

*Speech of Mr. Igor Ivanov at the dinner
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Russia and the United Kingdom in the Changing World

Our world has never stopped changing. However, the scale and the speed of transformations that we observe today is truly unprecedented. We confront changes every day the moment we wake up, open our laptops, switch on our TV sets, get into cars or enter the office.

The most radical changes cannot bypass the system of international relations. Of course, the change has not happened overnight. Still, the gradual erosion of the world order, which existed in the second half of the XX century, has become much more rapid and explicit. I do not claim to submit to you a comprehensive picture of the current international developments, but I would like to single out a number of trends that appear to be the most important, in my opinion:

- The level of governance in the international system is going down. I do not want to claim that this governance was ideal**

earlier, but for a long time it allowed us to provide for a degree of stability and to avoid most dangerous crises;

- **The global non-proliferation regime is eroding;**
- **The legal framework of arms control (including strategic arms control) that we were gradually building over many decades, is almost completely destroyed;**
- **Between Russia and the US – the leading nuclear powers – no negotiation mechanisms on strategic stability matters are in operation;**
- **Regional conflicts are more and more rising to the global level; for instance, we have never seen a situation in the Middle East, where military people from Russia, the United States and a number of other powers would be in direct contact with each other;**
- **At the same time, over the last years, we witnessed new threats and security challenges emerging. Such threats and challenges have a direct impact on the regional and global stability. Can you imagine what will be the consequences if cyber attacks are committed against nuclear control and**

command centers or critical urban and national infrastructure;

- **If we add to this list many serious problems in key bilateral relations between major powers (such as relations between Moscow and Washington or Washington and Beijing), we get a pretty bleak state of the world picture.**

This less than ideal background complicates even further relations between Russia and Great Britain, which have many specific problems of their own. Of course, one can say that relations between our two countries during many centuries of our interaction were always difficult and complicated, even when we were allies during the First and the Second World Wars. Nevertheless, such an explanation can hardly satisfy anybody in Moscow or in London.

I do not think that we should now start looking for scapegoats to impose on them all responsibility for our relations hitting the lowest point in many decades. It is hard to believe that we would come to a common view, and I do not see any value in such an exercise.

It might be more rational and more productive to try to assess how our two nations stand internationally, in view of the new threats and challenges and keeping in mind long-term interests of each of the sides in its relations with the other side.

During my long diplomatic career – as first Deputy Minister and later as Minister of Foreign Affairs - I had an opportunity to interact with many British policymakers. Let me mention, in particular, Robin Cook, Malcolm Rifkind, Jack Straw, George Robertson, and Chris Patten. With each of them, I had very interesting negotiations on sensitive matters – such as the Balkan crisis, the Iraqi war, the NATO enlargement and NATO’s relations with Russia, the Russian accession to the Council of Europe, EU – Russia relations and so on.

There is no need to remind you about how difficult these matters were; on most of them, we had more than significant disagreements with our British partners. However, on a number of questions, we were able to reach mutually acceptable solutions. And where that turned out to be impossible, we at least tried to minimize the negative impact on each other.

Let me give you one example to illustrate this point. You might remember the early stages of the Iraqi crisis and the events that preceded the beginning of the war. Our respective positions on the situation in and around Iraq diametrically opposed each other. Later on, Russia condemned the military intervention in this country.

Nevertheless, in parallel with the unfolding Iraqi crisis, we were working on the President Putin's state visit to the United Kingdom. The visit had to be the first trip of this level in the last hundred and sixty years. And this visit did take place. Both sides made their best to turn this visit into a success story. In his address to Her Majesty Elizabeth II, Vladimir Putin noted: "The atmosphere of good will, in which the visit took place, is strong evidence of a new quality of relations between our two countries". Delivering a speech in London, Vladimir Putin stated that both Russia and Great Britain have a mutual and articulated desire for strategic partnership. In this context, he quoted an English proverb: "Where There Is A Will, There Is A Way".

It seems to me that the main problem in our relations over the last years was exactly the lack of political will, which has to open the

doorway to cooperation. For some reasons, we lost this will, and our conversations today boil down to mutual accusations and not the search for areas of mutual understanding. This pattern is not productive: we cannot find solutions without keeping in mind a broader picture and long-term interests of our two countries.

As a result, we have a paradoxical situation: two permanent UN Security Council members with specific responsibility to maintain peace and security in the world are not engaged in any meaningful security-related dialogue with each other.

How can we get out of this situation? It is not going to be easy, but I would suggest following the English proverb and demonstrate political will. This has to be done on both sides.

In terms of specific steps that we in Moscow and in London might consider, let me start with saying that there are no universal answers to our security problems, nor can there be. We are facing problems that are too complicated and multifaceted. Nevertheless, I will take the liberty of expressing a few thoughts on the issue.

To begin with, we all need to realize that the world has already entered a zone of heightened security risks, both global and

regional. It is no longer a question of some distant or even not-too-distant future; it is a question of the present.

Second, if this trend continues, then no country or group of countries can feel safe. It is a global crisis and even the most advanced missile defense systems or other technological innovations will not insulate us from it.

Third, the only way out of the current situation is through political negotiations, which should take all factors into account, including the new balance of powers in the world. This is an incredibly difficult task, even compared to the experience of the Cold War.

Fourth, in addition to solving current problems, we also need to develop strategic solutions that would allow us to comprehensively assess all aspects of security in the modern world and conclude the necessary agreements. Right now, we – meaning everyone involved in arms control – are only reacting to technological advances, and with a significant lag at that. The task is to overtake this progress and quickly block the most destabilizing features of the arms race while we still can.

Fifth, and this is crucial, the process needs to be initiated by Russia and the United States. No other country, much less an international organization, has the political weight to reverse the negative trends in international relations and bring a positive agenda to the table. The conversation on global security should not come down to the dialogue between Moscow and Washington, but the two countries still have a special responsibility to maintain peace and security in the world.

However, I would not underestimate the role of the United Kingdom either. This is a country with a long and in many ways unique experience in international relations. British partners and opponents alike have always envied the high professionalism of British diplomacy. The United Kingdom has a remarkable tradition of independent and original strategic thinking. Great Britain is and will continue to be an indispensable partner for building a new safer world order.

I am sure that many people in Russia and the UK understand that it is in our common interest to gradually restore political dialogue. Yes, we are different, and on many issues we will have disagreement. But we must also be aware that the world is becoming

increasingly fragile and that we must cooperate to prevent a major catastrophe. I remain optimistic and believe that we will be able to revive normal dialogue, which is equally necessary for Russia and the UK.