

141st Bergedorf Round Table

Russia's Responsibility in Global Affairs

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Speech by Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

Dear Mr Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen, friends,

It is my belief that although you are—as Alexander [Rahr] said—old hands, you have fresh brains, I hope. At the very least, we are in a situation when the experience over the last years of our relationship and collaboration allows us to generate fresh ideas. I am confident that your forum will allow us to better understand the existing problems, even if it will not solve them all, as Mr President said.

So, thank you very much for this opportunity to share and exchange our opinions. I do not think that I will be able to solve so ambitious a problem as the one Alexander [Rahr] has described—to outline Russia's viewpoints on the 21st century—but I will try to explain in more detail the ideas that were put forward by President Putin and that are now being further developed by President Medvedev in his recent speeches, including the speeches he made in Berlin and Evian.

The selected topic of the conference is “Russia's Responsibility in Global Affairs” and it clearly reflects what our feelings and attitudes are, because we are forming our role in the globalised world not only on the basis of what the world gives us but also what it expects of us. This responsibility is evident and obvious, I can assure you officially. In the context of the systemic crisis international relations are now in, it is indisputable that our position in the international community is characterised by new dimensions, and as Russia and its position in the international arena are growing stronger, so too is Russia's sense of responsibility with regard to what is happening in the world. This is the essence of the philosophy underlying the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, whose new edition was approved by President Medvedev in July of this year.

Generally speaking, the notion of responsibility is a very significant one for all the leading states in their international affairs. We are convinced that this responsibility presupposes a complete absence of either economic or political egoism and promotion of one's own interests at the expense of the interests of others. It also presupposes readiness and willingness to contribute to improving the manageability of world processes, including the formation of what we call the “collective leadership” of the leading states of the world.

The international community has passively observed the processes of unsettling the system of global governance, not only in politics, but also in economics and in finances. And in the absence of rules that are common to all, we will experience such crises and instability. That is why we now need a “soft landing”, and this will only be possible for all of us by means of truly collective efforts and the involvement and participation of all the players that have the potential and the required resources for the implementation of the decisions agreed upon.

The August events—you know, this is not the first year when August has been a month of unexpected surprises in Russia, and these events were a surprising development, I am saying this with all sincerity—these events had far-reaching geopolitical consequences, in particular for North Atlantic politics. It would have been difficult to highlight the inefficiency of the European security architecture any better than the Saakashvili regime did. Fragmented, with the pretense of NATO-centricity, this architecture was unable to prevent either the reckless military venture or the supplying of large volumes of offensive arms to the Tbilisi regime, which made the venture possible, despite the codes of the OSCE, the European Union, and the Wassenaar Arrangement.

Unfortunately, the Tbilisi regime may interpret the donors’ generosity as follows: aggression is rewarded. The attempts to remilitarise the current authorities in Georgia have had the same effect. We have been trying to warn against such efforts, but so far to no avail.

I would like to repeat that there was nothing geopolitical there, no schemes and no plots to “shake the geopolitical tree” and eat its fruits. And those who blame us for this are like those that Gogol complained about—those who read his works tried to understand Gogol’s literary characters by identifying with them. But I will leave it at that. We had no geopolitical plans there, the geopolitical consequences that were brought about after the Caucasus crisis are objective in nature, and, thank God, many things have become clearer. This is good news.

This crisis—and that is our conclusion—showed us with perfect clarity that contemporary problems, including the settling of conflict situations, cannot be solved by resorting to force. And there is no alternative to political-diplomatic methods of regulation, with the participation of all the parties, without isolating any of the parties, for the purpose of reaching overall agreement. Within the already existing formats, we will continue to strive to provide all assistance in our power to settle the Transnistria and the Nagorny Karabakh conflicts—to help the involved parties to realise the merits of compromise and achieve mutual understanding and agreement. I am convinced that it is possible to develop such mutually satisfactory solutions within the already existing formats, as it would have been possible with regard to the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Therefore, in the situation with South Ossetia, Russian acted in an extraordinary way, under extraordinary circumstances, which were the result of gross violations of international law and international obligations on the part of Georgia. We do not know of any other political leader in the

European-Atlantic territory who would create such a situation. Therefore, there are no reasons to exacerbate the situation by increasing the tension and appealing to the domino theory.

We cannot agree when there are attempts to present the historically determined, and I would say mutually privileged, relations between states on the territory of the former Soviet Union as some kind of a “sphere of influence”. If we accept this logic, it then applies to the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Policy that is currently developed—by the way, it is not clear how this is different from the Neighbourhood Policy—and many other projects of the European Union, whereby decisions are made without the participation of Russia, even though these decisions are made with regard to our neighbours. Not to mention various NATO projects. By the way, during the discussions on the Kosovo status, Europeans, including my friend Bernard Kouchner, were telling us that the Balkans were a European problem, so we should not stand in their way as they were trying to solve it. That is the special privileged interests of the European Union with regard to the Balkans, which did not take into account the Serbian position.

And then when we, through the words of the President, announced our privileged interests, there was much ado about that. Honestly, I could not understand why. I would like to stress this again: We are not talking about Russia having special privileged interests, firstly, with regard to our nearest neighbours, but not only to the neighbouring countries; rather, we are talking about our neighbours also having special privileged interests in Russia. To refuse to understand this and to try to destroy what is objectively based on the mutually connected history, interdependency, interconnection of the economies, infrastructure, cultures, and the humanitarian spheres of life is, generally speaking, to go against history itself. I hope that there will be no unnecessary speculations here and that we will accept this as a prescription and respect it.

My personal opinion is that it is time to draw a line, to calm down a bit and to analyse the situation together. And I am very happy to see that this is exactly what the purpose of your forum is.

We have always been told that democracies do not wage wars. Recently, I read an interesting analysis that said that democracies were not waging wars against each others, at least not yet, but were very willingly engaging in wars against other countries. And I am sure that you know just as many examples of this as I do. But if people say that the Georgian regime is a democracy, and we have heard insistent statement that is it so, why did Georgia choose the way of war? And if somebody certified this regime as a democracy, what responsibility must this certifier take upon himself?

I believe it is a much better idea to promote democracy through your own example. And if we are talking about understanding the historical mission of your country, it is not necessary to refuse this understanding, but it may be transformed into useful things, such as fighting against poverty, the development of alternative energy sources, and looking for solution to the global problems of mankind. That would create the required conditions for a normal domestic development of

the entire state. Such a distribution of the material conditions for the development of a democracy would undoubtedly be useful in the long run. To mean that we have an effectively functioning democracy, when elections are held regularly is indeed strange. It is not a secret to anybody present here that regular elections can be very well and effectively staged, even though this is not frequently talked about in publicly. So, this showcase of democracy means very little and certainly is not an indication that true democracy exists.

I believe a good beginning would be to give the Georgian people, ideally with the participation of the opposition, access to all, even prohibited and classified, sources of information with a view to clarifying what exactly happened and how it became possible. We are deeply concerned by the information that we have been receiving through various channels that there are plans for arrests of former politicians and of those who are now in the opposition to the official authorities. This is very troubling news, but I would like to repeat that this no longer comes as a surprise. We know the essence of the Georgian authorities.

Now I would like to speak on a more global level. In principle, I believe that the reason for the instability on the territory of the former Soviet Union was the process of creating nation-states. That partly predetermined their systemic incompatibility with the European Union, which has set for itself the goal of entering the so-called post-modern stage of development, which effectively means moving in the direction opposite to the direction of the processes that has been unfolding after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The post-modern stage of development involves transferring a part of the national sovereignty, and the efforts to achieve that goal were considerably hampered by the wave of expansion due to accepting new members from Central and Eastern Europe to the European Union, which at the moment of joining the EU were moving in a slightly different direction, and were in the phase of establishing nation-states in their countries at that time. This was evident in the divorce of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and I think those circumstances were underestimated by those who were responsible for the speedy process of accepting new members into the European Union since they were guided not so much by the socio-economical and internal political readiness of those countries to take that step, but rather by geopolitical considerations. That may be the reason why it is so difficult for the European Union now to digest its much expanded state, but we wish it every success in this process and are interested in the implementation of all the reforms as planned, since we would then be able to talk to the European Union by dialing one single phone number, to use a phrase which I believe was used by Kissinger.

Unfortunately, our western partners have been unable to truly appreciate the elements of the Soviet and later Russian experience, which were post-modern in nature. Among those elements was internationalism, even though it was ideologically motivated, and the process of creating supranational unity based on common values and aspirations. I would like to leave that aside for the time being, since it came to nothing in practice, but the trend was clearly post-modern in nature. The embodiment of those aspirations was the Commonwealth of Independent States, whose

history has been an uneasy one, but I still believe there is a future for it, and the federal states of Russia and Belarus, the Eurasian Economic Community, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization—these organisations, all of them, were originally intended and envisaged as integrating organisations, not ones based on political blocs. I repeat that I do not want to go deeply into the details of the success or failure of different structures, but I would like to speak more about the tendency within which these structures were created. The relations in the framework of these structures have their own civilisation specificity, and I know it from my personal experience that each and every one of these structures functions well, as I myself have participated practically in all the events in the last five years, on the level of ministers and presidents, and I can assure you that there is no pressure exercised in this organisation, no one will be twisting your arms, let alone breaking them. This may not be that easy to understand to everybody in the West, but it is so. We do not dictate anything to anybody; firstly, because we cannot dictate, and secondly, because we do not want to dictate anything to anybody; we want to seek solutions based on mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests.

The gradual passage to the principles of the market economy promoted the establishment of more equal trade and economic relations between the former republics of the Soviet Union. We intend to continue this passage, despite all the difficulties that we are experiencing along the way as we are working towards it, and complete this transfer while also preserving all the positive elements of the common historical coexistence.

The rhetoric of recent years prevents to realise that due to the efforts of Russia the negative consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union were minimised, according to historical parameters. Only days ago Dominic Leven wrote in the newspaper “Wremja nowostej” [“Время новостей”] that the experience of the decline and collapse of the British Empire, which took three generations to occur, and which, by the way, was softened by the co-optation of London into the Anglo-Saxon alliance that “formed the core of the West and determined its significance”, can be seen in the 15 years of contemporary Russia. The prejudice of the past prevents us from looking objectively at things—that is why we are talking about the negative role played by the so-called Sovietologists in the development of Russian policy in some western countries. This was pointed out by President Medvedev in Evian.

Why does a unified Europe have to be built from a common center and not from several different venues at the same time? The desire to “divide” the post-Soviet territory into “pieces” reminds me, to be honest with you, of the Bolsheviks' methods of clearing the site for their grandiose construction project—we will destroy everything to the very foundations first and only then will we begin building something new. What this method in effect does is move the dividing line in Europe closer and closer to the Russian border. We would like to eliminate this line, and it is about this that we are trying to reach agreements, at least oral agreements, with the European Union, and we have had talks and reached agreements with NATO on that as well. At the OSCE, all the necessary decisions have been made; it is the implementation that is not working so well. I be-

lieve that this trend, which is aimed at separating Russia from its neighbours that are on their way to creating their 19th century nation-states, poses a threat to all of Europe as that might result in going back to the 20th century with its destructive nationalism.

All this was reflected—I have to go back to my main topic here—in the Georgian effort to use force in order to resolve the conflict in South Ossetia—not a very European way. In this context I would like to mention the historical extrapolation into fascism, which became the pinnacle of Europe’s self-destruction; and, by the way, it is often forgotten that this self-destruction was prevented largely due to the efforts and help on the part of the Soviet Union.

What is most dangerous is that thereby an attitude to Russia is demonstrated, to view Russia as a country that is alien to Europe. The intention is to artificially create this image of a “prickly” and hostile Russia in the minds of people in Europe—and it is as though it is used as a means to provide some boost to the existence of the West. We cannot help but feel that way and have this lingering suspicion. And I mean the existence of the West as being exceptional when compared to the rest of the world.

Both Putin, when he was President, in his article dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the European Union, and Medvedev, when he spoke in Berlin and Evian, confirmed on the top level that Russia’s first choice would be Europe. These words spoken by our two leaders over the last couple of years should make all the skeptically minded people forget their suspicions that we mean something different from what we say. This position of Russia is reflected in such ideas aimed at ensuring the unity of European civilisation as a strategic concept, by which we mean real involvement of the European Union in discussions on the issues of strategic stability, which so far has been limited to our dialog with Washington. We think that by establishing threefold collaboration between Europe, Russia and the USA—and I will touch upon that later—we could change the nature of strategic relations on the global level. It is this consideration that is the basis of our proposal to begin the development of the European-Atlantic Security agreement.

The “strawberry glades” of Europe are our common valuable possession. These glades should no more be trod upon by heavy boots or flattened by tanks. We will always distinguish between Europe, meaning our relations with particular European countries, and the location of military objects of non-European countries on European territory. This fully applies to our position with regard to Poland and the Czech Republic in the context of the development of the “third positioning region” there.

We are sure that the issue of the renovation of European security architecture has become a matter of urgency and, as I said, this is the reason behind our initiative to begin negotiations on the new treaty on European-Atlantic security. We believe that this treaty can help create a reliable system of a truly comprehensive nature, a system intended to unite the European and the Atlantic region on the basis of common rules and the guarantee of the indivisibility of security. Presi-

dent Medvedev has formulated the key principles of this proposed treaty in Evian. We are working on the schedule for a series of consultations to develop these principles, and we believe that it is crucial that the expert community should participate in these discussions and I expect that many of those present here will agree to take part in this work. We can discuss and agree on the format of this work and would like to be able to begin it without much delay.

The venue for the negotiations, after we have developed the expert and analytical potential, can be chosen from among any locations suggested by the OSCE. It is a real possibility—time will tell. We are also open to discussing new elements of the treaty as compared to those proposed by the President, and we can discuss new, alternative ideas. The problem is that no new ideas have been suggested as of yet; there is simply nothing to discuss now. We only hear things like, for example, “your initiatives are aimed at undermining NATO and at changing the comprehensive nature of security as stated and confirmed in the Helsinki Final Act, at the expense of forgetting the humanitarian basket.” But that is absolutely untrue! We publicly and openly proclaim that we would like to invite not only all countries from Vancouver to Vladivostok, but also all organisations in this territory that operate in the sphere of security to participate. We do not intend to undermine the humanitarian aspects of the OSCE activities. But we believe that what is called hard security, military-political security, is a sphere where many problems have accumulated, which are dangerously capable of exploding, and that military-political security should be given priority and paramount attention. When we are labeled as a country of revisionism that is against the status quo, we would like to ask the question of what status quo we are talking about. After the Cold War, in the context of the speedy formation of a polycentric international system and the current global financial crisis, what status quo can we be talking about?

That is why we are convinced that repairs to the European architecture should be speeded up. The only other alternative to that is the degradation of this architecture. As to our relations with NATO, the events of the last few months have given us serious reasons to reconsider the future of these relations. One thing is clear—there can be no return to the old relations, as if nothing had happened. We would like to be able to understand: Is Europe really there for NATO or is it the other way around, that NATO is there for Europe? I will repeat that we are under no illusions, and we have no intention of moving things in such a way that in the end there is no NATO and something more universal will be created instead. We understand that this is the reality that we will have to live with. But I am convinced that our conversation about all these things requires political courage. In this, I absolutely and wholeheartedly support Napoleon and his words “let us go to battle and then we shall see”. We need to start the discussion without much further delay.

Putin proposed this in February 2007 in Munich. At the time, this proposal, which was highly charged with emotion, was almost interpreted as the beginning of a new Cold War. There was no such intention! What he wanted was to begin the conversation. And the answer he received was that everything required for security already exists and we will tell you later what shelf in the NATO-centric system is allocated for Russia.

The Russia-NATO Council was created on absolutely progressive principles. Each party had equal status. This was stated in the documents that formed the basis of the Russia-NATO Council. It is also stated there that our common principle is the indivisibility of security. This definition of the principle was also provided in those documents and it states that no one country can ensure its security at the expense of the security of any other party in the Russia-NATO Council. We even used the principle of “one party, one vote”, not “26 + 1”, as an example to the European Union when we were discussing the perspective of the Russia-EU collaboration in the sphere of foreign security in Brussels. Helga [Maria Schmid] may remember that. We did say then that we have a more progressive foundation for working together in the framework of the Russia-NATO Council. Everybody is equal there, and it is laid down as the principle written in documents. But there was no such structure as “one party—one vote” with the European Union for the discussion of the security issues. But it is also clear that the Russia-NATO Council did not work on the principles that it was initially established on. What we had there was “26 + 1”, on any level, be it a summit or meetings of ministers or ambassadors. Something needs to be done about that, naturally. Even if it was not for this crisis, even if NATO was not trying to punish us by freezing some aspects of these activities, the necessity for this conversation would have surfaced anyway. The Russia-NATO Council will never function to the full extent of its potential without such an honest and open conversation. A conversation aimed at one goal: Do we confirm the principles that were agreed upon or not, and if we do, let us try to find out why they are not being implemented. By the way, this concept is included in the European Security Treaty: to take an inventory of the principles. If they are still important for us, as are the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, on the basis of which the Russia-NATO Council operates, and of course the UN charter; if it is important how they are reflected in Europe; and if we say all these principles are still supported and upheld by all of us, let us find out why we do not see them implemented and put into practice. Maybe the mechanisms are lacking. That is what we would like to talk about. When at the Russia-NATO summit in Bucharest we wanted to ratify the joint declaration confirming the principles that form the basis of our work, the principle that states that no party can ensure its security at the expense of the security of other parties could not be included. One delegation had its objections to that. Everybody understands that it was the American delegation, but this five-year-old quote was not repeated in April 2008. And that, naturally, makes you think. The current European architecture is one that is based on small pieces that are still being held together. It calls for transformation, and that needs to be done through a collective effort, once and for all.

We are happy to see that the regulation of the Caucasus conflict served as a reason for our collaboration with the European Union. In effect, the solution for the European problem has been found. This is in line with the general trend towards the regionalisation of global politics, when regional countries take more and more responsibility into their own hands and do not want to follow advice given from afar. By the way, that was how the crisis in Zimbabwe was regulated in its most acute stage, even though there are still agreements to be reached there; the dialogue between Israel and Syria is also under way—although still through intermediaries; certain aspects of the situation in Sudan are developing in a positive way. The initiative of the European

Union with regard to Georgia is another example of this desire on the part of the regional countries to solve the problems that are geographically close at hand through their own initiatives. I believe this to be a healthy tendency. I have said before, and I will say it again, that we support the strengthening of the European Union and its unity on a sober, pragmatic basis. We trust our European friends.

It is clear that in global and regional politics, especially in the European-Atlantic region, some “residual bipolarity” still remains. It is objectively determined by the strategic stability issues, as I have said previously, but there are issues where bipolarity will be enforced by artificial means. In particular, I mean the monopolisation of the negotiations with Russia on the future of the Treaty on the Conventional Forces in Europe. We had very effective negotiations with our American partners last autumn, a year ago, and we had even begun to see what perspectives we had to resolve the situation, but then our partners from Washington backed out on their ideas, saying that Georgia and Moldova would like to change the way the proposals made by the U.S. were formulated. And yet the desire on the part of Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain to join the informal discussion on possible ways out of this dead end situation, in which the CFE Treaty finds itself, does not inspire much enthusiasm. We think this is not right. Of course, in the end it will be all the participants of the CFE Treaty who will make the decision on the future of the Treaty or the mode of arms control in Europe, but it is clear that the leading European countries can and must make their contribution to preparing the ground for global negotiations on a universal scale.

The element of artificial bipolarity was also evident in what has been happening around Georgia in recent years. In essence—and I hope Mrs Merkel will take no offense, as we are talking very openly here—a far away capital city made decisions on the issues involved in the relations of the West and Georgia. There were, of course, certain developments in the framework of the group of friends of the UN Secretary-General with regard to Georgia, which included Russia, the USA, France, Great Britain, and Germany as the coordinator of the group; there were certain efforts made in the framework of that group, but by and large the crisis that occurred in August took Europe by surprise. It is good that the initiative of President Sarkozy, which was supported by the entire European Union, is now improving the situation. The discussions that started in Geneva on October 15 give us all an opportunity to eliminate the shortcomings and get involved in resolving such issues for the purpose of providing stability to the region, and not because we want to retain Georgia as an object of geopolitics.

We also believe that the participation of the USA in the Geneva discussions is very useful and contributes to the goal of finding the solution that would work best for the region. On the whole, the threefold interaction serves as the formula that ensures the unity of the European-Atlantic territory on the political level. The movement towards this oneness on the political-psychological level, if I may say so, could be promoted through a new interpretation of the term “Atlantism” or “Euro-Atlantism”. We are convinced that it should include Russia, the countries of Central and Eastern Russia, and the entire region from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

Brzezinski and Scowcroft recently wrote a book called “America and the World”. In this book they quote a researcher from RAND Corporation that it is not the polycentric system itself that is dangerous, as it is natural and logical, but rather the move to the polycentric system, which, on the one hand, is inevitable, and, on the other, will very likely be risky. The entire contents of “America and the World” testify to the main point here that it is impossible to pursue an imperial policy in the post-imperial epoch. Let us remember Oswald Spengler, who considered the historical destiny of the West a hundred years ago. His book “The Decline of the West” is still a considerable, and maybe a major part, of the philosophy of history. A global empire, a western or a communist empire, would be the very thing that would put an end to history.

Logic prompts us that it is necessary to restore the unity of European civilisation. Both Russia and the USA sprang from European civilisation and have contributed greatly to promoting and spreading it. At least in regard to the colonisation of Siberia for many centuries—I am convinced that this represented the expansion and spread of European civilisation. If you go to Vladivostok or any other Siberian city now, despite all the economic differences between Moscow and those places, you will still see European cities and a European population. The same applies to the branch of the European civilisation that grafted onto the North American continent and produced such abundant fruits and harvests there. Therefore, I am convinced that the fundamental characteristics of the new stage of world development will be the synthesis of different models of development and coexistence, including the coexistence of different cultures, religious traditions and, to a large extent, values. While depending on common European values, we cannot ignore the values formed in other civilisations. Their balance will determine history. The example of the European-Atlantic formation shows us that history eliminated extremes. First, it was the experience of the Soviet Union, and then it was liberal capitalism, which in its Anglo-Saxon model was fully realised in America. Following the Spengler method, one cannot help but notice that both these phenomena existed for about 75 years—if, with regard to the USA, we look at the period of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal. The synthesis was the socially-oriented model of the market economy of Western Europe that was developed during the period of the Cold War. It was formed largely under the influence of the U.S. and the Soviet Union. When I say the Soviet Union, I mean the fact that the declared and to a large extent realised social achievements of the Soviet Union were the driving force that urged Europe to pay more attention to developing the social aspects of its economy. The shortened working day, guaranteed vacation time, pensions, free medical services, free education, and many other aspects. The experience of the Soviet Union did impact the development of the economic model in Europe. The same was being done in the USA, beginning with the Marshall Plan, and this experience contributed to a much larger degree to the socialisation of the European economy than that of the U.S. itself. The result that we see today, the socially-oriented model of development, which has taken root and stands on a firm foundation now, is our common achievement. The fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Putin was President, Russia chose this very path of development is a sign that it is our common road.

Speaking of the U.S., let me say again that it is an integral part of European civilisation and the product of its historical collapse. I believe that it could only benefit the U.S.—in the sense that we are discussing now—to go back to Europe and accept the European outlook on the world, which in some part was formed after the Cold War, and I will repeat this again: not entirely without the active participation of America.

The relations between our country and America are not without complications at the moment. There are fundamental differences in our approaches to quite a few international problems, but at the same time we have every possibility to establish constructive and comprehensive collaboration and interaction on a stable and long-term basis. There have been many acute and insecure situations in the history of the relations between our countries. We have seen times worse than these, but in the end it was always common sense, pragmatism and the understanding of the special responsibility of our countries for the situation in the world that prevailed and determined the choices we have made on the level of practical politics. We are open to full-scale cooperation with the USA.

We are prepared and willing to work together on a predictable, mutually beneficial foundation based on equality and consideration of each other's interests in full compliance with a very important recent document that was ratified by George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin in Sochi—the Sochi Strategic Framework Declaration.

As both Medvedev and Putin have said on numerous occasions, nothing will move us to begin a new arms race and back out of the comprehensive modernisation of the country. Yes, this attack on South Ossetia was a serious distraction that made us briefly put aside the constructive tasks at hand. We will need to draw our conclusions from this event in terms of our military construction and the acceleration of the modernisation of the country, but there will be no militarisation of the country's foreign policy and no new arms race.

Of course, our atomic submarines with strategic weapons on board are not “yellow submarines”. We do realise that. But they carry out their tasks on the basis of the reasonable sufficiency principle. I am sure that our American partners, who have been carrying out the modernisation of their armed forces for the past twenty years, including the strategic component, will be able to explain what the essence of those tasks is. Our military expenses, according to various estimates, amount to five to 13 percent of the military expenses of the U.S.

We would like to further lighten this burden. Therefore, it is suggested that practical conclusions should be arrived at from the plainly evident fact that it is impossible to regulate international relations by resorting to force in a world that is undergoing globalisation. Maybe we should go back to the expectations we had in terms of the peace dividend that was ours to enjoy and a logical outcome of the end of the Cold War. I do not know; maybe it is too idealistic of me to hope so.

And, of course, it is in our common interests to overcome the deepening global financial crisis. We are active supporters of the proposal to hold a series of summits, this initiative put forward by Nicolas Sarkozy as the Chairman of the European Union that was welcomed, among other countries, by the USA, where the leaders of the 20 countries will meet on November 15. It is not entirely out of the question, by the way, that certain UN structures might be involved, for example the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Yes, it is an organisation that has no direct management and control levers in the financial sphere, but it is an important political casing, so to speak, that might politically support and protect the ideas developed in the real economy and in real world finances. I absolutely agree with the opinion that we need to overcome the inconsistencies of the unilateral functioning method of the bankrupt system and the collective interests of the international community. It was no accident when the “Economist” stated on October 11 that the approach should be system-wide and more global. The sooner we have the first drafts of the documents that are to be approved on November 15 in Washington, including the further steps to take—President Bush said that this summit will not be a one-time event but rather a stimulus to further work—the sooner we have the drafts of those documents, the better. They should be meaningful in their essence, they should be substantive and not disappoint those who are certain—and it is the majority who are certain—that we need deep reforms.

Russia is prepared to make its contribution to this work. Despite the negative impact of the world financial crisis, whose influence was felt in our country, we still have gold and foreign exchange reserves that can be compared to those of the International Monetary Fund. On the whole, according to estimates, governments around the world have about three trillion dollars. Most of these reserves are in the state reserves of the countries situated east of the Suez and east of the Urals. It is of no consequence what the name will be—it may be, as Sarkozy suggested, “the re-building of capitalism” or any other name; what is of critical significance is the result.

The result can only be positive if we acknowledge and agree that we are all in the same boat. Financial interdependence, so evident in the events of recent years, testifies to this fact. The Chinese have two pictogram characters for the word “crisis”: they stand for risk and opportunity. Let us focus on the second pictogram and change the topic of the conversation; let us focus on solving real problems and not on obsessively promoting virtual projects. I am convinced that we will establish close and equal cooperation with regard to this financial crisis, which will create the conditions and critical mass of trust we need to solve this and all the other problems we face.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we appreciate and value the fixed point of European politics that the relations between Russia and the Federal Republic of Germany have always represented. They are developing in a spirit of pragmatism combined with the desire to develop a common vision for the future of the European-Atlantic region. It is in the same spirit that our relations with many other European countries are developing, particularly our relations with Paris, Rome, and Madrid. We appreciate and value that.

It is vital that we remain able to sustain a productive and mutually respectful dialogue, not only when the geopolitical weather conditions are favorable, but also when we are experiencing difficulties. This was confirmed during the recent round of Russian-German intergovernmental consultations held in St Petersburg.

I am convinced that this approach—where there is no cause for taking offense but which is rather based on striving to understand each other and seek ways of further developing relations based on this understanding while taking into account the partner’s interests—is the only possible way for countries to interact in the modern world. My speech has taken longer than the time we agreed on, but I would still be happy and ready to answer any questions that you may have.

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