

# Changing International Architecture: Rethinking Russian-Western Relations

*Edward Kuzmin, Ambassador of the Russian Federation*

What is the political forecast for the Russian-US and Russian-EU relations? Are we at the dawn of a new international architecture where international security considerations might create stable, long-lasting partnership between former rivals?

## **Russia's choice**

Ten years ago Russia made a historic choice by embarking on the road of developing democratic statehood and a market economy. All these years my country was actively involved in international life and played a noticeable role on the world stage. Today we can firmly say: the Russian Federation has materialized as a democratic state with an independent and predictable foreign policy.

The tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup> last year in the United States of America bears dramatic evidence that the sweeping changes in all spheres of life of the modern society, generated by globalisation, may entail both positive and negative consequences for mankind. On the one hand, the danger of global nuclear confrontation has become a thing of the past, while new advances in science and technology and rapid expansion of world trade and economic relations create prerequisites for the sustainable development of all mankind. On the other hand, the gap between the most developed and the least developed countries continues to grow rapidly. Finally, the world has encountered new threats, such as aggressive separatism, organized crime and illegal drug trafficking, in addition to international terrorism.

Under these circumstances, the international community has the grand task of giving an adequate and, what is most important, a collective response to the challenges of our time. There is an urgent need to develop a joint action strategy which could make use of globalisation for a just and fair resolution of

the key problems that mankind is facing and for strengthening universal security.

September 11 has not merely shocked the planet. It has not only changed the world and reminded us of its fragility, but became a landmark event that has also made us think about the colossal responsibility that lies on all of us. As President V. Putin stressed in his interview to Wall Street Journal, it came to be understood that there are present-day threats with which no a single country can cope on its own. These are problems such as the fight against terror and the closely related task of ensuring the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, missile technologies and so on.

We believe these events and our actions as part of the international antiterrorist coalition are the beginning of a review of relations in the world as well as the beginning of the formation of new alliances based on mutual security interests. We are also convinced that just combining the efforts of states is not enough to create a new safe world. We need unanimous understanding in the non-acceptance of xenophobia and violence as well.

## **New Elba?**

People of my generation remember bright end of the Second World War, including the meeting of Russian and American soldiers at the Elba river. Joint struggle against common enemy united us, all anti-fascist forces of the whole world. And joint struggle against common threat of terrorism are uniting us together today.

We have given up a notorious Cold War motto - 'The more they lose the more we gain' and have eradicated that principle from our political vocabulary. It has to be said that, in spite of some problems of which we are aware - in relation to the events in

the Balkans and on other issues - the level of relations between Russia and the United States is sufficiently high, and our common duty is to preserve this level, to strengthen and develop these relations, actively and effectively to work jointly as part of the antiterrorist coalition.

It is perfectly clear that to maintain relations on a proper level between the United States and Russia it takes more than mere trust. It is very important, that both our countries are interested in strengthening the non-proliferation regime for nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles, as well as for other means of mass destruction. We are interested in active joint work to combat terrorism. And also, of course, in the economy we can be very natural partners.

### European path of Russia

From the time of Peter I Russia not only felt itself, but was really a part of the Europe. Today basic European values are becoming an integral part of the Russian way of living. On this - European - road Russia will only strengthen its positions and firmly establish its distinctiveness.

But of no less significance is the economic dimension proper - the participation of Russia in the creation of a Europe-wide economic space. Today the European Union countries account for up to 40 percent of our trade. Also from there, 64 percent of direct investment has come to us. This is a real testimony to the mutual drawing nearer and the complementarity of our countries. There is an enormous need for modernization in Russia, and, which is most important, the will to pursue this modernization. The doors for reforms in our country have never before been flung so wide open as today.

The change in Europe and on the expanses of the former Soviet Union would have been impossible without the main preconditions, namely, without the events that took place in Russia about ten years ago. These events are important to understand what precisely took place in our country and what could be expected from Russia in the future. As a matter of fact, the answer is simple. Under the impact of the laws governing the development of information society, our former ideology could no longer oppose the ideas of freedom, democracy and European humanism. The spirit of these ideas was taking hold of the overwhelming majority of Russian citizens.

As for European integration, we are not just supporting these processes, but we are looking to them with hope. In today's rapidly changing world, Europe (we can see it) also has an immediate interest in promoting relations with Russia. Our president, Mr. Putin, stressed in his remarks in the

Bundestag of FRG, that the time has now come to think about what should be done to make sure that a united and secure Europe becomes the harbinger of a united and secure world.

We have done a great deal in the security sphere over the past few years. The security system that we have built over the previous decades has been improved. One of the achievements of the past decade is the unprecedentedly low concentration of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe and the Baltic. As everyone knows, we have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Tests Ban Treaty, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, and also the START-2 Treaty. Stable peace on the continent is a paramount goal for our country, which lived through a century of military catastrophes. We understand that without a modern, sound and sustainable security architecture we will never be able to create an atmosphere of trust on the continent, and without that atmosphere of trust there can be no united Greater Europe.

### Russia and NATO

Let me begin with a quote of an official document - NATO-Russia Joint Statement issued on the Occasion of the Meeting of the Permanent Joint Council at the Level of Foreign Ministers in Brussels on 7 December last year:

"Today we commit ourselves to forge a new relationship between NATO Allies and Russia, enhancing our ability to work together in areas of common interest and to stand up to new threats and risks to our security. We reaffirm that a confident and cooperative partnership between the Allies and Russia, based on shared democratic values and the shared commitment to a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, as enshrined in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, is essential for stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. We have decided to give new impetus and substance to our partnership, with the goal of creating a new council bringing together NATO member states and Russia to identify and pursue opportunities for joint action of the 20."

Was it possible some years ago? - Of course, not.

Russia does not raise the question of joining the North Atlantic alliance; at the same time, we are prepared to cooperate with it in areas of shared interest. The experience of the last decade proves that such cooperation can be effective only if it is based on the principles of equality. Hence the idea of creating a mechanism of cooperation within the framework of "the 20" - the NATO member nations and Russia - which can provide joint development and

implementation of decisions in the fight against terrorism and in responding to other contemporary challenges.

We consider, that every state has the right to choose its own way to ensure its security. But if you ask the Russians regarding expansion of NATO - whether it is good or bad for Russia - an overwhelming majority will reply that it's bad for Russia, that they feel less secure. Why? Because the infrastructure of the military bloc is approaching our borders. Naturally, it should provoke a response. So, the mere mechanical expansion of the bloc seems to us to be counterproductive. We do not believe at present that NATO is a hostile organization for Russia. But to become a universal security organization, of course, the quality of the relations between NATO and Russia should change and we are ready for that.

### What to do next?

Our foreign policy will be pragmatic, consistent and predictable. Its principal content will remain unaltered - creating the most favourable and secure external conditions for the sustainable economic and social development of the country and improvement of the life of our citizens.

The focus of attention will remain on questions of strengthening the central role of the UN in contemporary international relations, including the tasks of forming a global system of counteraction against new threats and challenges, and primarily combating international terrorism.

As a member of the Group of Eight Russia will continue to make an important contribution to the work of this forum in the interest of solving key global problems. Concrete steps are to be taken to create a common European security space and to give a new quality to relations between Russia and NATO in the format of the "20". At the same time Russia will not relax its attention to the OSCE. Of course, multi-pronged work on building long-term partner relations with the European Union, implementing the concept of a common European economic space, developing the energy dialogue, and fostering closer security cooperation will continue.

We hope that the positive transformation of Russian-American relations will not lose momentum. It is very important to fill the legal vacuum created by the erroneous decision of the USA to quit the ABM Treaty, and in 2002 to legally formalize agreements on further radical, irreversible and verifiable reductions of strategic offensive arms.

Globalisation compresses space and time, and makes the world an ever smaller place. Today, we

are charged with an immense responsibility before the succeeding generations: we should strengthen positive trends of globalisation and use them only in such a way that would benefit the entire human race. We are convinced that, by jointly achieving this goal, we will be able to build a truly safe, stable and prosperous world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ■