

The article is written at the request of the thematic issue of NATO “Securing Our World”, which will be presented at the NATO Wales Summit, September 2014

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## WHY IS THE WEST FAILING IN ITS RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA? AND WHY NOT ALWAYS?

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### BRIEFLY, ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Solomon Passy was Bulgarian Minister for Foreign Affairs (2001-2005). In that capacity he negotiated and signed Bulgaria’s accessions to NATO (2002-2004) and the EU (2005). Back in 1990, as MP in the then Constituent National Assembly he was the one to propose that Bulgaria should renounce her membership in the Warsaw Pact and join NATO and the EU. In 1990-91 and 2001-2009 he was MP and chaired the parliamentary committees on foreign affairs and defence. In 2002 and 2003 he was Chair of the UN Security Council, and in 2004, as Chairman-in-Office of OSCE he launched a broad organizational reform programme. In 2009, the Bulgarian government nominated him for the position of NATO Secretary-General.

Dr. Passy has a PhD in Mathematical Logic and Computer Science. From 2008 to date, Solomon and Gergana Passy have successfully been campaigning for a universal GSM charger in EU and have initiated the all-Europe access to Wi-Fi.

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Following the adoption of Christianity from Bulgaria in 988 AD, Orthodox faith had been introduced in Kievan Rus under the guidance of the Bulgarian clergy through three channels of communication: the formal language of church service (Old Bulgarian), the formal state religion (Orthodox) and the formal national alphabet (the Cyrillic alphabet, another name for the Bulgarian alphabet). Consequently, as early as 10c contemporary Bulgarians and the Volga-Kama Bulgars who had adopted Islam had already embarked upon close yet complex relations with Russia, intertwining the evident interaction of common cultural and religious elements with ferocious conflicts and wars for dominance.

The Bulgarians had obviously become aware of the need to maintain strong links with Russia at a very early stage, not least owing to the historic experience of the two Bulgarian states, one of which collapsed squeezed between the Mongol and Russian imperial powers. It was just as obvious that good mutual understanding with the big state of Russia would depend on keeping a respectful distance, albeit that was sometimes inadvertently narrowed in scope or even destroyed by historic trials and tribulations.

Her present-day geopolitical position allowed Bulgaria to introduce into the European Union two of her communication channels with Russia, the alphabet and the language which is expected to improve the West-Russia dialogue.

Why is it then that today, despite the multitude of modern communication channels are Russia and the West speaking different languages? Simple - because of the incompatibility of the respective value systems or, to express myself in iPhone lingo, owing to differences in default.

Russia enjoys satisfactory cooperation with the West in many places on Earth, and in Open Space: to mention but a few, the dialogue with Iran, the logistics in Afghanistan, the chemical weapons in Syria, the fight against world terrorism and the joint work on the international space station, all bear witness to that. Yet cooperation is invariably based on common interest, rather than common values; in other words, it goes about cooperation that Russia wants reimbursed at the highest possible price. This situation will only change when the defaults of the West and Russia converge.

While the wealth of the West has been rooted in competition aiming at the perfection of society, Russia has predominantly built her wealth owing to her territory, since territory supplies the needed resources and acts as a buffer against the permanent threat of attacks from neighbours. This explains, and generates, the impulsive imperial attitude of Russia, which seems to define her actions at least for the time being.

The West allows for a recurrent error in its attitude to its opponents, adversaries, enemies and even partners, by habitually treating all of them as "one of us", thereby "punishing" or "rewarding" them in a uniform manner based on its very own concepts and manner of response. The outcome often reminds us of a dialogue between inhabitants of different galaxies.

Thus, the West is prone to confusion in the very core of its policy towards Russia, wrongly combining episodes of untimely neglect with pledges for eternal strategic partnership, adding into the bargain concessions which lack principles and indulgence which defies logic. Consequently, Russia interprets this as a sign of weakness encouraging further steps towards division and demands for further concessions.

This is how Moscow reads the anemic response of the West to the practical annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia back in 2008, complete with the persisting refusal to invite Georgia to join NATO: *Since NATO avoids a state with problems it will be in our interest to create the problems.* Thus it was that we arrived at the moment when the Crimea was annexed in a most natural manner practically annulling any chance for NATO's membership of Ukraine. Next in line are Transnistria and Moldova...!

For all the conditionality of historic analogies, there is still psychological recurrence in political behavior, which has been repetitive throughout historic periods. The annexation of the Crimea is an annoying reminder of the Anschluss of Austria, an event particularly instructive in the wake of the "democratic" fig leaf of the plebiscite, regrettably reenacted in 2014.

The Munich syndrome is yet another of those: at the Munich conference of 1938 the West granted Hitler the right to dispose of the fate of the Sudetendeutsche (ostensibly the last

concession) thus encouraging him to occupy Czechoslovakia and divide Poland with the USSR in 1939. The trap into which the West systematically falls is to try and "sacrifice temporary values to gain significant advantage". Invariably, this results in the loss of both, in addition to the loss of substantial human life.

Just as it does not succeed (to the expected degree) in concessions, the West is unsuccessful in sanctions: they are similar in essence against Iran, North Korea, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Libya and Cuba, and now against Russia. Sanctions undermine values, which would be much nearer to the average West-European or North-American citizen than to the inhabitants of Chukotka, Kamchatka, Khabarovsk, Siberia or even the European part of Russia, let alone those of the militarized region of Kaliningrad. In their overwhelming majority, Russian citizens cannot even begin to think that they were more important than "the state" (invariably identified with the ruling regime); hence their tolerance to material deprivation, immensely, colossally higher than the tolerance in the average Western citizen. The average Russian would unhesitatingly swap his child's breakfast for a T-shirt with Putin's portrait; the average European would feed his family before embarking on politics.

Thus, for the time being, Western sanctions are making Russians rally behind President Putin - and President Putin would be happy to offer a round of drinks for that. He is currently turning into the most charismatic Russian/Soviet leader after Stalin: as much for the territories annexed by him, as for the sanctions imposed on him. The heroic slogan of the Second World War: "For the Motherland, for Stalin!" under which millions of Russians fell in a surge of romantic self-sacrifice, is now being edited by history itself as "For the Motherland, for Putin!" We can reasonably expect to see, on the occasion of the centenary of the October Bolshevik revolution in 2017, President Putin transfigured into the cumulative image of Lenin, Stalin, Brezhnev - and why not a resurrected Russian emperor? And all because Putin has shown a very good understanding of PR laws and has a free hand in using them to his liking, while the West seems to be his best ally in this.

It goes without saying that what President Putin plants today will be paid for by the children of those who are glorifying him in our time... Does the West have to wait that long? The question is academic, the answer is, of course, *no, it does not!*

If we insist on sanctions, why not turn to a smarter approach which may prove much more efficient than classic sanctions? Since Vladimir Putin seeks to make a public impact through his acts, photographs, even T-shirts, the West should deprive him of such chance if results are to be achieved. Sanctions against participation in World, European, Olympic sports events, as well as in music, cinema, theatre etc. cultural festivals and competitions would be much more effective than any trade or financial restrictions on Putin's entourage. And, since all sanctions are re-active, a sensible Western pro-active policy would be able to prevent all need to impose them.

To start with, NATO should put a stop to its wrong signals and policies. Georgia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, as well as Serbia and Kosovo ought to be urgently involved and allowed to join NATO, as an opening to their mid-term EU prospects. Finland and Sweden ought to be energetically encouraged to develop and deepen their relations with NATO. The EU ought to seek a new mode in their strategic relations with NATO. In the meantime, the presently neglected budding partnerships of NATO with Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand, as well as with Mongolia, ought to be revitalized urgently, since they present an unfinished business with traditional partners.

NATO urgently needs to establish new and even unplanned-for partnerships: with China in one mode, with the Islamic world via the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in another, and with Latin America and Africa, in a third. NATO needs to communicate directly with the Russian society, rather than go via the Russian government. The use of the Internet will make this possible, despite all efforts to restrict access to it. The West ought to be firmer in its actions with regard to smaller dictators all over the world, like Bashar Assad for example, since every dictator is a stronghold for all dictators.

However, NATO's most urgent and substantial need is to create a new public image for itself among the societies of its own member-states, and all over the world. Global public opinion is NATO's most powerful ally, which will help to win numerous battles prior to starting them, to evaporate a number of enemy goals prior to their formulation and to stop a number of criminal minds prior to their criminal acts...

NATO deserves its own Nobel Prize for Peace yet NATO also needs a qualitatively new flight of imagination and finances to boost it. One hundred dollars invested in information can save one thousand dollars invested in war...

Those ideas should not come as a surprise to NATO: The Atlantic Club launched them first in 2009 and had been promoting them ever since.

[http://www.atlantic-club.org/content/articles/publications/2010-11-Implementing\\_NATOs\\_New\\_Strategic\\_Concept.pdf](http://www.atlantic-club.org/content/articles/publications/2010-11-Implementing_NATOs_New_Strategic_Concept.pdf)).

They expand the pioneer think-tank research on NATO Global Role in 21c., done on a NATO *Manfred Woerner* scholarship in 1998. The research developed further the successful policies and the history-endorsed vision of the world formulated as early as 1990 by the Atlantic club of Bulgaria, the only pro-Atlantic organization set up on a Warsaw Treaty territory.

Russia will be friend of the West only when the West remains strong and follows indubious policy of principles. Russia will return to the political tradition of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, which will make her a good partner of and even a potential member of NATO. This should be the daily message to the Russian society.... Meanwhile, NATO, EU, US and the West as a whole should take good care of ensuring our global presence and our appearance.