

## Russian-American Relations in a Changing Global Security Environment

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After the end of the bipolar confrontation, the global economic and political order has become more interdependent, more complicated in its structure and framework of actors. The security environment has dramatically changed too; it has become more affected by different types of international and transnational challenges. Has this emerging world become more secure or not for Russia and the United States? And does the current state of relations between them really match the depth of the changes and challenges? Both answers are negative.

The case for of a new world war between major powers is the lowest since the beginning of the 20th century. It has become almost excluded from the intentions of the two nuclear superpowers. But the international system has not become more secure and predictable for all responsible players in each concrete field of international security.

The political atmosphere of Russian-American relations is still developing under the strong influence of the ideas and attitudes formed during the final period of the Cold War and the first years after it. The two countries still carry the controversial political legacy of mutually exaggerated expectations and attention to traditional military issues. Psychologically, relations between the two nations were seriously damaged during these years by ahistorical beliefs in rapid progress and the succeeding natural mutual disappointments. During the last 10 years, sometimes because of serious international reasons but mostly under the influence of fickle winds of domestic politics, the haze of mutual mistrust and inertial zero-sum psychology was still saturating the minds of Russian and American political elites. Such a model of interaction is becoming a more and more costly game for both powers. It is giving other actors plenty of opportunities to use the Russian-American unwillingness to cooperate with each other and to start common initiatives in nonmilitary security in their own interests. Each time Russia and the United States face new security challenges, they prefer to see them separately from the bilateral agenda.

Of course, Russian-American nuclear strategic stability and bilateral arms control regimes will be one of the principal elements of the military balance between two countries for the long term, even when and if both sides reach new levels of reductions and want to go further. But the problem is that such traditional military topics are still overshadowing other security issues, which are not directly interconnected with Russian-American interaction but can become an area of cooperation. The experience of the last three years since the Prague Treaty has shown that, in the case of reaching new levels of strategic

arms reductions, the deficit of Russian-American dialogue on new global and regional security issues could quickly become filled with stereotypes and phobias of the past. In this case, both sides are beginning to use small competing claims as an imitation of serious politics. The paradox is that common attention to the new security issues gets even lower when the next phase of the strategic arms reductions is not among the priorities of both governments. Now we are in such a period again. And it depends on the political farsightedness of both governments if they will find new drivers for the broader 21<sup>st</sup> century security dialogue, or will prefer to wait for several years more for a window of opportunity to do big deals on strategic offensive and defensive weapons and not waste their political capital on other issues that still seem to be too small for a positive agenda.

The level of trust between Russia and the United States during the last two years was too low to predict any serious breakthrough in bilateral cooperation on modern security challenges, even when they include international terrorism, religious political extremism, transnational crime, illegal financial networks, maleficent cyber activity and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, instability in the Middle East and Africa, uncertainty about Afghanistan's future, and unpredictable scenarios of possible crisis on the Korean peninsula. But Russian-American collaboration on the Syrian crisis has shown the real possibility for cooperation on a broader variety of international problems. If such activities were not something extraordinary and interaction among officials and experts concerning the broader security agenda was valued as much as communication associated with big arms control issues, it could give us a chance to go beyond routine cycles in our relations.

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