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West-Russia Relations in Light of the Ukraine Crisis

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West-Russia Relations and the Emerging Global Order. Polycentric World as the New Reality

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3.1 The Role and Place of Russia in Europe and Eurasia

The idea of the emerging global order, in other words the emerging polycentric world, is intractably bound with the issues of global governance and regulation as well as the role and place of each big state and its ring of friends and allies in these processes. In fact, there are not many countries which in principle aspire for a significant stake in the global regulation mechanisms. An even smaller number of them are inclined to claim a role in their invention. For the majority of functioning states the ultimate goal is to establish themselves as influential regional players; for some of them leading positions on the regional level is a strategic price. Very few nations have a desire and resources to strive for a place in the category of those subjects of international relations which have transregional interests and adequate resources to underpin them.

In the past, the top of the pyramid of global influence was occupied by great powers. In their ranks the most powerful were big empires. In the course of time, they were replaced by two superpowers, the United States (US) and the Soviet Union. Their main difference from previous heavyweights consisted in the fact that they wielded unmatched capacity to project their influence almost in any corner of the world, and propensity for such a projection was limited mainly by mutual deterrence.

Russia in the beginning of the 21st century has been evolving as an autonomous transregional centre of influence with elements of a global power. By its culture and history Russia is mainly a European country but by mentality and psychology a transcontinental one. With its borders stretching tens of thousands of kilometres in the west, south and east, Russia geopolitically, economically and security-wise cannot and should not concentrate its foreign policy in one direction.

This observation does not mean that Moscow lacks priorities in constructing its relations with other parts of the world. Their hierarchy is well known: the post-Soviet space, the European Union (EU) and other European countries, the United States, China and other members of the BRICS group, etc (Putin 2013). As foreign policy and national interests of any country are multifaceted, in each concrete situation such hierarchies of interests are different and shifting. For example, from Moscow's point of view, nothing can be more important in the sphere of strategic stability than the United States and China. But there are regions that entail such a density of different interests for their neighbours that they become the main point of reference. Today and in the foreseeable future the region of paramount importance for Russia in political, economic, financial, cultural and security terms is and will be "Wider Europe", i.e. the European civilisation stranding the landmass from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. Only on the basis of Wider Europe the Old World may achieve the status of Greater Europe (Ivanov 2014, Gromyko 2013b).

Perhaps, the dynamics of global history will lead in the future to a different set of priorities in the foreign policy of Russia. It is difficult at this point to judge if the scenario of its transformation into a Eurasian power, focused primarily on the Asia-Pacific region, is realistic and achievable. Even after the fall of the Soviet Union Russia keeps staying in its essence a European rather than an Asian or Eurasian state. Migration of Russians from Siberia and the Far East has not stopped; the bulk of the economy beyond the Urals mountains is oriented towards Western markets; infrastructure in that part of the country that extends east of the Urals, which constitutes two thirds of its territory, is developing too slowly; foreign investments, not counting the oil and gas sector, are concentrated in the European part of Russia. New pipelines, heading to China, Japan and other non-European consumers, will not alter the situation fundamentally.

With all its grandeur, the "Power of Siberia" pipeline, the long-term gas contract between Russia and China, signed in May 2014 during the official visit of Vladimir Putin to Beijing, envisages a maximum capacity of a fourth of the European market share of Gazprom, Russia's energy giant. In order to implement the "turn to the East" within a short range of time the Russian state would be expected to demonstrate an iron will comparable, for example, with the colossal task of evacuating the Soviet industry to the Urals and beyond during the German invasion in the Second World War (WWII). It will be impossible to carry it out by relying on self-regulating market forces. Even in the long run such an assignment would demand consistent and systematic neo-industrial state policy.

3.2 The Role and Place of Russia in the Polycentric World

Keeping in mind all the challenges Russia is facing, there is no doubt that it should diversify its foreign trade and foreign economic policy, and adapt its foreign investment policy to the inexorable rise of China, India and other fast growth markets on a huge territory from Turkey to Indonesia and Latin America. It would be a mistake to see the European orientation of Russia in certain key spheres as a monopoly, exclusive and excluding other options. In the spheres of security, politics, and economy, it will be increasingly important to develop a multi-vector foreign policy, a policy of strategic depth. Besides other projects, it certainly applies to the BRICS group, which boasts huge potential and which already has proved its viability against all odds. The BRICS summit in Brasilia in July 2014 was a vivid demonstration that Russia is embedded in the new emerging international system and that it is almost impossible to isolate Russia on global scale.

A noticeable contribution of the BRICS to the construction of global polycentricity is that it is not the restoration of the balance of power in its traditional sense but rather a way to increase adaptability of aspiring countries to the world, a way to increase clout in international affairs without imposing views on others. This is a logic of rebalancing instead of counterpoising, the application of soft and smart power instead of pressing and coercing others.

It is highly probable that in the following decades the dynamics of international relations will be defined by two groups of states – those that comprise BRICS and the combination of the European Union and the United States (Gromyko 2011). In fact, this process is already ongoing. Under these circumstances, Russia finds itself in quite a unique situation when it is objectively one of the leading actors vis-à-vis the European Union and at the same time a member of the BRICS. Of course each of the BRICS has its own track of relations with America and Europe; what is important is that they pursue these tracks on the basis of polycentricity.

The strategic horizons of Russia are clearly seen in the Group of Twenty (G20) format. Moscow has used it and will continue to use it as an additional leverage to coordinate regional and global policies with China and with other fast growing economies and aspiring nations. The Group of Eight (G8) format, dismantled by its Western members because of the Ukrainian crisis, has however not exhausted its potential. The suspension of Russia's membership is not an insurmountable obstacle for Russia's pursuit of its foreign policy objectives, but to resume it sooner or later would be in everybody's interests.

One may argue that soon after the breakup of the bipolar world humanity found itself in a situation similar to the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, a situation of shifting alliances and competition among various centres of power. The notion of multipolarity (or polycentricity) became widespread. It took the place of the "concert of powers," born on the tailcoats of the Vienna Congress in 1815 that settled post-Napoleon Europe. However, the polycentric world is no repetition of past configurations of power. Instead it is a unique product of the latest stage of globalisation (Dynkin and Ivanova 2011).

The principle distinction of multipolarity in comparison to "concerts" of the past is threefold. First, the world is drifting away from Eurocentrism and in broader terms from Euro-Atlantism. For the first time in modern history on all continents there are aspiring nations which harbour transregional ambitions. Second, the ability to influence the course of regional or global affairs now depends not so much on dominance let alone on coercion but on persuasion, attractiveness and smart combinations of soft and hard power. Third, the second half of the 20th century gave us the legacy of international law, which is based on the Charter of the United Nations (UN). Therefore, there is good reason to argue that to declare the post-WWII Yalta-Potsdam system of international relations dead is a mistake. International law as it has evolved since 1945, as a component of the Yalta-Potsdam system, is still the benchmark to judge the legitimacy of states' actions, a sort of a straitjacket hampering the intentions of those prone to violate established norms of conduct.

International law, being a thoroughly codified system, still accommodates the ingredient of competition allowing for different interpretations of events. One of the best known manifestation of this is the deep-rooted dialectic of two principles: territorial integrity and self-determination. The former dominated in Europe for a long time after the Second World War. In other parts of the world the latter got the upper hand as a result of the anti-colonial struggle and the demise of European empires. But since the beginning of the 1990s, with the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, then Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine, the principle of self-determination again has come to the fore in Europe. It still keeps its attractiveness in the eyes of a number of Western European peoples, striving for their own statehood, such as Scots, Catalans and Flemish.

To be apprehensive of polycentricity because it ostensibly reconstructs the concert of powers of the 19th century is misleading for the three reasons mentioned. In any case, one may argue that to run counter to objective forces of history, to turn the clock back, is impossible. What is within our reach is to correct these processes, to maximise their advantageous consequences and to minimise negative ones. The worst thing to do is to pretend that nothing happens and to ignore the reality. It is not less senseless to warn against polycentricity on the ground that it is much more complicated and unpredictable than a bipolar or a unipolar world. The whole history of humankind is a testimony to the fact that mechanisms of regional and global regulation get more intricate, not more simple, and from this point of view the 21st century will be the continuation of its predecessors.

The law of rise and fall of great powers functioned all previous centuries; it appears that this law is carrying on. Not a single country, which dominated international affairs during recent periods of history, has succeeded in preserving its status or in enhancing it. In most cases, hegemonies of the past yielded their positions and slid back to lower categories. Sooner or later they were challenged by new aspiring nations and the next reconfiguration of regional, transregional and global influence took shape.

Such reconfigurations never happened overnight and the current one will take a significant time to solidify. The present system of international relations strands both the 20th and 21st centuries. It is still attached by numerous bonds to the post-WWII period. It is highlighted for example by drastic efforts of Euro-Atlantic states to prevent their marginalisation in the emerging polycentricity. Some observers still define the United States as a superpower; others reserve this status for rising China. However, it is a unique nature of polycentricity, which distinguishes it from the epochs of empires, concert of powers and superpowers, that new transregional or global hegemonies have a low chance to emerge and endure. Force fields of political, economic and other sorts of influence are distributed as even as never before and this trend is reinforcing. It will be a daunting task for any pretender to overcome the force of these fields.

3.3 THE ROLE AND PLACE OF RUSSIA IN THE CHANGING CONFIGURATION OF POWER

Russia had an opportunity in its history to enjoy the status of the largest land empire, later a superpower. In both capacities it played an essential role in shaping mechanisms of regional and global governance and regulation. After the breakup of the Soviet Union for the first time since the 18th century Russia found itself in the range of regional, even subregional actors. However, history has shown that the depth of its downgrading was not entirely conditioned by the iron logic of "rise and fall." Time showed that Russia's stance in the world could be significantly improved.

Presently Russia is a transregional power with elements of global reach. Today the thesis of Russia's international obligations sounds quite natural although in the recent past it was treated by many with scepticism and even dismissed as unrealistic. Even today quite a few specialists in Russia, not to mention foreign ones, urge Russia to avoid the "unbearable burden" of strategic depth.

I believe that this scepticism is misguided. For a long time successful internal development (and the 21st century makes it even more vivid) has relied heavily on a successful foreign policy. In the world, which is deeply intertwined, it has become an axiom. Of course, as Roman poet Horace said, *est modus in rebus*, there is a proper measure in things. Foreign policy, severed from reality, can be a burden for a country. But to find a right balance between foreign policy activity and demands of internal development is an indication matter of the quality of the public administration, certainly not the sign that such an activity is unnecessary. To waste domestic resources for the sake of illusionary foreign policy dividends is not less unacceptable than inaction in foreign policy detrimental to national interests.

A desire to restore the role of a superpower would be counterproductive for modern Russia not less than the inability to protect and further its interests as one of the centres of influence in the 21st century. Notably, aspirations of the Russian political class and society to see the country in the league of leading players in international affairs are not accompanied by messianic fervour or by declarations of some exceptionalism. At the same time the latter has returned to the political lexicon of US leaders, as was demonstrated by President Barack Obama's June 2014 speech in West Point. There are varieties of this approach to self-assessment in other countries. For example, since the time of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair the idea of the United Kingdom (UK) as a "pivotal power" has come into vogue. One may get the impression that the more some international actors are made to adjust their policies by global development trends, the more they are willing to prove that this is not happening.

To realise its potential in foreign policy Russia is going to use mechanisms of regulation inherited from the second part of the 20th century as well as mechanisms invented in the wake of the bipolar world. Among the first – the United Nations with all its ramifications, the World Trade Organisation (WTO, itself a continuation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade or GATT), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE, the evolution of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), etc. Among the second – G20, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Cooperative Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), the Eurasian Economic Union, etc. Without an active foreign policy it would be impossible for Russia to create or to contribute to the creation of these organisations and therefore to have a say in regional and global mechanisms of governance.

Moreover, in order to improve its chances to preserve an appropriate place in the 21st century world order, Russia, needs to act even more energetically on the international stage. Besides other things, it will be increasingly important to take the following paradox of modernity into account: in many cases it is impossible to enhance one country's influence without the buttress of regional integration even if this requires a degree of delegation of sovereignty upwards. In other words, it is a country's ability to establish itself as the core of a certain group of states. An obvious example is Germany, which has acquired its present status of a European heavyweight due to its membership in the European Union, or the United States as the core member state of NATO, or Brazil as a centrepiece of several Latin America organisations. In light of this instructive experience, it is very rational and advisable for Russia to press on with its role as a leader of integration projects in the post-Soviet space. Their further development and the rate of success in the following years will be a significant component of Russia's ambitions to embed itself in the international order as a transregional centre of power.

The emergence of new mechanisms of regional and global regulation and the reconfiguration of old ones will continue for years to come (Gromyko 2013a, Shmelev et al 2013). This will be a period when different international actors can join the process, correct it and shape it. If not for the assertive foreign policy of the Soviet Union, the United Nations would have looked different, less conducive for Moscow's interests. Why has the United Kingdom for all the decades past failed to become the driving force in the European Union and now is its only member pondering about leaving its ranks? Because long time ago it missed the opportunity to become one of its founding members and to invent its rules. Why is Brazil successfully establishing itself as a leader of Latin America? Because at the right time it made efforts to shape South American integration processes in a way, which was favourable to it. This pattern will continue to reproduce itself: some countries will enhance their positions in world affairs due to the application of strategic thinking ("horizon scanning"); others will lose out because of inaction, passiveness or wrong strategic calculations. Assumingly, Ukraine has lost the opportunity to become on par with Russia a driving force in the integration projects in the post-Soviet space.

3.4 SMALLER EUROPE (THE EU), RUSSIA AND THE US: STRATEGIES OF GEOPOLITICAL SURVIVAL

What variants of strategic development exist for Smaller Europe in the coming decades? According to a linear logic of evolution, the European Union is positioned to develop further as an autonomous actor of the 21st century. There are two ways to augment this status (Gromyko and Timofeev 2012). First, the inertia scenario – to augment its status with the help of well-known methods such as "power by example," i.e. through the attractiveness of its model of development, soft power, pooling of sovereignty, solidarity, etc.; second, the modernisation scenario – with the help of further federalisation including the field of foreign and defence policy. The first way is less problematic as it does not require further institutional changes, but at the same time less promising against the backdrop of the comprehensive crisis, which the European Union has been engulfed in for seven years now. Modernisation or slow death is quite a real perspective for the Union. In a situation when the eurozone experienced a genuine risk of breakup, when some of its members were on the verge of bankruptcy, when several countries are still in recession, when rates of unemployment in many places are record high and one of the major member states of the European Union is planning an in-out referendum, it is difficult to keep arguing that the EU model of development is still sound and does not need an overhaul.

The second scenario – quality changes in the European Union – is much more difficult as it runs counter to numerous entrenched interests. Its consequences are less predictable and risks are higher including the risk of a multi-speed Europe getting out of control and centrifugal forces taking upper hand over centripetal ones. Nevertheless, it is the second scenario which gives some hope that the project's gravity will restore its previous force. And the potential is still there. Even in its present weakened state the European Union is the biggest market in the world; it boasts half of the world expenditures for international development and half of the world social expenditures. Many of its member states enjoy high living standards and generous welfare. The development according to the second scenario cannot be limited to soft power instruments. Geopolitical weight, as Joseph Nye convincingly put it, will be defined in the 21st century by smart power, which combines in different situations hard and soft power (Nye 2011). It seems that under the veil of business as usual a significant part of the EU political class inclines to go down this rout.

At the same time, critics of further territorial and political enlargement of Smaller Europe abound. The view is that in its present state the European Union is already overstretched. Indeed one of the towering obstacles for internal and external development of the Union is its heterogeneity, which reached new heights since the biggest ever wave of new members in 2004 and the later additions of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia. The constant increase in social and economic inequality inside the European Union is its obvious weak point, which should be tackled. However, it is telling that in recent years economically and socially most problematic countries have been not so much "young" EU member states but countries in the periphery, which are represented not only by Ireland (accession year 1973), Greece (1981) or Spain and Portugal (1986) but also by Italy – one of the founding members. Therefore, the roots of the current problems of the integration project, laid bare by the economic crisis, go much deeper than the hasty enlargement of the 2000s.

Currently the structure of the European Union is based on a sort of minipolarity rather than multilateralism. Various centres of influence cooperate as well as compete. These inner tensions are accompanied by the desire of Smaller Europe, although diminished in recent years, to extend its sphere of influence to the post-Soviet space, to the whole of the Mediterranean region and the Middle East. So one may argue that there is both an internal strategic overstretch, producing "enlargement fatigue," and an external one, leading, for example, to the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean debacles (Yazkova 2014).

There is another variant of strategic development, which is worth analysing no matter which one of the two above scenarios will occur (the inertia scenario or the modernisation scenario). The logic goes that if it is impossible to stem the strategic sidelining of the European Union in global terms by relying only on its own resources, than perhaps it can be done in cooperation with external (f)actors. In other words – can partnership with other key international players prevent the further relative marginalisation of the Union?

Indeed, it does not seem implausible, judging by long-standing trends, that the European Union can avoid three fundamental corrosive factors. First, demography. In 1900 the population of Europe as a whole stood at one quarter of the global one. In 2014 it is at 10.3 percent. According to UN data, it has already reached its maximum and is projected to decline between 2013 and 2100 by a further 14 percent (UNDESA 2013). By 2050, according to the medium fertility estimates, the share of Europeans in the world population is expected to fall to 7.4 percent (UNDESA 2013). By 2065 one third of Europeans will be people older than 65. Second is the problem of the relative decline of EU economic competitiveness (World Economic Forum 2014). Moreover, the data show that this decline started not with the world economic crisis in 2008 but much earlier, in the 1990s. Third is the slow long-term decline in the European Union's share in world GDP. In 2002-2012 the European Union's share of world GDP (measured in purchasing power parity) shrank from 25 percent to 19.9 percent (the EU28 share in world nominal GDP in 2012 was 22.9 percent) (Eurostat 2014:75-76).

Individual states, acquiring the status of EU member states, in their majority have enjoyed the integration project's surplus value and additional instruments to guard their national interests inside the Union and outside it. Now it may be the turn of the European Union itself to use the same upgrading method – to enter an integration project of a higher level, i.e. transregional integration with other significant centres of influence. For the latter such a proposal may be the attractive option as well. With all its shortcomings, Smaller Europe is a global player in world trade, innovation, science, education, social and technical standards, in international development and partly in conflict prevention and resolution.

At the same time, it is doubtful that the EU in its present form can reasonably expect that there will be a "scramble for Europe" on the part of other international actors. The European Union in many aspects is in a mess and its appeal is far from what it was until recently. Almost the same can be said about Russia. Both Moscow and Brussels should admit that a possibility of their marginalisation in the 21st century is not scaremongering. It is quite real if geopolitical combinations, which do not include them, will become dominant, for example, "Chimerica" – that is, a global *directoire* by China and America – or a variant of a "tripolar world" between the United States, China and India.

Apparently there are two potential "integrators" for the European Union which may halt the weakening of strategic positions of Smaller Europe: Russia (the Greater Europe project) and the United States (a new transatlantic deal). There are no other more influential partners in the space of the European civilisation. Theoretically Turkey's accession can give the European Union a new existential boost (seventy million new EU citizens, a new dimension of multicultural nature of Smaller Europe, the geopolitical wedging of Europe in Asia, etc). But the probability of such an occurrence at this point in history is rather low. The enlargement fatigue may be seen not as a drawback but as a manifestation of common sense of the European Union. It is quite clear that in the foreseeable future the main task of the organisation is to solve its present difficulties and not to import new ones.

The project of Wider Europe is problematic for the European Union for a number of reasons: significant anti-Russian sentiments, especially in some East European and in Baltic countries, substantial differences in economic and political structures between Russia and the most economically advanced EU member states, mismatch in a number of strategic goals, etc. But arguably the attractiveness of such a strategic lock is also obvious, taking account of the size of Russia, its human capital and natural resources, advanced positions in several spheres: nuclear industry, space industry, energy, military complex, cross-regional infrastructural potential. Several macroeconomic parameters of Russia are appealing: the size of its GDP (the world's eighth), small budget deficit, low public debt, one of the largest gold and foreign currency reserves, relatively small share of the state in the economy, flat income tax, etc. With all its home-bred problems, the potential of the Russian economy is big. Last but not least, the strategic bond between Russia and the European Union would be a union between equals and not an asymmetrical relationship between a leader and a subordinate.

The idea of a new transatlantic deal is more comprehensible and straight-forward. The negotiations over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) point out in this direction. However, this type of strategic alignment would rule out the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), solidify Europe's subordinate status, lead towards the abandonment of European foreign and geopolitical ambitions and over- reliance on the United States, whose foreign policy and economic interests in many ways do not coincide with the interests of Europe. The European Union will have to share with the United States the burden of hard power and the responsibility for future instances of military adventurism abroad. Even more important is to answer the question: won't such a union be directed at the salvation of the Washington consensus, which betrayed its weariness if not to say exhaustion since the start of the world economic crisis in 2008?

There is a view that a retreat of the European Union to the role of the "little brother" to America's "big brother" is justified for the reason that it will provide Smaller Europe with inside influence on the policy of Washington. However this idea has already proved its inanity not once, but several times. The recent conspicuous example was the irreparable damage inflicted by Washington foreign policy on the political career of Tony Blair, who lost much of his prestige and credibility when he resolved to stick with US President George Bush's unpopular (in Europe) decision to invade Iraq. At the same time Europe has never been free from anti-Americanism. US reputation was severely dented because of the causes of the world economic crisis. The "American dream" has lost much of its appeal. The country politically is deeply divided, its infrastructure, services and welfare long time ago ceased to be the envy of the world. The essential question is: if the US is in the phase of long-term decline, isn't it a wishful thinking to count on the strategic lock with it to uplift Smaller Europe globally?

Table 1. Share in the world's GDP (PPP), %

	1995	2007	2020	2030
US	21,7	19,4	18,3	16,6
China	5,5	10,1	17,7	22,7
Japan	8,3	6,0	4,6	3,6
India	3,1	4,3	6,9	8,7
Russia	2,8	2,9	3,1	2,7
EU27	24,5	20,8	18,6	15,6
France	3,6	3,0	2,5	2,1
Germany	5,3	3,9	3,2	2,5
UK	3,4	3,1	2,9	2,5

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU.com).

The table above demonstrates that the positions of the United States and the European Union are weakening and apparently will continue to do so. It should be noted that Russia, according to these figures, is in a shaky situation as well. With the present structure of its economy and even in case of moderate growth, which presently is not on the cards, its share in world GDP will probably stagnate or will decrease in comparison to other more dynamic centres of growth. The country desperately needs neo-industrial modernisation policy. The Ukrainian crisis and anti-Russian sanctions have shown that over-dependence on export of natural resources is hardly sufficient to preserve a top position in the premier league of the 21st century.

Theoretically there is a third variant – a new "concert of powers" in the triangle Russia-Smaller Europe-United States. This combination would solve the dilemma, which partner the European Union should build a strategic partnership with, Russia or America; it would unite the space of the European civilisation in its entirety; it would ensure that the three "concert" players play the role of global leaders in economic, political and military affairs for several decades. It would be Wider Europe Plus.

Unfortunately, the probability of such a scenario at the moment is low. First, the United States seems to be still stuck in the unipolarity mindset and therefore will not agree to a status of *primus inter pares* in the mentioned triangle. Second, taking the low visibility of the European Union as a global player into account, it is clear that in the foreseeable future Russia and the United States would prefer to deal directly with national capitals rather than with Brussels. Such state of affairs would only prolong the present stagnation of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), would further marginalise those EU member states that do not yield much influence. Third, in Europe and America anti-Russian sentiments are stronger than anti-American feelings in Smaller Europe. Fourth, if relations between China and the United States become more tense, it would be difficult to expect Moscow to preserve equidistance with Beijing and Washington as it would likely tend to support the former.

Each of the strategic locks, outlined above, have their own logic and attractiveness (Greater Europe and the new "concert of powers"). Even though, against the backdrop of the Ukrainian crisis, it seems impossible to implement any of them, it would nonetheless be a mistake to write them off entirely. The world in ten-fifteen years' time will be a very different place. History is prone to surprises and sometimes these surprises are positive.

However, if the dream of the European civilisation coming together – Greater Europe from Lisbon to Vladivostok – ultimately is not going to come to pass, then the success of integration projects in the post-Soviet space would acquire additional and even existential nature for Russia.

Whatever course the history decides to take, whatever combinations of power and influence Russia gravitates to, it is imperative for Moscow to establish itself as a core of integration processes. The more successful such a policy proves to be, the broader transregional and global manoeuvre Russia is going to have in the 21st century.