their expectations, especially when there is so much on the table for the entire world community.

We are far from trying to impose our approaches on anyone. But we have to be aware that the Russian government, like the government of any democratic country, is accountable first of all to its people and is obligated to defend their interests. The Russian leadership's current foreign policy course, despite all the critical discussions on various aspects of it (as one would expect in a democratic society), enjoys broad support in the country. We see in this one of the foundations for the public consensus that has taken shape here, a crucial achievement for Russia's development in the last few years.

## Sixty Years After Fulton: Lessons of the Cold War

*This article, "Sixty Years of Fulton: Lessons of the Cold War and Our Time," by Foreign Minister Lavrov, was published in the Russian daily Rossiiskaya Gazeta on March 6, 2006. An unofficial translation, issued by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is reproduced here. Subheads have been added.*

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.

### World Is at a Turning Point

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 U.S.S.R. and the U.S., which had not only political-ideological, but also social-economic and other dimensions. The origin of the Cold War is not confined to the scheme prevalent in Western countries: the U.S.S.R. 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 U.S. 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 U.S.S.R. 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 U.S. and Britain showed a tolerant attitude to the geopolitical claims of the U.S.S.R., recognized the legitimacy of its security interests, and adhered to the course of integrating the U.S.S.R. 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 re-

mained 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 U.S.S.R. through the 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.

### **Danger of Rivalry for World Influence**

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 U.S.S.R. 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 U.S.S.R. 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 U.S.S.R. 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 U.S.S.R. and the U.S. 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 could 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 U.S. and the U.S.S.R. 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 U.S. 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 U.S.S.R., 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 U.S. 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.

### **A Threat to International Relations**

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 only be 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 U.S., 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 G-8, 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.

## GENOCIDE RUSSIA AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

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