

## **Ivan Rybkin**

**Former Speaker, State Duma, Russian Federation**

**Former Secretary, Security Council, Russian Federation**

Thank you. Dear chairman, dear colleagues, I am not taking the courage to review all questions which are being discussed at our panel and I wouldn't really like to go much into memories but in regard with the mutual steps that are now being made by Russia and NATO, I mean the Rome Treaty- what the Russian president called the return of Russia into the civilized family of European nations, I would like to speak about the non-public side of Russian foreign policy of the beginning of the 1990 and partially lift its curtain of mystery.

Andrei Kozyrev and I were the ones who brought the written request of Russia to join the Council of Europe in May of 1992. I was also honored to be the vice-president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and I was and still am a convinced and firm supporter of Russia joining all European structures without exception. For me the idea of an "axis of peace" from Vancouver to Vladivostok was not without meaning: I was of the point of view that real steps should be made in the direction to implement this idea in practice. And in talks with many politicians both acting and retired I spoke of these ideas. If speaking about those of the United States I had the opportunity to speak with Al Gore, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Secretary of Defense William Perry, my colleague (as I was the Russian Parliament speaker at that time), the speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich, talked with such European politicians as the two General Secretaries of NATO, Willie Klaas and Hon. Xavier Solana, who is now in charge of foreign policy of the European Union. And in conversations with them I always expressed the idea that an "axis of peace" from Vancouver to Vladivostok can only exist with one condition: that Russia will be a part of it, and that Russia in this axis is something that holds it together like a belt-buckle holds a belt; and without this buckle our "international policy trousers" will always "drop below the knees". I spoke of this openly and I must say that when President Boris Yeltsin assigned me to develop the National Security Doctrine which Russia lacked at that time and official documents dealing with security needed to be brought together and a unified conception worked out, my team came to the conclusion that there were four types of threats for national security: first, a global collision, but this appeared not probable at the moment; second, regional conflicts which we encounter all over the world now; third, terrorism and organized crime; fourth, the threat to human rights and freedoms. And often speaking on these subjects perhaps not with as much pathos as now, but concluding the list of threats that Russia faced, we, together with the president, came to the conclusion that in order to counter them Russia must be in NATO. But this point of view was shared by few in the Russian government at that time: by Yuri Baturin and by our two Defense Ministers, perhaps as the result of the titanic shifts that were occurring in the structure of the Russian Armed Forces. As the Soviet contingent in Germany was transferred back to Russia with the troops singing "Goodbye, Germany, Goodbye!", the North-Western contingent was brought back, and as the nuclear platforms were also being brought in to the territory of Russia, with the last one delivered from Belarussia in the end of 1996, the

question arose: “How do we go on?” And we understood (here I totally agree with Vladimir Baranovsky) that a head-on resistance to NATO expansion to the east will not lead to anything good.

And we were not the only ones to rally these ideas. For example Philippe Segen (the chairman of the National Assembly of France and my personal friend) said: “With the rapid pace that NATO is expanding to the east it looks like it’s directed against Alaska”. Is this question posed fairly? Of course it is. Then we were talking about the necessity to find new forms of engagement, and I said that perhaps it would be wise to act as France did: it left the military organization of NATO but stayed in the political one, so why don’t we enter the political structure and thus have the influence in NATO and the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, meanwhile in the military sphere we would make the first steps by unifying the means of communication and control of forces which are the easiest to unify, then will come the unification of the rest of the military including weapons systems. The latter could be adopted as well, taking into account the high appraisal that soviet weaponry had won within the international community and that it remained in large numbers in countries ex-members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Such were MiG and SU planes, tanks, various communication technologies, amphibious and so on. All of these could have been adopted, and work in that direction should have already then been started. And our weapons manufacturers should have gotten and did get requests for weapons production and modernization, e.g. the request from Germany to modernize MiGs. Such were our conversations with my colleagues, quite concrete and thorough.

We also talked about the 16+1 format of Russia-NATO relations. It should have been 17. As it is now: not 19+1 but 20. We solve problems together. But if we continue at such a slow pace, we might as well be talking about a 21+1 format a 22+1 format in the future. We are losing the pace in our rapprochement, and losing the pace in politics is like losing everything.

Though I can say that such a position is not shared by many in the west. For example, a question from their side is immediately posed: “And what do we do with the 5th article of the Washington treaty, when suddenly the “zone of responsibility” of the Northern Alliance will be suddenly extended to the southern borders of the former Soviet Union?” I have always said, and such a point of view is widely known, that every innovation goes through three stages in its development: first, this cannot be true because it can never be true; second, there’s something to this; and third, how could we have lived without this? Today, the tragic and horrible events of September 11th of last year have made NATO extend its “zone of responsibility” to central Asia, and pay more attention to the Middle East as well as the Far East.

In the 90’s the situation was difficult. To my mind there was too much haste in NATO enlargement and on our side certain reactionary politicians such as Victor Ampilov, Victor Turkin and others were resisting not only by gathering street protests but within the government structures as well. I remember the session of the Foreign Policy Council when my ideas were only supported by Yuri Baturin and president Yeltsin perhaps, who

didn't let this idea be discarded. By the way the military chiefs taking part in the session expressed no fierce opposition to such ideas, though often the military is perceived to be slow to change.

Today it is obvious that Russia cannot solve many of its' problems including border security without a firm and durable NATO-Russia and US-Russia partnership which would be without hypocrisy and cunningness. I mean not only US presence in Central Asia and the war against the Taliban. Concerning the latter, William Winner, vice president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE and I tried to bring this topic up for discussion back in 1996, as events developed in Afghanistan very rapidly. And he supported the idea with even more eagerness to discuss the war in the country and dangers that the Taliban posed not only for Central Asia but for Europe as well. This is all in the protocols. And I'm not saying we were prophets, we just understood the situation for which we were responsible.

Another problem is that of Kaliningrad, which cannot be solved by Russia without cooperation with the US. Yesterday I heard that the prime ministers of Lithuania and Poland voiced their governments' position as negative towards creating a corridor for Russians through their territory, an idea that is being proposed by Russian politicians and our Foreign Ministry. I thought that there is really no other position that those countries can take. And many years have passed, historically speaking since the Danzig corridor, through which, as Poland very well remembers, foreign troops were brought in. A corridor is always a limit to sovereignty, everyone should understand that. And it is sometimes useful to put yourself in the shoes of your opponents to understand the depth of the contradictions. And the topic that was brought up in Roman Prodi's speech, I think is appropriate and the answers are quite reasonable, although everything must be thought through. The problem is complex and difficult but it can be solved in close cooperation with NATO and the US. In any other case there will be no result. Moreover I can say that, having been occupied with the problem of Chechnya for a long time, I became convinced that in resolving it, it is not only necessary to take into consideration the interests of other Caucasian independent republics and countries of the Middle East but countries of NATO as well. Or else we will have no success. So when I heard some politicians protesting against the arrival of American instructors to Georgia, I could not find the words to describe such a position. We accuse others of a policy of double standards, while implementing this type of policy ourselves. I think that our president was right in asking: why can we accept US bases and coordinate our efforts in central Asia and not in Georgia? We should use the second opportunity as well. I am aware of the position of E.A. Shevardnadze on the question of the Pankiski gorge and the Kadorski gorge when he directly asked for help and support on the matters. In particular from Russian border guards to close the border including the Georgian side. He wanted to prevent the tumor of terrorism from growing and spreading further. Although even such an issue should be carefully examined. For example there are people who do not consider themselves terrorists or bandits, but rather separatists, whose main goal is the separation of Chechnya from Russia. This is also a point of view that has the right to exist. Separatism is a problem of many countries, and if we look carefully we can find it practically in every country, like a skeleton in the closet, as our British friends say.

Such are my thoughts concerning the processes which are occurring at the moment. Of course the “20” format in NATO is a good idea, and it would be quite useful in the fight against terrorism, but to my mind we should not get caught up in the euphoria of this success, and forget about other questions which also demand to be resolved in the near future. Though I think the situation itself will push us in that direction. The problem of Kaliningrad becoming an enclave will start to press even more as the Baltic nations enter NATO. The mainland will be left with only air and sea communication with the territory. Another question is whether such a large Russian armed forces contingent in Kaliningrad is needed? Unfortunately, I don’t have the full answers to these questions. I think these problems should be resolved the sooner the better.

And I think that an “axis of peace” from Vancouver to Vladivostok is absolutely necessary. The dangers and threats to the countries of this axis come mostly from the south. We did not make them up, they are real and very clear. I have said all this before and will continue saying this. Answering the question on whether the Russians are more Asian than European, weather we are “Scythians” as a great poet once said, I would ask the people of the most eastern city in Russia Vladivostok, do they think of themselves more as Asians or Europeans? I think that for the most part they will reply: as Europeans. When I was in Pearl Harbor and spoke with the Pearl Harbor fleet commander I said to him: “What our submarines and ships should be doing in the Pacific Ocean is not spying on each other but patrolling it together”.

Thank you.