

**Vladimir Lukin**

**European Security: A Year after Istanbul and Future Prospects**

On November 19, 2000 was the first anniversary from the day when the Heads of States and Governments of the OSCE participating countries gathered in Istanbul and put their signatures under the Charter for European Security. The purpose of this Charter was to draw experience from the lessons of the last decade of the 20th century and to forecast the main trends in the evolution of the prospective international relations in Europe.

**Three stages**

The Charter of Istanbul was preceded by two fundamental documents, both of which in one way or another reflected the changing European realities of their times.

A quarter of a century ago – in 1975, the Helsinki Final Act, which was the starting point for the pan-European process, was a response to the situation which had developed in result to the global nuclear balance achieved between the East and the West. While in the “Third World” military conflicts of limited and local character were still possible, in Europe, divided then by the “Iron Curtain” into hostile military blocks, any attempts at using power at a large scale threatened to commit the mankind to a collective suicide. Thus the decision of the European states, as well as the USA and Canada, to jointly formulate the rules for their conduct on the continent. The basic of them were the inviolability of frontiers, non-use of power, non-interference into internal affairs, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation, wide contacts between peoples. The common aim was obvious: to prevent Europe from turning once more into a detonator of a world catastrophe, where it, as it had already happened twice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, found itself to be the principal field of battle as well as its main victim.

Of course, the final goals pursued by the 35 participants of the first Summit on Security and Cooperation in Europe were far from unanimous. The administration of the USSR was trying to reinforce its advantageous post-war territorial and political *status quo*, while the leaders of the Western states, on the contrary, were trying to secure the possibility of its revision. Thus the interest of the Soviet side essentially in the first “basket” of the Final Act – principles of international relations, especially the inviolability of frontiers, while that of the West – in the third, dealing with humanitarian problems and contacts between peoples. Nevertheless, both sides agreed that the whole complex of the problems, inherited by Europe from the Second World War, had to be resolved by exclusively political means.

This basic concord successfully withstood the test of the final outbreak of the Cold War at the end of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s which was provoked by a whole series of events both in Europe and beyond – the deployment both by the USSR and the USA of new middle-range missiles, by the military conflicts in Central America and Africa, events in Poland, the entry of the Soviet Army into Afghanistan, etc. To a considerable extent, the pan-European process was still able to continue even in the circumstances of severe confrontation between the East and the West, and the historical transformations, which radically changed the outlook of the world by the beginning of the 90s – the fall of the Berlin Wall, unification of Germany, collapse of the communist

regimes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – went through peacefully. The bloodstained tragedy, the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia, remained to be an exception. Even more, it was just in the Warsaw Pact member countries that political transformations went through comparatively fluently, while in Yugoslavia and Albania the situation turned to be different.

The Charter of Paris for a New Europe, signed by the participating countries of the pan-European process in 1990, relegated to the past a period of 40 years of confrontation on the continent, marked by permanent mutual distrust and the quest for security on the track of arms race. With the purpose of terminating this race, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) was signed in Vienna.

Unlike the Helsinki Final Act, which was built on the principle of the coexistence of different, even more importantly – opposing social systems, the Charter of Paris was based on the priority of universal human values over ideological, social or national. It looked like finally Europe had found the way to create a single space “from the Atlantic to the Ural Mountains” or even up to Vladivostok, with all the states honoring the same for all fundamental principles – those of social market economy, democratic plurality, human rights, and where the relations between states were built upon equality, respect for lawful interests of each other, solidarity against the menacing challenges of the third millennium and, the most important – on equal for all security.

There was some progress actually achieved in this direction. With the abolition of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the Warsaw Pact Organization, and, finally, with the collapse of the USSR, there began the creation of new relationships between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and later between the states of the post-Soviet area and the Western Euro-Atlantic structures which had emerged in the era of the Cold War. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe embarked on integrating into NATO and the European Union, while Russia and other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – on entering into bilateral agreements with them. Thus Russia in 1994 signed in Corfu the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation (APC) with the European Union and in 1997 in Madrid – the Fundamental Act on the Relationship between the Russian Federation and NATO. In 1996 Russia joined the Council of Europe – the oldest pan-European structure, committed to ensuring that its members complied with human rights and fundamental liberties.

In parallel, there went the construction of the institutional structure of the OSCE intended to facilitate the fulfillment of the goals set before this pan-European organization.

Nevertheless, by the end of the 90s it was increasingly becoming obvious that the operating efficiency of the OSCE was far from satisfactory. The documents adopted by it often turned to have been just good intentions, and the cumbersome bureaucratic machine was working futilely, frequently duplicating other organizations. In the sphere of economic cooperation, a decisive role was played by the European Union, in the human rights arena – by the Council of Europe. The function of the principal peacekeeping instrument, committed to preventing and resolving politico-military conflicts, was increasingly being assumed by NATO with its integrated structure under rigid control from the USA. The pan-European process started to halt, and it definitely needed some invigorating stimulus to enable it to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This necessity became especially evident with the expansion of NATO on behalf of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which gave rise to the most profound, since the end of the Cold War, crisis of trust between the East and the West of the continent. Russia, weakened by structural difficulties of the transitional period, regarded such expansion as a potential threat to its security. This crisis became even deeper during the Kosovo conflict, when NATO, lead by the USA, for the first time since 1945 used military force in Europe against a sovereign state – a member of the OSCE.

The Kosovo conflict gave birth to far-reaching consequences by stimulating a substantial evolution in the approaches of its participants to security, both of their own and that of the European continent as a whole.

Following NATO, Russia adjusted its military doctrine by abandoning its former commitment not to be first to use nuclear weapons in the event of direct threat to its vital interests, first of all, to its territorial integrity. Under its insistence, the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty was adapted to the qualitatively modified strategic situation, conditioned by the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact Organization and NATO expansion, especially in relation to flank rules (*Ed. note – by Article V, CFE Treaty*).

The development of the persistent tension in the Caucasus sub-region into the second Chechen war was to some extent an echo of Kosovo. Disregarding the attitude to the Milosevic regime, the prospects of finding oneself, like the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, facing a disintegration of the state brought about by the pressure of inside separatist forces supported by outside military power, spoke louder than words. Mostly for this reason, contrary to the first, extremely unpopular Chechen war (1994-1996), this time the majority of the population supported the “antiterrorist operation” in Chechnya. The hypersensitive reaction of the West to the excessive, according to their view, use of force by the Russian military not only against separatist bandits but also against civilians, negatively affected the image of the state on the outside, nevertheless, was met with little response in Russia. The greatest part of the Russian public saw in that not so much the concern of the West over human rights, but rather further attempts at geopolitical isolation of Russia and cynical interests in the oil recourses in the Caucasus.

In its turn, the United States, which had tested and illustratively demonstrated in the Balkans the effectiveness of its satellites-linked-to-computers military equipment, embarked on increasing its military expenditure which had been significantly reduced after the end of the Cold War. From 2000, in the course of three years, it is expected to increase by 112 billion dollars, which constitutes 60 percent of the current annual military spendings of the European members of NATO taken together. The US Congress approved a program for creating a national anti-missile defense system which undermines the 1972 Soviet-American Treaty on Anti-Missile Defense – the foundation for global strategic stability and the cornerstone in the process of strategic arms limitation.

Finally, the countries of the Western Europe – members of the EU, concerned about their lagging behind the transatlantic ally in terms of high-tech warfare, which will onwards determine the outcome of local conflicts – the principal military treat of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – have accelerated the forging of the Common Foreign Policy and Security Policy committed to becoming the basis for the European “defense identity.”

All these facts could not fail to affect the prospects of continuing the pan-European process. By the end of the 90s, it became obvious that the “new world order from Vancouver to Vladivostok”, which was referred to by then the US Secretary of State

James Baker in 1989 in Berlin in paraphrasing the famous formula by de Gaulle, failed to come true. And again, as it had already happened in the course of preparing the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, Europe was confronted with an alternative: either to move forward to common guarantees of a more reliable security and effective cooperation on the continent, or to retreat back to the dividing lines and confrontation which was characteristic of the Cold War. The answer to this question had to be presented by the Charter for European Security adopted by the OSCE summit in Istanbul.

### Difficult compromise

The author of the present article was a witness of the difficult, sometimes even strained atmosphere of the Istanbul summit. In the foreground there was the heated polemics around Kosovo and Chechnya. Sensitive issues also included the peacekeeping missions of Russia in the post-Soviet area – in the Caucasus, Middle Asia, the Transdnier area. Thus, there is no surprise that under these circumstances the final document of the Istanbul summit contains a number of ambiguous, sometimes contradicting formulations which may be arbitrarily interpreted by the parties.

For example, the reaffirmed inherent right of each and every participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements, including treaties of alliances, is interpreted by the West as the renunciation on the part of Russia of its principled objection to the expansion of NATO further east. Russia, however, is able with equal conviction to refer to the phrase that the participants will not strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other States, which, from the point of view of Russia, might exactly be the implication of the expansion process of the Alliance, especially into the post-Soviet area.

Equally ambivalent seems the provision which establishes that within the OSCE, no State, group of States or organization can have any pre-eminent responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE area or can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence. The West finds in this provision an indirect denunciation of the thesis about exclusive interests of Russia in the area of the former USSR and, consequently, its particular responsibility for maintaining peace and security there. Russia, in its turn, finds it curbing the “NATO-centric” tendencies, the attempts to turn the North Atlantic Alliance into the principal instrument for carrying out peacekeeping operations in Europe which, furthermore, would, in conformity with the new strategic concept of the Alliance, reserve itself the right to take unilateral decisions related to them. The reaffirmation made by participants of the Charter of the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security and its crucial role in contributing to security and stability in the region, of the rights and obligations of the OSCE members under the UN Charter, including their commitment on the issue of non-use of force or the threat of force, peaceful resolution of disputes, also supports this attitude of Russia. The problem of the peacekeeping role of the OSCE *per se* gave rise in this context to lengthy arguments: Russia was doing its utmost to expand it by adding a truly pan-European character, while the NATO countries were trying to maximally narrow it by concentrating essentially on the conflicts in the post-communist states of the former USSR and the Balkans.

Finally, there was confirmed the right of the OSCE, on a case-by-case basis and by consensus to decide to play a role in peacekeeping in Europe. The OSCE will be given the leading role exclusively in those cases when the participating States judge it to be the most effective organization, capable of performing peacekeeping actions with the support of separate States or their organizations. It might be possible to present here many more examples of this kind of ambiguous provisions intended to find a common denominator between different, sometimes opposing attitudes of dozens of Heads of States and Governments.

However in total, the texts signed in Istanbul are undoubtedly a significant step forward. Their main advantage is the consensus on the part of the participants in relation to the character of threats and challenges which confront Europe on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They include, above all, violations of democracy, of human rights and fundamental liberties, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, manifestations of intolerance, aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and antisemitism. These sometimes are expressed in such extreme forms as torture, ethnic cleansing, discrimination of national minorities and women, international terrorism and extremism with the application of violence. Among the principal common threats there are rightfully mentioned widespread corruption, organized crime and drug trafficking.

It was acknowledged that serious consequences to the European security could be also caused by economic problems, environmental degradation and a widening gap between the levels of development and welfare in various parts of the continent.

The most important accomplishment is that the Charter of Istanbul, following the Charter of Paris, is based on the concept of indivisible security in Europe: it acknowledges that the security of every single participating country is inseparable from the security of others, while all its dimensions – human, economic, politico-military – ought to be regarded as a whole. The commitments adhered to by the participating States in the framework of the Charter are no longer considered to be exceptionally an internal matter of any individual country – all of them are accountable to their citizens and responsible to each other for their implementation of those commitments.

In order to prevent those commitments from becoming, as it had already repeatedly happened in the past, merely good intentions, the participants of the Istanbul summit gave added attention to providing the use of instruments. Alongside with ordinary missions of assistance in organizing and monitoring of elections to ensure their democratic character, in helping to create conditions for negotiations that could facilitate the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the execution of peacekeeping missions, the Charter of Istanbul provides for qualitatively new forms of OSCE operational activity.

The 25-year-long experience of the activity of the amorphous, often ineffective institutions of the OSCE convinced the participants of the Istanbul summit that it was not expedient to further increase their number or scope. Instead of proliferating new costly bureaucratic structures, the low efficiency of which had for a long time been receiving much substantiated criticism, the emphasis was now given to a flexible framework for coordinating the activity of other regional organizations. Precisely that was the purpose of the Platform for Co-operative Security adopted alongside with the Charter. Its goal is “to strengthen the mutually reinforcing nature of the relationship between those organizations and institutions concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area.”

In principle, this aim had already been set in the Common Concept for the Development of Cooperation between Mutually Reinforcing European Institutions, approved at the 1997 Ministerial Council of the OSCE meeting in Copenhagen, though never implemented. Duplication of tasks, shifting of responsibilities, struggle for leadership, resulted in various European organizations more often conflicting than assisting each other.

After long discussions, which preceded the Istanbul summit, experts agreed that it would be counterproductive to create in advance a hierarchy of organizations or a permanent division of labor among them. Instead, a pragmatic formulation about general efforts at developing and maintaining political and operational coherence among all the various bodies dealing with security was included into the Platform. The issue of the OSCE amidst these organizations was resolved by a compromise: “Recognizing the key integrating role that the OSCE can play, we offer the OSCE, when appropriate, as a flexible coordinating framework to foster cooperation, through which various organizations can reinforce each other drawing on their particular strengths.”

The documents adopted in Istanbul emphasize the importance of sub-regional cooperation as an element of enhancing security in the region as a whole. The Pact on the stability for south-eastern Europe, adopted under the auspices of OSCE in the aftermath of the crisis in Kosovo, may serve as concrete example of this kind of cooperation.

Russia is entitled to become, with the resolution of its particular difficulties and problems, not so much an object but a subject in jointly regulating all these most complicated sub-regional – pan-European problems.

### **What’s next?**

The developments in Europe and in the rest of the world after the Istanbul agreements reaffirmed the reasonableness of the re-assessment of the pan-European process priorities made in the course of the OSCE summit. An increasingly important role there is being played by the interaction between various international organizations, facilitating a complex approach to the problems of European security and cooperation.

A notable stimulus there was also the parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia. The continuity of the main directions in the foreign policy course of the country, which have been formed during the last years, is, in particular, reflected in the revised Conception of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, the novelty of which is expressed in greater pragmatism, economic sense, the priority of national goals.

The most important part in the Conception is devoted to Europe: “Relations with the European countries are traditionally top priority directions in the foreign policy of Russia. The principal aim of the Russian foreign policy in relation to Europe is to create a stable and democratic system of pan-European security and cooperation.” In this aspect, emphasis is given to the interest in a further balanced development of the multifunctional character of the OSCE and the utmost employment of the regulative potential accumulated in the course of its quarter of a century of existence. Russia is determined to vigorously oppose any narrowing of the OSCE functions, in particular the attempts at focusing its activity exclusively on the post-Soviet area and the Balkans.

The realization of this kind of attitude has proved to be far from simple. The atmosphere during the current session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Bucharest

(June 2000) was quite strained, in particular, when the discussion focused upon the Chechen war or the Russian peacekeeping missions in the post-Soviet area. The same issues likewise impaired the relations of Russia with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, where the Russian delegation failed to deal with the situation effectively and was denied the right to vote.

Nevertheless, the basic underlying principle of comprehensive approach in the Charter for European Security, implying a flexible employment of the potentials of various international organizations, as well as effective bilateral contacts of the new Russian President with the leaders of both the major CIS countries and the countries of Eastern, Central and Western Europe (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Italy, Spain, Germany, Great Britain) enabled them to avoid the “freezing” of Russia’s European activity. In particular, the dialogue Russia – NATO, which had been frozen as a result of the Kosovo crisis, was again re-opened.

Still, the new Russian administration rightfully regards the European Union but not NATO as its main interlocutor. The relations with the former are defined by the Conception of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation as having the key importance for both parties: “The Russian Federation views the EU as one of its most important political and economic partners and will seek to develop with it a profound, stable and long-lasting cooperation, devoid of any vacillations depending on the political situation.”

The exceptional attention Moscow is paying to the European Union is determined not only by the fact that it has long become the principal direction in the development of Russia’s external economic relations (the EU states account for approximately 37 percent of the overall Russian foreign trade). By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the process of European integration, which at present involves 25 countries, is expected to include most of the states of the continent – the list of potential candidates to join it consists of 13 countries. This will undoubtedly have a crucial impact on Russian interests.

The process of integration is paralleled, albeit unevenly, by its intensification – the transition to a single currency, institutional reform, extending the supra-national responsibilities of the Union institutions, gradual, albeit difficult, formation of the common foreign policy and security policy, “defense identity.” As a result, the European Union acquires all three international dimensions – human, economic and politico-military (The Council of Europe confines itself only with the first, while the North-Atlantic Alliance – with the last). Naturally, all this significantly enhances the role of the EU in the international arena. In these circumstances there arises the obvious question about delimiting the areas of competence of the EU and OSCE. The Charter of Istanbul answers this question by suggesting to employ in the relations with other organizations, different by their constitution and assignment in Europe, the “principle of subsidiarity”: all organizations and institutions are expected to work within their sphere of competence, avoiding duplication and creating a flexible framework for cooperation of the various mutually reinforcing efforts.

Precisely such principles determines the relationship between Russia and the EU. Alongside with the Agreement for Partnership and Cooperation of June 24, 1994, which, it is necessary to acknowledge, has not yet acquired its full effect, the dynamics of the relationship is defined by two new important instruments – “Collective Strategy of the European Union in Relation to Russia”, approved in the EU summit in Cologne on June 4, 1999, and the “Strategy for the Development of the Relations of the Russian

Federation with the European Union for a Medium-Term Prospect (2000-2010).” The first was officially presented to the Russian side at the “triple” meeting Russia –EU consisting of its current, former and future presidents, the second was presented at the summit Russian Federation – EU in Helsinki on October 22 of the same year by Vladimir Putin, who at that time was the Head of the Government of the Russian Federation.

In comparing these two documents, it is easy to notice the coincidence or closeness of their principal provisions, which considerably facilitated the preparation of the Charter of Istanbul for European Security. It is first of all applicable to the definition given by the participating States of the principal task which confronts them on the threshold of the 21st century. In the Collective Strategy of the EU it is defined as “maintaining European stability, assisting global security and the quest for responses to the common challenges on the continent through enhancing the cooperation with Russia.” In its turn, the Russian “Strategy of Development” focuses on the “formation and strengthening of the partnership between Russia and the European Union on pan-European and global issues as well as prevention and resolution of local conflicts in Europe by means of joint efforts and relying upon the international law and non-use of power.”

The achievement of this goal must be assisted by the consolidation of democracy, rule of law and the state institutions of Russia, by its integration into the common economic and social area, and the cooperation for enhancing stability and security in Europe and beyond. This will necessarily involve a wide range of problems – creation of a pan-European economic and legal infrastructure to form the basis for increasing the scope of trade and investments, environmental protection, likewise combating organized crime, money laundering, tax evading, illegal capital export, violation of customs regulations, money counterfeiting, trafficking in human beings and drugs, and illegal immigration.

A basically new direction in the cooperation between the EU and the Russian Federation is the project of joint initiatives in foreign policy, the co-ordination of positions in international organizations, the prospects for Russian participation in the Petersberg (peacekeeping) WEU missions of conflict prevention and crisis management, including the framework of the OSCE and UN. The Russian side is prepared to go further forward in this area by proposing the EU a military-technological cooperation, taking in regard the prospect of creating the European “defense identity”, to conclude agreements for activity in the area of law enforcement.

The implementation of these strategic initiatives will certainly require considerable time and effort on the part of both parties. A proclamation of the very best intentions does not necessarily preclude disagreements and even crises. In particular, at the end of 1999, the relations between Russia and the EU, as well as with other international organizations – OSCE, NATO, the Council of Europe were notably clouded by the second Chechen war. In the course of the session of the Council of Ministers and the summit of the European Union in Helsinki, there were adopted resolutions which acknowledged the right of Russia to self-defense, combat against terrorism and to the preservation of territorial integrity, but sharply denounced the violation of human rights which occurred in the process of the conflict. Some of the programs in the framework of the cooperation between the EU and the Russian Federation, in particular TASIC, were temporarily frozen. (At present they have been re-opened).



Nevertheless, these disparities failed to become insurmountable stumbling blocks for the continuation of the dialogue. On May 29, 2000, a current summit meeting of the European Union and Russia – the first after the new President of Russia officially took his office – was convened in Moscow.

The final Joint Statement presented a favorable assessment of the intensification of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the EU on the issues of non-proliferation and disarmament, on the projects for assistance in the destruction of chemical weapons, likewise on the transportation, storage and utilization of plutonium. The expediency of exploiting the ample possibilities presented by the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe in developing comprehensive regional cooperation, the strengthening of stability and statehood of the countries of Transcaucasia – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia was also emphasized.

A particular role is assigned there to the problem of institutional balance in the relations of the European Union both with Russia and the USA, which is an OBSC member and a full and equal participant of the pan-European process.

It is illustrative that almost immediately after the trip of the EU leaders' delegation to Moscow, the fourteenth EU–USA summit with the participation of President B. Clinton convened in Lisbon on May 31, 2000. In the center of the negotiations there were the problems of the new economics, European security, relations with Russia, stabilization in the Balkans, transformation of the UN, and the situations in Africa and the Middle East. The coincidence of the greatest part of this agenda with the talks during the EU-RF meeting is obvious. Like the Russian delegation, the representatives of the American administration emphasized that the European Union was a “vitaly important strategic partner of the USA.” In relation to Russia, the Final Statement emphasizes that both parties would like it to show “more solidarity and compatibility of action with unified Europe.”

In the same vein is also expressed the attitude of Russia towards the place of the USA in the system of pan-European security. Moscow considers that it ought to be ensured by “the efforts of Europeans themselves without isolating the USA or NATO but likewise without their monopoly on the continent.” In suggesting to expand and enhance the structures of the permanent dialogue between the RF and EU by means of annual meetings in the framework which would include the Head of the Government of the Russian Federation, the President of the European Union Commission, the Chairmen of the Houses of the Federal Meeting of the RF, and the President of the European Parliament, Moscow is supporting Finland's proposal to convene a trilateral summit of Russia, the European Union and the USA. Its essence is to ensure the continuation of the dialogue between each of the two corners of this triangle, the RF and EU, the EU and the USA, the USA and the RF, thus proceeding, not at the expense of a third party, but with mutually reinforcing effect.

A similar architecture of European security, where bilateral cooperation and interrelations between various international organizations (UN, OSCE, EU, WEU, NATO, CE, CIS, etc.) are in concord and compliment each other, could not only maintain stability on the continent but likewise serve as an example for other regions of the heterogeneous world of the 21st century.

For the implementation of this truly historical, and important for global civilization, regional project in the sphere of security and cooperation, it is necessary to realize in the concrete political practice three crucially important conditions.

First, the European Union has to present more clearly defined fundamental parameters of what is meant under the prospect of “European identity” in the sphere of foreign policy and security. It is necessary, in particular, to overcome the Cold War complex of perceiving the USA in the capacity of an “inside factor” for Europe, with Russia as an “outside factor.” This complex presents a dead-end not only for Russia but even more for the prospects of the “European identity” itself.

Second, the USA must overcome its quite deeply ingrained complex of the “eternal unipolarity” of the world lead by Washington, the rejection of genuinely collective efforts for the enhancement of security, which starts with collective decisions on the most crucial issues. The framework: “USA decides, everyone complies”, has already caused serious problems not only in its relations with Russia but with Europe as well. Russia is far from interested in their further deterioration. On the contrary, Russia is interested in practical expressions of collective efforts and is demonstrating that both in the Balkans and in its attitude to the problem of anti-missile defense.

Third, Russia will be able to become a worthy and equal participant of the European security “triangle” only in the eventuality of its practical demonstration that the European priority for Russia is not just a concept but also its real political orientation. This is first of all related to the internal political orientation: democracy in Russia must become the leading reality, and fundamental European values, not just a slogan (even though constitutional) but practice. In the sphere of foreign policy, Russia is no less entitled to a “Russian identity” than Europe and the USA, but within the framework of a collectively worked out strategy of common security of the “triangle” for a long-term strategic perspective. Like the USA, which has not only its European policy but likewise Asian, Latin American, and other interests, and Europe, its African and Middle Eastern ones, Russia was, is and will be involved in all the issues of interest to it. But the level of priority and co-ordination must naturally be based on complete reciprocity, precisely and unambiguously defined and realized in the framework of a pan-European project of collective tripartite security. Such a course is one of the principal prerequisites for the existence both of Russia and Europe in the world of the 21st century.

The Charter of Istanbul and the logic of the subsequent events open definite possibilities for the progress in this particular direction. Will we manage to take advantage of that or are we bound to lose this historic chance?