

Opportunity in a Shared Enemy

The meeting of the Russian foreign minister and the U.S. secretary of state in Paris last month has led to a surprise thaw in relations: The two countries will share intelligence on ISIS and work together to combat terrorism in the region. The significance of this outcome cannot be overstated; it is the window that both countries have been waiting for. ISIS has given the United States and Russia a golden opportunity to recommence cooperation. In the name of sustainable international security and the future of the bilateral relationship, these two countries should not waste this opportunity.

When the United States isolates Russia, and Russia isolates itself, they are severing ties on more than just the commonly cited issues. Yes, the escalation of tensions since Russia's intervention in Crimea has led to a break in political, military and economic cooperation. However, it has also led to an often-overlooked break in cooperation on developing the political future of Russia. This break threatens to push Russia ever further away from the West and sound the death knell for its young democratic institutions.

So, maybe it is time to ask ourselves: Do we have the cart before the horse? Instead of both sides withholding cooperation in order to affect the behavior of the other, the United States and Russia should take a page out of the Helsinki playbook and pursue cooperation in order to affect the behavior of the other. This would heavily influence the norms and institutions of the future international

security architecture, while at the same time create the atmosphere necessary for renewed dialogue on democracy and human rights.

The reasons for cooperation are numerous enough to move beyond grievances, without rehashing them, and concentrate on an issue that is equally disturbing to both: ISIS. This joint effort should go beyond the currently agreed upon intelligence-sharing and grow to include military training, arming and consulting to Iraqi security forces. Eventually, Russia should be taken under consideration to become a partner in joint military action as part of the multilateral coalition against ISIS. Russia should be integrated into this process, making full use of its extensive knowledge and resources.

The first of many steps has been made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Secretary of State John Kerry. While relations suffer, the strictly transactional operations involved in the fight against ISIS are the most appropriate way to launch further cooperation efforts. The next step should be to focus on any low-hanging fruit. This should be achieved by analyzing where overlap in current joint efforts with potential joint efforts exists. For example, cooperation on nuclear terrorism is a logical field on which to build further cooperation. This new nuclear element of the equation overlaps with nuclear maintenance, which could be yet another field for potential cooperation and so forth.

Eventually, this chain reaction may hit a glass ceiling due to Ukraine. Building off the fledgling trust that began with the fight against ISIS, a resolution to the conflict may finally be found. A multilateral forum of heads of state could call for a second referendum in Ukraine, this time under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. While this possibility may seem far-fetched, it is one of the few opportunities available under international law, although it is likely that such a referendum will still result in Crimea becoming a part of Russia. Next, Mr. Putin could cease Russian support for militants in Eastern Ukraine, thereby earning the gratitude of the international community. In acknowledgment of this display of rule-abidance, the U.S., along with the other heads of state, would call for the reintegration of Russia into the

international community and the commencement of a new stage of Russia-U.S. relations. Both states should see tremendous value in this move: Russia obtains recognition as a major player on the global stage, while the U.S. achieves its foreign policy goals in Eastern Europe.

One truth must be understood: neither of the states will apologize for its past, but both need each other more than ever.

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