

LSESU Russian Business Society and LSE lecture

The Foreign Policy of Modern Russia: The Prospects for Russian British Relations

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome the opportunity to speak at the London School of Economics, one of the most reputable British universities. Young people from many countries including Russia study here. This fact alone creates an outspoken atmosphere and promotes a broad and open-minded view, encourages to be socially active.

The modern Russia is a country in transformation that leans on its own and the world experience. Russia strives to be a land of new opportunities that is open to partnership, trade, investments, civil society contacts and projects in all areas of public life.

The main task of our foreign policy is to contribute to comprehensive modernization of the country and transition of our economy to an innovative, hi-tech development pattern. To achieve this goal, we have mobilized our own political will and resources, but we are ready to close interaction with our partners. We understand quite well that they do care what kind of Russia they are dealing with.

There are all necessary conditions to make the modernization of Russia an all-European project – as was the case during the reforms of Peter the Great. This project could become a major input in the efforts to overcome the consequences of the global crisis. This is the essence of our "Partnership for Modernization" with the European Union and its key members as well as other partners in Europe, Asia and America. Today, the development issues have become a priority for all the States – in the West and in the East, in the South and in the North.

As in the previous three centuries, Russia is prepared to assume its share of responsibility for the current global state of affairs. We have no great-power ambitions, nor do we suffer from inferiority complex. We are committed to finding solutions to existing problems based on the rule of international law, balance of interests, and common sense. To this end, we actively participate in various collective mechanisms for managing international relations at the global and regional levels, including, first of all, the UN, but also G8, G20, CIS, SCO, BRICS and others. This network diplomacy reflects the emergence of a new polycentric world order which would be more equitable, democratic and sustainable.

Teamwork philosophy underlies the entire Russia's diplomacy. Having long abandoned ideologically charged policy, we opted for a pragmatic and multi-vector approach to the promotion of our national interests. In a rapidly changing world, one can efficiently deal with global threats and challenges only through the broadest international cooperation. The scale of these challenges suggests that we pursue a positive and synergetic agenda and abandon suspicion and prejudices, which undermine mutual trust and make it difficult to cooperate.

Last year the leaders of the countries in the Euro-Atlantic succeeded in significantly improving the climate in the region. Relations in the field of security are changing, displaying the spirit of

cooperation rather than confrontation. Areas of common interest are getting wider. There is a chance to start genuine movement towards our common goal of ensuring stability and prosperity in the entire Europe, where there would be no dividing lines and where all countries would feel safe and secure, irrespective of whether they are members of military alliances or not.

The outcome of the NATO-Russia Council Summit in Lisbon, the OSCE Summit in Astana, as well as the new START treaty concluded by Russia and the US have sent encouraging signals and reaffirmed that there is an increased understanding of the need to work together, pursuing a more constructive Euro-Atlantic policies, and shaping today's partnership based on mutual trust and commitment to the principle of the indivisibility of security. What matters now is to translate this positive trend into specific actions, make the indivisibility of security legally binding. That's the essence of President Medvedev's proposal to negotiate a Treaty on Euro-Atlantic security. We must not miss this chance as we, regrettably, did more than once over the last couple of decades.

Much will depend on how things will go with the European Missile Defense. We call for carrying out this project on the basis of equality and synergy of both NATO and Russian capabilities. This will test sincerity of all our joint declarations about willingness to cooperate and respect each other's security concerns. We have already acknowledged that we pose no threat to each other. But a new level of confidence can be achieved only through practical collective work to reach common objectives.

For the first time in many years the new window of opportunity seems to make it possible to overcome, finally, the legacy of the cold war and start shaping a truly united Europe.

We are prepared for this serious work. Both Russia and the UK can and should contribute to its success. We are also ready to develop further relations between our two countries. We see no reason why those relations cannot be closer, more confidential and strategically stable. Neither the Iron Curtain nor the Berlin Wall divides us any longer. All in all, we have much more in common between us than it might seem.

Maybe, here lies the reason why, despite all the differences between our countries on various issues, we stood together in the face of common challenges, sometimes of existential scale. This was the case in the years of 1812-1815, during the First and Second World Wars. You know how much those wars cost Russia. As for the Cold War I would consider it as a time and space warp in European and world politics.

From the historical perspective, it's only today that Europe and the whole world are emerging from the epoch launched by the First World War – this truly European catastrophe, the root causes of which are yet to be fully realized. All sacrificial predetermination of the tragic fate of Europe, shared also by Russia, was expressed with an impressive artistic force by D.H. Lawrence in his story "England, My England". Its secular but essentially deeply Christian approach seems to be much needed in today's Europe. It is in our hands to ensure that all victims of the European history of the 20th century become redemptory.

Today, when the world is witnessing the passing of the last imperial temptations, Russia and Britain are all the more doomed to be together in the face of common threats. I would like to mention just one of them – international terrorism. The tragedy in Domodedovo airport last January 24 took lives of citizens of six countries, including one from Great Britain. Unfortunately our cooperation in counter-terrorism is stuck, and not through our fault.

At the same time, political dialogue between Moscow and London is gaining momentum. Top-level contacts have set the right tone for the multifaceted British-Russian intercourse. They will be maintained this year – we are looking forward to Prime Minister David Cameron's visit.

It is quite realistic to expand our interaction on the world stage. Today, together with Secretary Hague we have seen once again that our countries' vision of such important issues as Afghanistan, Middle East settlement, non-proliferation, countering piracy and confidence building in Europe are close. We also agreed to continue our coordination in the Security Council and other UN bodies.

Our economic cooperation has good prospects. Great Britain is unfailingly among Russia's five major investment partners. The recent agreement among the oil giants "Rosneft" and BP, which, in fact, amounts to a strategic alliance, opens unique opportunities for strengthening partnership in various areas, including scientific and technological cooperation and creating innovation industrial capacity.

Together with our British partners, we have identified six key areas of diversifying our business relations – financial services, high technologies, energy and energy efficiency, support for small and medium enterprises, cooperation in the continued use of the Olympic infrastructure, and improvement of the business climate.

Undoubtedly, facilitating mutual travel by our citizens is a key prerequisite for success. We took note of the Prime Minister Cameron's declaration in favor of introducing a visa-free regime for the trips of Russian citizens into European member-states of the Schengen Agreement. We hope that such an approach will also be applied in our bilateral relations since Britain is not part of the Schengen space. The lack of a full-fledged bilateral agreement in this sphere is hampering contacts in humanitarian and cultural fields, as well as among representatives of civil society.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that today we have a real possibility to open a new page in the history of our relations. I believe there is a common understanding that stronger and future-oriented bilateral ties have no reasonable alternative.

Thank you for your attention.

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