

# NOT THE COLD WAR, BUT THAT IS A PROBLEM

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Blaming Cold War thinking for the frictions in U.S.-Russia relations unfortunately distracts us from honestly facing and fixing the reasons why we seem unable to cooperate on truly important global security challenges.

A fundamental source of the friction is something only Russia itself can solve: its insecurity and resentment in the face of a rapidly changing world. Russian insecurity is rooted primarily in its underperforming economy, long-suffering but restive society, and increasingly clumsy political system. As long as Russia's political leadership rejects political and real economic modernization in order to cling to power, Russia will remain less prosperous and secure than it can and should be.

While the United States can do little about Russia's internal political drama, it can do much to create opportunities for Russian social and economic integration through trade, investment, and education. And to the extent that uncertainty and mistrust about America's global security presence and policies feed Russia's (misguided) fears that it is the target of U.S. schemes, focused diplomacy on even the toughest issues—most notably change in the Middle East and security in post-2014 Afghanistan—has to build a cooperative modus vivendi for the challenges ahead. Mutual reaffirmation to follow international law and utilize international institutions—even when doing so means compromise and policy adjustment—is in America's interests because an insecure and destructive Russia is not.

The Cold War is not coming back, but that is no reason to pat ourselves on the back and ignore the need to invest in the American-Russian relationship. Looking backward risks tripping on the obstacles before us: it's time to see those obstacles more clearly and adjust our path.

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