

## **Russia and the United States Are Destined to Be Partners**

*Sergey Oznobishchev, Institute for Strategic Assessments*

The recent upsurge of cooperation between Moscow and Washington toward a resolution of the Syrian crisis demonstrated once again that the most urgent regional and world security issues cannot be resolved effectively in the absence of close U.S.-Russian cooperation.

This is also true with regard to a much broader array of important global-level problems. Dismantling the Cold War machine and confronting global threats and challenges—terrorism and nonproliferation being among them—are a few of the most urgent from the first-order agenda of problems to be resolved. This list may be further expanded.

Another important goal, which is also impossible to reach for any country on its own, is a nuclear-free world—a distant dream that should, however, be realized if we really want to build a safer world based on new security principles. There is no logical explanation why we should be unable to make an attempt and start moving, in much more practical terms, to this noble goal and agree on a certain timeframe and on measures to be implemented—as it was presupposed in the mid-1980s according to Gorbachev's multistage plan for the elimination of nuclear weapons by the end of the 20th century.

It is also difficult to find rational reasons to justify why we cannot proceed further with arms control, taking into account that efforts in this field were implemented even in the decades when Moscow and Washington considered each other to be “potential enemies.” It seems that all of a sudden we have to look for an explanation for the things we considered to be a natural common interest for dozens of years.

Is it some new outstanding threats that have emerged? Or, which is more probable, is it something that went wrong in U.S.-Russian relations, unprecedentedly reducing the level of mutual trust?

I suppose that in such a short piece there is no need to go into detail and remind readers what concrete steps led to the present unsatisfactory state of mutual relations. Experts and politicians on both sides can enumerate a lot of them. And all their assessments should be taken seriously—for they will reflect the perception of the two sides.

The Russian specialists, most probably, will point to the one-sided U.S. and Western policy over a long period of time of ignoring Russian concerns (on the enlargement of NATO, for instance). The U.S. experts will be emphasizing the “value gap”—differences in the ideological foundations of approaches to the resolution of domestic and external issues. A lot of other discrepancies will be found.

Hence, to improve mutual perception is the first priority task, and what is even more important, to refrain from creating again the image of the other side as a potential enemy. Let us also do everything in our power to reestablish mutual trust.

Let us try to put aside the issues we cannot solve for the time being. Let us take the most urgent and fundamental issues, agree on some of them, put others down on the list of our concerns and try to discuss them openly. We are really lacking such an open dialogue, particularly at the expert and public level. But such a dialogue should be a standing one, not the sporadic attempts at discussing disconnected topics, which the politicians often prefer to do. The dialogue should embrace the fundamental issues of our relations, including the military and strategic ones.

At the official level, it is essential to start building the foundations of the mechanism of partnership—when, at least, neither of the sides is introducing steps that will definitely raise concerns of the other. In parallel, attempts should be intensified to revitalize the arms control process. To improve relations, cooperation should be started in all possible spheres.

What could draw us into tighter relations and make partnership more probable is a common “grand project” which would incorporate an ever-increasing number of spheres of science, technology, economics, and human relations. This should be a project of a new kind, for

instance, to oppose the threat from space (an asteroid striking the Earth, which is now taken as a rather serious threat by certain Russian officials) or cooperative preparation for an expedition to distant planets.

In view of the common goals and challenges that Russia and the United States are facing, they are destined to be partners, if the national elites do not sway them off this course.

*[Sergey Oznobishchev](#) is the director of the Institute for Strategic Assessments and department head at the Center for International Security of the Russian Academy of Sciences' [Institute of World Economy and International Relations](#).*

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