

## **LEURISPES.IT**

*Eurispes's official newsletter, Rome*

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## **Interview with Alexey GROMYKO**

**Director, Institute of Europe – IE-RAS**

**Russian Academy of Sciences**

**Member, Scientific Committee, Eurispes**

### **Question 1**

The next 6 July 2018, the Ambassador of Italy to Russia, Pasquale Terracciano, will celebrate the hundred years of Italian-Russian relations, 1918-2018. This is a major event, a historical-scientific conference organized in collaboration with the Institute for Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Moscow State University for International Relations MGIMO. The Italian-Russian relations will be examined in a double aspect, historical and contemporary. What is your overall judgment on the current state of relations between the two countries?

Russia and Italy are longstanding European neighbors and partners. Culturally and civilizationally they boast a millennium history of relationship. Italy is one of the most favorable destination for Russian tourists, businessmen, people of art, scientists. Diplomatically and economically Moscow and Rome have a dense fabric of interaction. In both capitals there is a fundamental understanding that we are indispensable partners and problems should be solved together.

### **Question 2**

Based on your experience and knowledge, what is according to your opinion the image of Italy in Russia and vice versa?

It is almost impossible to find a Russian who would not like and, usually, admire Italy. Italy in my country is considered as one of the most friendly and attractive states. Not always we are political allies; our joint history has its own white and black pages. However the overwhelming experience of our relations, rooted in the Middle Ages, has made our peoples intrinsically close. Judging from my experience, in Italy such an attitude is reciprocal. Even against the backdrop of difficult political

climate between Russia and the West in the past years, numerous Italian voices from business, political, expert and civil society communities, have been calling for common solutions and close cooperation.

### **Question 3**

Are there, in your opinion, specific sectors of activity in which the collaboration between Italy and Russia should be particularly strengthened?

Obviously it is economy, where our interests are deeply intertwined. Italian business has been vocal and persistent in criticizing the political interference in business cooperation between the two countries. In spite of sanctions imposed upon Russia, both local and transnational Italian companies and banks have continued and in many cases intensified partnerships with their Russian counterparts. In the political sphere Moscow and Rome have a potential to return Europe to the idea of a common economic and humanitarian space from Lisbon to Vladivostok.

### **Question 4**

How do you evaluate the collaboration between Italy and Russia in particular in the cultural and scientific field?

The Italian diplomatic and think tank communities are from the top category of global players. The Institute of Europe has many partners in Italy and our leading visavi is EURISPES. We have good relations with ISPI and, especially recently, with IAI. From 1 January 2018 Italy presides in the OSCE and specialists from our countries are active in discussing capabilities and potential of this organization to improve the situation in the sphere of European security. One of the most difficult contemporary problems is irregular migration. On the platform of the Institute of Linguistic, Civilizational and Migration Processes (ILCMP) at Russkiy Mir Foundation, we conduct active dialogue with specialists from Italy. Russkiy Mir Foundation itself has dozens of partners in Italy, including leading universities, in promoting Russian language and joint cultural cooperation.

### **Question 5**

Following the dramatic events in Ukraine and Crimea, the European Union has established a series of sanctions against the Russian Federation which has responded with similar sanctions. Italy, as a member of the EU, participated and approved these decisions. Since 2015, you have always stated that economic sanctions are a mistake and should be abolished internationally because they affect people, rather than states and governments (Quotation A \*). How is it possible, under current political conditions, to help correct and improve this situation?

As we have been arguing, sanctions have proved their futility and uselessness. No political objectives have been achieved by those, who introduced them. Instead business and diplomatic interests have been hurt, making it more difficult for our countries to develop and cope with modern challenges, first of all, international terrorism. Sanctions should be scrapped as soon as possible and the Ukrainian crisis should not be used as a reason, better to say – pretext, for punishing Russia. In fact it has been used for well known anti-Russian geopolitical purposes. The West should carry out its obligations and make Kiev adhere to Minsk-2 requirements. Also it is very important to work out a workable and effective solution to realize the idea of a peacekeeping force in Donbas, which could be a hybrid UN and OSCE mission.

### **Question 6**

Italy with the EU has long supported the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) which, however, in your judgment, 2017, (Quotation.B \*) has so far failed to guarantee stability neither in the Eastern area (Eastern Partnership), nor in the Mediterranean area. All this despite the will of both the European-Italian and Russian realities, to have stable neighbors and friends at the borders. According to your opinion, how is possible to build this situation of peaceful coexistence and possible collaboration? What value could have the method of "pragmatic cooperation" advocated by many parties for this purpose to solve the main problems?

ENP is in tatters. The so-called Arab Spring, which many in the EU enthusiastically supported, has ended up in chaos and mass scale human sufferings, which dwarf dark sides of previous political regimes. French and British military interference in Libya in 2011 was an irresponsible act and has had the devastating affect. As a result Italy has become one of the countries damaged most by that events. The initial version of the Eastern Partnership was also ill-considered because in essence it was designed as a project to squeeze Russia out of this region. "Either Europe or Russia" – that was a false choice presented to the participating states of the EP. The Ukrainian crisis to a significant extent has become a dramatic consequence of this logic. What we should try to revive is not "peaceful coexistence", which characterized the relations between the Soviet Union and the West during the Cold War period. A "new cold war" would be a self-defeating project for Europe. Even pragmatic cooperation is not enough. We are in one civilizational boat and that is much more than pragmatism.

### **Question 7**

Do you consider it possible, at least in the medium term, to start proper relations and collaboration between the European Union (EU) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which is participated by Russia?

In fact, at the expert level the technical cooperation is going on. But it should develop into an official and comprehensive partnership, because both regional integration projects are the reality and objectively they need each other.

### **Question 8**

Italy and Russia both participate in important international institutions and coordinations, such as the United Nations and the G20 summits. In those bodies, both Italy and Russia have endorsed important commitments to address the main global challenges, such as climate change, economic and social inequalities, migration flows. These are common platforms of great importance on which to build up an intense and useful collaboration for both countries. How do you evaluate this possibility of intensifying cooperation between Italy and Russia in the implementation of these international commitments taken on the basis of common agreement?

Russia is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and together with its other member states it is responsible for global peace and stability. Italy and Russia participate in G20, which, from my point of view, is the second most important global platform after the UN. Such multilateral institutions are focal players in the polycentric world. The international law, based on the UN Charter, should be upheld by all countries. Unfortunately, starting from the NATO unlawful invasion in Yugoslavia and ensuing Kosovo precedent, which opened the Pandora box in the fragile balance of different international principles, mutual commitments and common agreements have been often discredited. The right of power, instead of power law, has become a common instrument in the toolkit of many major states. Moscow and Rome understand very well that such an approach is destructive.

### **Question 9**

For about 15 years - signed in 2003 - there is an important cultural and scientific collaboration agreement between Eurispes and the Institute for Europe IE-RAS, an agreement that over the years has produced both continuous exchanges of information, documents and visits, both numerous common initiatives, such as seminars, conferences. You are a member of the Scientific Committee of Eurispes and the president of the Italian Institute, prof. Gian Maria Fara, is a member of the steering committee of the IE-RAS official magazine, "Contemporary Europe". How do you evaluate this common experience and what further steps could be taken to contribute strengthening cooperation between Italy and Russia?

We are proud to be an old partner of EURISPES and we are looking forward to developing our cooperation. Together we have carried out numerous projects both

in Italy and Russia. For example, this year we are planning together with ILCMP and with the support of Russkiy Mir Foundation to conduct an important international conference in Rome on migration. We are grateful to Professor Fara and Professor Ricceri for their commitment to our common causes and goals.

**\*Quotation.A**

*by Alexey Gromyko e Valentin Fedorov*

*Article, 4 July 2015, Magazine "Contemporary Europe", N. 4-2015*

"Looking at the essence of economic sanctions, one can deduce that they should be banned from international practice. Sanctions are aimed at eliminating or controlling political regimes. But in fact sanctions mainly affect people, worsening the standard of living and causing social and technological stagnation. Sanctions are nothing more than an attack to people. Government officials always find a way to avoid the effects of sanctions, both in business-related areas and in the circles of personal interests. The effects of sanctions are very different on different areas of society. Having a long history, these punitive measures should be permanently banned in inter-state relations and their use should be disrupted by international organizations, including the UN. Such an approach should be implemented by international law by means of a convention. The sanctions are incompatible with the humanistic ideas of modern global society which promotes universal human values to which the right of all peoples and individuals to live his life in dignity without external interference is certainly connected".

**\*Quotation B**

*Article, IE-RAS and Egmont, The Royal Institute for International Relations*

*The EU Global Strategy: Implication for Russia, Moscow 2017.*

"The EU is expected to promote resilience in its surrounding regions, which on the surface is quite a legitimate task, drive by the desire to provide more stability in the neighborhood. For Russia, it is equally desirable to be surrounded by stable and friendly neighbors. The EU aspiration for stable partners would especially important in light of the fact that so far the ENP has failed to provide stability, both within the Easterns Partnership (EP) and in the Mediterranean"

## Profile

**ALEXEY GROMYKO**

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