

JOINT STATEMENT

THE TWO REPORTS PUBLISHED IN THIS DOCUMENT are the product of a unique project involving leading U.S. and Russian policy analysts and former senior government officials involved with U.S.-Russian relations. In the spring of 1999, when U.S.-Russian relations had reached what was generally agreed to be their low point in the post-Soviet period, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, with support from the Ford Foundation, launched parallel working groups in Washington and Moscow, respectively. The project was motivated by a growing concern in the foreign policy analytical communities in both countries over the troubled state of the relationship and over trends that pointed in the direction of possible further deterioration.

The working groups shared an analytical framework that had been worked out by the U.S. and Russian chairs. Their objective was to produce reports that would provide expert U.S. and Russian assessments of the state of the U.S.-Russian relationship and its prospects, as well as guidelines for its improved management. In early November, the groups exchanged preliminary drafts and then held a joint meeting in Washington to discuss and debate each other's findings. The final reports of the two groups, published in both English and Russian versions, grew from these deliberations and debates.

Despite what both groups acknowledge to be the strikingly asymmetrical character of the U.S.-Russian relationship and the radically different circumstances of the two countries, the two reports share a surprisingly large area of analytical common ground. Both groups believe that the relationship is deeply troubled and that trends point to more trouble ahead if they are not soon reversed. The Russian report characterizes the relationship as being in a state of “sluggish crisis”; the U.S. report states that the relationship has for some years been undergoing a process of “systematic ratcheting down.” The common ground includes:

- Broad agreement on the reasons for the troubled relations: initial unrealistic expectations on both sides; a failure to take fully into account the radically altered post-Cold War environment; glaring asymmetries between the two sides; the dramatically different fates of the two countries over the past decade, including Russia’s deep socio-economic crisis and a period of unprecedented growth and prosperity in the United States.
- Agreement that the Russians themselves are primarily responsible for Russia’s internal failings, but that the United States backed both a flawed economic reform strategy for Russia, which most Russians blame for their country’s decline, and a narrow circle of leaders who became the country’s most widely unpopular politicians.
- Concern about recent trends in public and elite opinion in both countries over downgrading the importance of each country in the foreign and security policy calculus of the other. The Russian report argues that U.S. global political influence, military power, and its dominant role in the world economy inevitably make relations with the United States a high priority for Russia but asserts that there is a growing asymmetry in the priorities that each country assigns to the other, with the United States increasingly viewing Russia as a second-rate power in all spheres of international life apart from the strategic nuclear sphere. The U.S. report argues that Russia must remain a key concern for the United States, even if it can no longer occupy center stage as the Soviet Union did during the Cold War. This is not only because of its still-vast nuclear arsenal and large quantities of fissile

material and WMD-related technologies, but also because its geographical position places it astride regions of vital interest to the United States and because of the major U.S. interest in the outcome of Russia's domestic transformation, upon which stability in Eurasia strongly depends, as well as Russia's capacity to realize its enormous potential to act abroad for good or ill.

- Agreement that chances for a serious improvement in the relationship will have to await completion of the presidential electoral cycles in both countries and that the main emphasis between now and then should be to prevent further damage and to prepare the ground for an effort at renewed broad engagement under new leadership in both countries.
- Expectations of a downturn in the extent of U.S. involvement in Russian internal development in the short to mid term. The U.S. report recommends that the next U.S. administration should maintain a respectful distance from the Russian leadership and involve itself less in Russia's domestic political affairs than the current administration has. It also calls for the United States to rethink its strategy of economic reform and recovery in Russia, calling for a more agnostic U.S. approach to the details of any reasonable economic reform program developed by a new Russian leadership that appears to command the political support necessary for implementation. The Russian working group doubts that there will be substantial new assistance from the United States anytime soon but acknowledges that in any case Russia has not effectively used help in the past. The Russian group asserts that Russia's chief economic need from abroad now is debt relief, investment in viable sectors of the Russian economy, and improved market access. Above all, it maintains that if the United States does not know how to help, or is unwilling to help, its watchword should be "Do no harm."
- Agreement on the continuing high priority of strategic nuclear issues, with emphasis on the importance of preserving the treaty-regulated U.S.-Russian arms control regime. The Russian report warns against the danger of unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty in the context of a strategic dialogue between the two countries, which

Moscow's long failure to ratify START II has caused to stagnate. Both groups outline possible compromise approaches to the conjoined START III-ABM treaty modification issues, which may be considered by the two sides after their presidential elections.

- Support in the longer term for broad U.S.-Russian engagement not limited to strategic issues, but with a more realistic agenda, reflecting the large asymmetries that exist in the resources and capabilities of the two countries. As U.S. relations with its allies demonstrate, the U.S. report concludes, asymmetry does not preclude partnership. The U.S. report calls for a U.S. policy of engagement that sets realistic goals, taking into account Russia's presently limited resources and domestic preoccupations, and avoids overburdening the relationship, which would increase the risk of perceived failures and would jeopardize public support for engagement. The Russian report emphasizes the need for Russia to focus on its principal vital interests, which are overwhelmingly domestic; to avoid being drawn into international confrontations; and to follow a policy of "selective involvement" in international affairs. In the interim, as Russia struggles to recover, the Russian report calls for greater cooperative efforts on "new agenda" issues, such as the fight against drug trafficking, terrorism, organized crime, and environmental pollution so as to avoid an exclusive preoccupation in bilateral relations with issues on which the interests of the two countries diverge.
- Agreement that differing assessments and perceptions of the conflict in Chechnya are the most serious current source of tension in the relationship. In both reports, corruption in Russia is acknowledged to be a serious problem for the bilateral relationship. The U.S. report states that in addition to an end to Russia's military campaign in Chechnya, a concerted effort by the Russian government to deal with high-level corruption is essential to create and sustain U.S. public support for broad engagement with Russia. The Russian report acknowledges that Russia must seriously confront corruption if a favorable investment environment is to be created in the country and if Russia's credibility in the international financial community is to grow. Finally, both groups see the Newly Independent States as posing the most

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serious potential for confrontation in U.S.-Russian relations, and each faults its own government for failing to articulate a comprehensive strategy for that region.

The two groups agree on the need for both countries to avoid further damage to the relationship in the short term and to begin now to lay the ground for improving and ultimately rebuilding the relationship on a more realistic basis under new leaderships in both countries.

Arnold L. Horelick
U.S. Chair

Sergei Karaganov
Yuli Vorontsov
Russian Co-Chairs

