

Place economic considerations at the top of the agenda

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Information that emerged recently regarding the further shift of the United States' foreign policies toward the Asian region and diminishing U.S. attention to the Middle East (with the exception of the Israeli-Palestinian track) has already caused widespread reaction. If Washington truly intends to carry out the policies of the U.S. pivot toward Asia that was announced several years ago, this does not represent a significant disengagement by this leading global player from the effort to support stability in our restless world. In turn, emphasis on the Asian Pacific region cannot but have an impact on global and regional dynamics. It also serves as a testament to the United States' increasing attention on relations with China.

No matter how one views the rebalancing of U.S. foreign policy, relations with the United States will remain at the heart of Russia's foreign policy priorities. Recent progress toward the resolution of the crisis in Syria demonstrated that there are new advantages for those who support the strengthening of Russian-U.S. relations.

It is not by chance that last September, during the Valdai Forum, the Russian minister of foreign affairs made it clear that successful efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis will lead to the restoration of strategic cooperation with the United States on a wide array of important bilateral and multilateral issues.

In Russia the issue of respect for international law and adherence to UN decisions, including those pertaining to the use of military force, are of particular importance. Any attempts to circumvent international law will be perceived with extreme sensitivity in Moscow, and may affect relations with various countries and organizations. Therefore, agreement on this

issue between such prominent players as Russia and the United States will facilitate the improvement of bilateral dialogue.

The future of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of coalition forces represents an extremely important challenge for Russia. This issue is of concern to Moscow and its partners in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. It would be useful to gradually establish contacts between the Collective Security Treaty Organization and NATO. Such contacts would have a positive effect on Russian-U.S. relations due to the United States' leading role in NATO. Certainly there are many obstacles, primarily stemming from the West, but it is worth considering.

Recently signed bilateral documents related to cyber security represent an important event. Our two countries should continue to actively consult with one another in order to expand agreements in the sphere of Internet governance and cyberspace on an international level, in order to overcome serious common threats. The voices of those who proclaim the importance of strengthening the economic foundation for Russian-American relations and of moving toward a significantly higher level of interaction in that sphere are becoming more prominent these days. Given all the obvious difficulties on this path, this would enhance predictability in Russian-American relations and diminish the chance of sudden changes.

Related to this, the ongoing formation of new trade and economic partnerships between the United States and EU, with the participation and under the auspices of the U.S. Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), should be noted. Thus far, it's too early to assess the risks for Russia in this regard, but we must consider ways to jointly overcome possible misunderstandings. That may be facilitated by the strengthening of cooperation and mutual understanding at such important venues as the G-20 and G-8. But on the whole, it is useful to place economic considerations in the top tier of the agenda for Russian-American

relations.

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