



# U.S.-Russian Relations: A Statement

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## **A New Century of U.S.-Russia Relations**

This year marks an important anniversary. In 1807, the Russian Empire and the young American Republic agreed to establish diplomatic relations. Soon after Russia's first envoy Alexander Dashkov arrived in Washington, and John Quincy Adams traveled to St. Petersburg.

Since this modest beginning, our relations—at their best and worst—have borne out de Tocqueville's prophecy that America and Russia each seem “marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.” Today, with the Cold War and immediate post-Soviet transition behind us, we face a new world in which an effective U.S.-Russian relationship remains central to addressing many global challenges.

As direct descendants of those ambassadors who pioneered the bilateral conversation, we have come together on this diplomatic bicentennial at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington to reflect on the prospects for U.S.-Russian relations. We are diplomats—not politicians—who represent a half-century of experience of “doing U.S.-Russian relations.”

Our careers have seen our countries face critical, at times existential, challenges. We have known the success of close cooperation when we defeated common foes and developed a safer

world, but also the consequences of estrangement and rivalry, which during the Cuban Missile Crisis brought us to the brink of catastrophe.

Today unprecedented globalization of communications, economic dynamism, and the movement of people, goods, and ideas have broken down traditional barriers and opened our nations to new and powerful influences for positive change. But change also brings with it new threats.

The threat posed by WMD proliferation, the menace of terrorism and organized crime, unprecedented stresses on our environment and energy security, and a host of unresolved and frozen regional conflicts are among the pressing issues that require joint attention. In these and many other areas, our two countries have the experience—and responsibility—to provide leadership.

Faced with so many important tasks, we cannot afford to let miscommunication or mistrust derail our relations. When we have pursued active dialog and creative diplomacy based on agreed principles we have brought about positive change. How do we regain that relationship?

What lessons have we learned?

First, America and Russia are two large, complex nations with different histories, geography, and cultures. These differences make it normal and inevitable that we will each see the world through the lens of our own national interests, compete in global economic and political affairs, and have legitimate disagreements.

Thus the task is to identify and advance shared interests, even as we manage our differences and disagreements. As Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, who was instrumental in negotiating the Cuban Missile Crisis, wrote, “We should be candid and not easily discouraged when our views do not coincide. From time to time our interests may even clash. But we should always be able to find a way to disagree without damaging a profoundly important strategic partnership.”

Second, both countries have experienced profound change in the past quarter century. The Cold War’s end and the dissolution of the Soviet Union into independent states brought a sea change across Europe and Eurasia, the consequences of which continue to reverberate. Russia has entered a difficult period of economic, social, and political transformation as well as of reshaping its global and regional strategies. The U.S. has also undergone the national shock of 9-11. The emergence of violent anti-U.S. extremism poses an imminent threat to Americans everywhere, challenging traditional U.S. policies, perceptions, and priorities.

Third, U.S.-Russian relations work best when we avoid demonizing one another and hone in on common interests to develop shared solutions. For example, we have markedly improved our work together in combating terrorism. We must concentrate on opening new areas of cooperation in nuclear matters including prevention of WMD proliferation, which we consider a matter of paramount importance.

But much remains to be done. There is growing concern that our successful arms control regime, including the verification system, may disappear, with unacceptable consequences for the world. Present disagreements about missile defense in Europe, the shape of future security structures for Europe, and how best to proceed in Kosovo have brought new tensions between us. Our diplomacy, with other international actors, must find a way forward.

Fourth, as we begin our third diplomatic century, it is important to continue to rely on the power of diplomacy. As Henry Kissinger wrote, “American leaders should not fear frank discussions about where American and Russian interests converge and where they differ.” The same is true of Russia. Keeping our channels always open and busy spared us from nuclear annihilation in the 20th century and can help us surmount the existential threats that lie ahead. Today, in addition to regular diplomatic channels and contacts between leaders, we should explore further institutionalization of our dialog at the cabinet and sub-cabinet levels.

Finally, we need a wider conversation between our societies to strengthen the foundation of shared values. Encouraging the broadest possible open contacts among scientific, social, and religious organizations is equally important. To this end, our visa systems should facilitate exchange rather than hinder it.

Expanding our economic ties can also promote a more stable and predictable relationship. We must move beyond the WTO issue and remove politically motivated barriers that have held up U.S.-Russian commercial exchange so that Russia takes its place as a full member of the global trading community.

Our two countries have already proven themselves able to bridge wide political and cultural gaps. We can now work together in the broad context of democratic values and market economics. Today the U.S. and Russia need to build a well-defined new strategic framework for productive diplomacy to resolve old problems and meet new challenges. Our future work should be worthy of a third diplomatic century.