

Russia's foreign p



By Sergey Lavrov

Russia's consolidation has become a catalyst for positive changes. It is open to constructive dialogue and equitable cooperation with all states

THE field for international confrontation is becoming narrower as the standoff between the blocs is progressively overcome. Globalisation of the potential for and challenges to security and steady development is making it clear the world community can resolve today's key problems only by a concerted effort. This results in reduced demand for unilateral leadership, and devalues commitments based on ideological and cultural affinity.

At the same time, the world has not become a safer place to live in. The main reason is the cost we pay for globalisation — the growing gap in development engenders social, economic, ethnic, and religious conflicts. Recurrent unilateral use of force is also creating a feeling of insecurity. Stagnation in disarmament is increasing the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The lack of a clear vision on the future world order was largely caused by Russia's weakening after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Its other source is a western Cold War 'victory' syndrome, which is rooted in a black-and-white perception of the world, a desire to revive old dogmas and to re-militarise international relations.

Therefore, Russia's consolidation has become a catalyst for positive changes. Now it is capable of taking part in the development and implementation of the global agenda on a par with other countries. No international problem

can be resolved without Russia or against its interests. The situation in Iraq and Afghanistan graphically illustrates the problems with unilateral use of force and attempts to monopolise conflict resolution.

The system of international relations is unstable and becoming increasingly imbalanced. Bloc-based, ideological motives cease to function, while the new ones have not been established yet. Under the circumstances, many countries are beginning to revise their interests.

Development of new global centres of influence and growth, a more even distribution of resources and of control over natural wealth

Russia's foreign policy independence is an implicit imperative. Not every country can afford this in the globalising world. But for us it is a key issue, a question of our sovereignty. This country or its foreign policy cannot be controlled from the outside. We are not trying to please everyone, as at the end of the Soviet era, but simply proceed from our own clear pragmatic interests. There is no reason to conceal or dramatise the existing contradictions with our partners. We have a great deal to do together in the future. This includes cooperation in the United Nations and the G8, Russia-EU partnership, and the NATO-Russia Council.

We hope our American partners have not had settlement in Iraq. It is high time to involve the UN, and leading regional organisations in the effort to reconciliation of all Iraqis. Realistic adjustment of Iraq would help Washington and Tehran to pursue there. This could pave the way for normalising

are laying the foundation for a multi-polar world arrangement.

Under the circumstances, the trend in the face of the challenges and threats of the 21st century is towards asserting collective and legal principles in world politics. Russia made the right choice in 2000, when it chose pragmatism, multi-vector diplomacy, and firm, albeit confrontation-free, upholding of national interests. Russia has left many countries behind in learning from the Cold War and in giving up ideology for common sense. This is why Moscow is able to take an unbiased view of international realities and to suggest unconventional solutions to the most intricate problems.

Russia is open to constructive dialogue and equitable cooperation with all states. With many countries, including our CIS neighbours, China, India, Egypt, Brazil, and the G8, we have already established or are developing a strategic partnership. The forces interested in a powerful, independent Russia are gaining strength.

What are the obstacles to this cooperation?

Regrettably, some countries find it extremely difficult to conduct affairs with Russia on an equitable basis. This is not our fault. But this fact is turning into a major problem for global politics, because it is designed to preserve a certain status quo — that is, the privileged position of individual countries in the developing international system. First, all claims to leadership should be supported by actions and add value to the "common good." So far, unilateral responses have not facilitated the settlement of problems; instead, they have created new ones.

We believe that there are positive examples of real collective and equitable multilateral efforts, which show that our vision of the modern era is correct. This is supported by the resolutions of the G8 summit in St. Petersburg on international energy security and the Middle East. In the first case, global energy

policy imperatives

policy rests on a fair balance of the interests of energy producers and consumers. In the second case, the sides reached conceptual agreement that the region's problems are rooted in the lack of settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects.

Finally, while undergoing unprecedented changes, Russia simply cannot take part in the efforts to preserve the current transitional status of the international system. We can afford less than others to risk the growing confidence in our foreign policy, which, in turn, is a major factor in the overall predictability of global development. We insist only on well-grounded,

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open, and free debates, without preset outcomes. In politics, like in everyday life, it is very important to hear and consider what others have to say. Furthermore, in a number of cases this ability could help save lives and material resources, which are wasted as a result of irrational policy. We are resisting the attempts to make us accept as a fait accompli a policy on certain issues, which has already proved to be insolvent even in the eyes of the electorate of the countries concerned. If Russia makes mistakes, it pays for them itself. Meanwhile, sometimes we are called upon to support a faulty line that creates problems for the entire world community. We do not claim to know the absolute truth, but our foreign policy is succeeding in standing the test of time.

We hope our American partners have not had their final say on a settlement in Iraq. It is high time to involve the UN, all of Iraq's neighbours, including Iran and Syria, and

leading regional organisations in the effort to support genuine national reconciliation of all Iraqis. Realistic adjustment of the coalition's course in Iraq would help Washington and Tehran to pursue their common interests there. This could pave the way for normalising US-Iran relations, which would, in turn, create a favourable background for the resolution of Iran's nuclear predicament. This would mean progress in settling the problems of the Middle



East, and in strengthening the non-proliferation regime. These objectives cannot be achieved with zero-sum logic.

Today, it would not be possible to find those who claimed just four years ago that "the road to Jerusalem goes through Baghdad." Practically everyone, including the anti-Iraqi coalition members, agrees on the need to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Any attempts to obviate this fundamental reality, including efforts to play the card of inter-Muslim and inter-Arab conflicts, would have the most destructive consequences. The Iraqi experience suggests addressing the problem of sanctions. Haphazard sanctions and their use, contrary to UN Security Council resolutions, for regime change created the

groundwork for the situation in Iraq. In principle, as an instrument of the Security Council, sanctions may be useful because they facilitate settlement of a problem through negotiations. When programmed for the use of force, sanctions become a smokescreen for power politics. However, unilateral sanctions in circumvention of the Council can only undermine chances for settlement, antagonise partners, and weaken the unity of the world community. We believe that only bona fide multilateral efforts can lead to political and diplomatic settlement, if they are not accompanied by any preconditions.

Needless to say, any transgression of international law, not to mention crude violations of its fundamental standards, such as the immunity of diplomatic missions, will lead to deplorable results. NATO and EU expansion has given food for thought. As a result of expansion, both the EU and NATO are losing flexibility and ability to achieve their fundamental goals. Some may welcome their expansion, while others would see it as a prelude to NATO's self-liquidation and the weakening of the European project. Neither meets the interests of Russia, which is ready to promote the positive development of pan-European cooperation along existing lines. Any arrangement is better than chaos. We think that a comprehensive approach to the problems of the Euro-Atlantic region is the best choice.

I am convinced that neither a remake of the Cold War nor a Cold Peace are sensible choices for the world community if only because choices no longer have to be made behind closed doors by a select few.

Sometimes, Russia is accused of trying to live in several cultural dimensions. But it has always existed at the juncture of civilisations by virtue of its geography and history. Our historical destiny is rooted in a diversity of cultures and civilisations, which should be reflected in globalisation. Russia will facilitate the solution of this problem at home and abroad by pursuing a vigorous, open, and predictable foreign policy. **COURTESY THE HINDU**

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