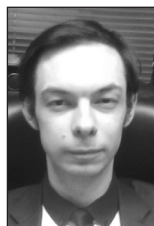


ОБЩИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ КОММУНИКАТИВИСТИКИ

США и Россия: 210 лет дипломатических отношений и международной коммуникации**USA and Russia: 210 Years of Diplomatic Relations and International Communication**

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**Р.О. Райнхардт**

Канд. экон. наук, преподаватель кафедры дипломатии МГИМО МИД России, Россия, 119454, Москва, пр-т Вернадского, 76, e-mail: don.reinhardt@mail.ru

R.O. Raynkhart

Ph.D. (World Economy), Lecturer at the Department for Diplomatic Studies Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University), 76, Prospect Vernadskogo, Moscow, 119454, Russia, e-mail: don.reinhardt@mail.ru

Аннотация

Статья посвящена 210-летию установления дипломатических отношений между США и Россией и раскрывает историю их развития. Рассмотрены основные вопросы российско-американской повестки на протяжении более двухсот лет. При комплексном исследовании предмета автор делает акцент на отдельных кейсах, ключевых с точки зрения понимания текущей геополитической конъюнктуры, определяемой взаимодействием двух стран. Анализируя различия в их политической культуре, автор выявляет важную роль межкультурной коммуникации в рамках соответствующих исторических эпизодов. Результаты исторического анализа дают почву для умеренного оптимизма относительно дальнейшего развития отношений между США и Россией.

Ключевые слова: российско-американские отношения, история дипломатии, холодная война, украинский кризис, межкультурная коммуникация.

Abstract

The article is dedicated to the 210th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and Russia and casts light upon their genesis and development. It provides an acute insight into the key issues of US-Russian agenda within a time span of more than 200 years. Along with giving a holistic picture of the subject, the author focuses on specific cases crucial for understanding the current geopolitical juncture shaped by the interaction of the two nations. With an emphasis on differences in political culture, he outlines the important role of cross-cultural communication within the framework of the respective cases. The findings derived from the historical analysis give grounds for a certain degree of optimism in terms of further development of the relationship between the US and Russia.

Keywords: US-Russia relations, history of diplomacy, Cold War, Ukrainian crisis, international communication.

Good old frienemies

In 2017, Russia and the United States celebrate 210 years since the official establishment of their diplomatic relations. The cross-cultural communication of the two nations has an even longer history and sometimes conjures up the buzzword ‘frienemy’. The latter, being a portmanteau of the words ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’ (nowadays more commonly spelled ‘frenemy’), first appeared in the US press on May 19, 1953 in the article ‘Howz about calling the Russians our Frienemies?’ [14]. It gained popularity even outside the political discourse and in the modern usage can refer to either an enemy disguised as a friend or to a friend who is simultaneously a competitor and rival. In the present context, we definitely opt for the second meaning. A similarly ambivalent sense can be attributed to the word ‘coopetition’ (portmanteau of ‘cooperation’ and ‘com-petition’), also used in the present article.

In general, almost every relationship between two nations, whether amicable or rather hostile, cannot but have its ups and downs. Eternal friendship just as perpetual enmity, in line with a famous quote by Lord

Palmerstone [5], seems to be hardly applicable to foreign affairs. At the same time, globalization tends to make the world arena too small for any two countries to disregard each other’s interests. Shrinking distances along with growing interconnection of the key geopolitical actors make us therefore live in a global village where a clash of interests (both strategic and tactical) should not be regarded as something unusual.

Without going too much into theory, it can be presumed that the bigger and more powerful the potential parties to a conflict of interests are, the more often they will face confrontation. In the case of Russia and the US such confrontation has so far culminated in a stage commonly referred to as the Cold War which used to shape the international scene for almost half a century. However, since then the countries in question have also gone through better periods in their bilateral relations.

As for the current state of affairs in this framework, today’s political and economic juncture tends to conduce concern. Successively as the situation in different parts of the world, especially the Middle East and Ukraine, is getting more and more complicated, doom-mongers come up with gloomy prophecies. Since the beginning of the

respective crises, Cassandra's forecasts vary from the resumption of the aforementioned Cold War to the breakout (if running into extremes) of a hot one [7; 10]. On the other hand, analysts who prefer to be more reserved in their judgments are still far from being optimistic about what at this point tends to remind a deadlock [12]. The jury is still out, but no matter what stance one takes, positive expectations and aspirations do not yet seem to be backed up by facts — even after the election of Donald Trump, who enjoys the sympathy of a good part of Russian establishment and public.

At any rate, there is not a shred of doubt that the above problems are an issue at the top of US-Russian agenda and have a great impact on the development of the latter. Whatever the future has in hold for us in terms of their possible resolution, it will most probably signify another benchmark for the two great powers with the largest nuclear stockpiles. But how radical can it actually be? A brief look at the history makes one think of the well-known statement from The Inspired Writings:

“Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.” (Ecclesiastes 1:10).

Formulating the initial thesis in a more straightforward manner, one might go so far as to say that we have seen worse. But we have also seen better.

Once upon a time in America

It all started a long time ago when the United States of America as we know them now did not even exist. The year 1775 as one of the momentous turning points in history was marked by the unrests breaking out in 13 British colonies of the New World. Not to put too fine a point on it, this initially internal affair of the United Kingdom with a substantially economic underpinning soon turned into the American Revolutionary War with serious political repercussions at the international level. Using the modern terminology of political scientists, the respective events may have easily been referred to as the American spring with the Battles of Lexington and Concord as the first military engagements being fought on April 19, 1775.

As soon as it became clear that the situation was getting out of control, the British monarch George III began looking for allies and addressed his Russian counterpart Catherine II (the Great) asking for assistance. The Empress, however, turned him down flat but made considerable efforts to organize peace negotiations between the belligerent parties. In terms of concrete actions, with her declaration of 1780 she also founded the First League of Armed Neutrality — an alliance of European naval powers, which essentially lowered the negative impacts of the economic sanctions imposed by the UK. In their overall

outcome, these steps might be deemed such as to merit the final verdict of having contributed to the signature of the peace treaties in 1783.

When all relevant factors have been taken into consideration, it would not seem totally opportune to give the Russian empire credit for US independence. Still, on mature reflection the outlined firm policy of non-interference definitely played an important and constructive role in the process of global and local dispute settlement. Moreover, it definitely was not the worst start for a relationship.

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Russia was apparently in no hurry to provide these relations with an official and legal basis by means of diplomacy. Shortly after Catherine's above mentioned declaration of 1780, which Americans regarded as an undoubtedly friendly step, they sent Francis Dana as Minister (term used to designate Ambassador at that time) to the Russian empire. This statesman resided in Saint Petersburg till 1783 without being officially received at court. The next Minister (Plenipotentiary) William Short, an experienced diplomat, was appointed only 25 years later, but his mission did not turn out to be a success either — this time due to domestic issues. Close associate of Thomas Jefferson (who would call him 'adoptive son'), Short used to be the head of US diplomatic missions in France, the Netherlands and Spain, i.e. America's key strategic partners in Europe. His appointment to Russia took place during a recess of the US Senate. While he was en route, the Senate rejected the nomination hindering him to proceed to post.

Thus, the official establishment of diplomatic relations between the Russian empire and the United States of America dates back to 1807. The first US ambassador to actually present credentials to Catherine's grandson Alexander I was none other than John Quincy Adams who later became the 6th President (1825–1829) of his country. His identity and service record appear even more impressive compared to those of his nominal forerunners on the post and give an idea of the importance the US attached to dealing with Russia. John Quincy Adams was the son of one of the US founding fathers John Adams, who himself used to serve as ambassador to Great Britain and the Netherlands before becoming the 2nd US President in 1797. The highlights of John Quincy Adams' diplomatic career are: US Minister Resident to the Netherlands (1794–1797), Minister Resident to Prussia (1797–1801), Minister to Russia (1809–1814 — during Russia's war with Napoleon), Minister to Great Britain (1814–1817), Secretary of State (1817–1825).

On the other hand, Adams' counterpart going as the consul general and chargé d'affaires to Philadelphia — Andrey Y. Dashkov — was also an outstanding personality and founder of a diplomatic dynasty. The fact that Russia's first diplomatic hub in the US was Philadelphia

and not Washington can be linked with quite an interesting coincidence. The founder of the city William Penn whose name is also reflected in the State's geographic denomination (Pennsylvania) is said to have met Peter the Great back in 1698 in London, which sometimes tends to be regarded as the very first Russo-American high level political contact. Later on, 11 (till now) Ambassadors of the US to Russia represented the State of Pennsylvania.

In 2007, the bicentennial of diplomatic relations between Russia and the US was celebrated in both countries without too much general public's attention neither a stir in the mass media. Was it mainly because of the current geopolitical juncture before the start of new election cycles in Moscow as well as in Washington? Or is it rather the overall lack of warm memories which made the anniversary less cheerful than it could have been? Even with the further insight into history, this question remains open.

From a long honeymoon to almost a divorce

Given the variety of their aspects, making an exhaustive survey of the 210-year-long US-Russian relations and interstate communication — even in the form of an executive summary — would strongly remind a Sisyphean task. Since it is not our job to challenge either Russian americanists or American kremlinologists, we would focus on some illustrative cases which might be of use in terms of understanding the key trends about the subject in question.

After a delayed but on the whole successful start, throughout the whole XIX century bilateral rapports between Washington and Saint Petersburg can be characterized by very positive dynamics. Several documents were signed, amongst them the Russo-American treaty of 1824 followed by the Trade Treaty of 1834. The first one's official title was 'Convention Between the United States of America and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, Relative to Navigating, Fishing, Etc., in the Pacific Ocean'. It dealt with the demarcation of the Pacific Northwest coast of North America. The second treaty ('U.S.-Russian Treaty of Navigation and Commerce' — in force till 1911) stipulated the principle of most favored nation ante litteram in trade between the two countries.

Such a rapprochement can obviously be explained by predominantly economic reasons. The only cornerstone in this field could be seen in territories known as Russian America, i.e. possessions of the Russian empire on the Northwest coast of North America. The first Russian settlers reached this part of America around 1648. As an administrative unit, Russian America existed from 1799 to 1867. In 1867, however, this problem was solved in a smooth way by the US' purchase of the above lands for

7.2 million USD — an act that the Russians will later on deeply regret.

At the same time, cooperation and international interaction would by no means be limited by the economic dimension. During the War of 1812 between the United States and the British Empire (1812–1815) which coincided with the Franco-Russian conflict, as well as during the American Civil War (1861–1865), Saint Petersburg would provide Washington with both financial and political support.

What appears to be indeed even more interesting — with regard to certain recent events — is America's reciprocal assistance and role in the Crimean War of 1853–1856 (Russia vs Britain, France, Ottoman Empire and Sardinia). The point is that in the course of this military confrontation the US not only shared Russia's stance at the political level but also helped the Russian army with military supplies and were even considering sending volunteers to the seat of war. Despite the fact that at the end of the day American troops never disembarked in Crimea, many Russian soldiers were grateful for the service of several doctors and army surgeons from the New World.

Without going into further historical details or putting too much emphasis on the above example, we would like to stress that the Crimean Peninsula has already been part of the US-Russian agenda in terms of cross-cultural communication [3]. It hardly needs to be stated that America's position at that time somewhat differed from their current vision of Russia's national interests and respective policies [1]. Of course, there was a completely different political reality and situation on the international scene — in other words, as they would probably put it — another story. Nonetheless, the very remembrance of this episode along with its more comprehensive analysis could be conducive to engaging the sides in a more open and truthful dialogue on the issue.

The next case worth looking into lies in the field of technical and once again economic cooperation. The regrettable outcome of the same Crimean War made the Russian government face the irrefutable necessity of modernizing both the armed forces and the economy. As for the first track, American engineers made a considerable contribution to the rearmament, as for the second — to the construction and equipment of infrastructural facilities, inter alia the railroad between Moscow and Saint Petersburg, as well as the telegraph network. Similar cooperation was witnessed in the course of the First and especially the Second World Wars (Lend-Lease).

Another factor having a significant influence on US' relationship with the Russian empire and subsequently the Soviet Union was the Russian emigration to the New World. It should not come as a surprise that ab initio the so-called Russian community in America was to the bet-

ter part comprised of people coming from the western parts of the country, above all from the Pale of Settlement, which encompassed modern Ukraine [13]. Unlike immigrants from other European countries, the vast majority of them belonged to ethnic and/or religious minorities and was predominantly Jewish.

Overall, these people numerous to come to the US since the end of the XIX century did it mainly out of political and social reasons rather than out of economic ones. Moreover, the Russian government's attitude to this phenomenon would be basically negative — to the point that such emigration from the judicial point of view was treated as illegal or quasi-illegal. Hence the immigrants' idea of their ex-homeland: with few exceptions, they were not too eager to maintain contacts with their country of origin. This disposition did not play a positive role for strengthening bilateral links and interstate communication through compatriots abroad.

A more or less similar tendency can be traced throughout the XX century with all the four so-called waves of Russian emigration. Thus, the high potential of what now is supposed to be the mission of *Rossotrudnichestvo* has for a long time been underestimated and virtually unexplored. It is quite remarkable that the scope of application of the notorious Jackson-Vanik amendment, with the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation (till 2012) being subject thereto, was initially linked to the restriction of emigration.

Consequently, the Russian part of the US melting pot became one of the rather destructive factors in the relationship between the two countries. It appears to be definitely worth emphasizing that many emigrants, who used to take with them bad memories about Russia/USSR to their new home, came from territories of modern Ukraine — a fact largely depicted in popular culture [13]. Good instances thereof are movies like 'Weather Is Good on Deribasovskaya, It Rains Again on Brighton Beach' (1992) or 'Lord of War' (2005).

As far as the successive development of relations between Saint Petersburg / Moscow—Washington is concerned, towards the beginning of the 20th century the honeymoon seemed to be over. Tensions in the Far East gained ground, so that during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) US sympathies were apparently not on the Russian side. Still, Prime Minister Petr Stolypin (1906–1911) claimed that the United States would be Russia's strategic partner not just on the political level, but also in the cultural dimension — unlike European countries [4].

The First World War led to some convergence (Nicholas II and Woodrow Wilson entered it as allies) but only for a short time. With the advent of the Russian Revolution in 1917 the US alongside some other Western countries first supported the rebels, then changed their prefer-

ences for the White movement (anti-bolsheviks) ending up with the participation in the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War (1918–1920). However, when in 1919 the Lithuanian National Committee addressed the American government asking for recognition of their independence, the official response stated that the US still regard the Baltic States as an integral part of Russia [4]. This policy line was confirmed in 1920 by the Secretary of State Colby's note on maintaining Russia's territorial integrity. Such a stance definitely contradicted Britain, which would support separatists both in the Baltic and in the Caucasus regions.

After the foundation of the USSR (1922) the US were one of the last countries to reestablish diplomatic relations (1933) with the Russian State risen from the ashes. Given the paramount significance of this act, Washington sent to Moscow William Bullit, a prominent candidate who was considered an old friend of the Bolsheviks thanks to his diplomatic efforts at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. In particular, the first ambassador to the Soviet Union was known for having resigned from Woodrow Wilson's staff after failing to convince the President to support the establishment of relations with the Bolshevik government back in 1920. Apart from that, Bullit's traits and appearance are said to have been embodied in Bulgakov's Volland, the principle character of 'The Master and Margarita', whereas its famous scene of Satan's ball might have been inspired by one of the receptions at the American embassy in Moscow (Spaso House): another example of cross-cultural communication. Bullit's counterpart, Alexander Troyanovsky, a close friend of Lenin, was also a distinguished statesman and occupied the post from 1933 to 1938. By and large, these choices illustrate and justify that the nations would not appoint men of no importance as each other's ambassadors.

World War II can be described as another phase of coming closer and fighting as brother-in-arms against Nazi Germany. Broadly speaking, it would boil down to the philosophy of 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'. Once the common enemy was defeated, the paths diverged again. The absolute trough in relations was apparently reached in October 1962 with the Cuban Missile Crisis when the Cold War came closest to turning into a nuclear conflict. Was it a point of no return?

Bound to be partners: a longstanding mutually beneficial cooperation

The development of the relations since 1962 reminds at some stages an old joke:

An elderly couple has been married for a very long time. When they were asked whether, in all those years, they had ever thought of divorce, they replied, 'Heavens no, murder yes, but divorce never.'

There was the *détente*, with joint efforts aimed at slowing down the arms race. One of its key tracks took the shape of several negotiations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, including two rounds of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) held from 1969 to 1979, and bilateral treaties¹. Still, following the course towards a ‘peaceful coexistence’ (reference to the Marxist-Leninist foreign policy doctrine) the sides did not always manage to come to terms: the Vietnam War (1955–1975), the Soviet War in Afghanistan (1979–1989) as well as other less bloody but also important events would be bones of contention on a global scale.

At the same time the nations which ‘shared the same biology regardless of ideology’, as Sting put it in 1985, still found some areas for collaboration. Thus, the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project (1975) marked the end of the Space Race (1957–1975) between the two superpowers. Cooperation in space was continued after almost 20 years by the Shuttle-Mir Program (1994–1998) and the collective work on the International Space Station (1998 — present time).

As the Soviet State was in the propinquity of the ultimate termination of its existence, the Cold War appeared to be almost over. Its former opponents seemed to be quite ready to meet each other halfway, whereby the Eastern partners would go even further, for instance signing the Maritime Boundary Agreement (1990) which implied considerable benefits for the West. The nuclear dialogue was also carried on with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) in 1987 and finally the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) in 1991.

USSR’s eventual collapse was often construed as the end of the bipolar system (*Pax Americana* vs *Pax Sovietica*) and the onset of a completely new world order where nothing would hamper the reestablishment of relations between the two countries on a totally different basis. At first, this approach seemed to work: a growing interest for the Russian culture and language was witnessed in the US [2], whereas in the Russian Federation ‘Bush legs’ (popular expression to denote chicken leg quarters) alongside other goods imported and delivered as humanitarian aid from the West became tokens of the early 1990s. In general, pretty much everything — including disarmament (another START II signed in 1993) — was running smoothly.

Nonetheless, the condition of ‘everything’s OK’ (a phrase which at that time became popular with many a Russian) was not a long-lasting one. It may be claimed that the new point of irreversible bifurcation in the relations emerged as early as in 1998 with the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia [6]. On the day this operation started (March 24), the Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov

was going to Washington on an official visit. Flying over the Atlantic, he received a phone call from the US Vice President Al Gore, informing him about the verdict on Kosovo. Primakov, as former Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996–1998), demonstrated a quick thinking and an even quicker reaction: the plane changed its course and started heading backwards. This episode inferred that Russia would no longer agree with every decision endorsed by the United States — a difficult disposition to enter together the new millennium [15].

The 21st century since its very beginning proved to be full of changes and challenges having an impact on the US-Russian international communication. As an outcome of the quasi-synchronous election cycles in the first decade, Vladimir Putin and George W. Bush became the new leaders of their respective countries.

Three months after 9/11 the American President announced US’ withdrawal from the aforementioned ABM. The proponents of this step claimed that it would help to protect the United States from nuclear blackmail by rogue states and terrorists. As in almost every similar debate, there were ardent ‘abolitionists’ of the treaty as well as its fervent ‘retentionists’. According to the latter, denouncing ABM would cross out all the existing achievements and lead to a ‘world without effective legal constraints on nuclear proliferation’ [11]. Thereupon Russia in their turn withdrew from START II. As a substitute of a significantly lower caliber, the heads of the state signed the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) in 2002.

The Iraq War, which began in 2003, only amplified the deteriorating dynamics of the relations. Other benchmarks were the revolutions in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon (2005), the South Ossetia War (2008), the Arab (since 2010) and ultimately the Ukrainian (since 2014) spring. To cut a long story short, throughout the last 10 years the relationship we are tracing has been sequentially going down the drain.

Yet this continuous race to the bottom was for a short time interrupted in 2009 by a positive shift. At that time the two presidential cabinets were occupied respectively by Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama who decided to spur the feeble cooperation by making a ‘fresh start’. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov symbolically pressed the ‘reset button’, whereas their superiors established a bilateral presidential commission named after them. The Obama-Medvedev commission encompassed various areas from nuclear energy and nuclear security to specific questions like health, agriculture, control of drug trafficking as well as other related issues. Apart from that, the new leaders also saw fit to sign another nuclear arms reduction treaty, the New START (2010).

Still, very soon disagreements on geopolitical matters and local conflicts, which did not directly concern the

¹ SALT I (1969–1972), SALT II (1972–1979); LTBT = Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963), NPT = Non-Proliferation Treaty (1969), ABMT = Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (1972).

partners' national interests, would transform into concrete measures. The tools used for reflecting and embodying them tend basically to be in line with the *lex talionis* ('an eye for an eye'): Richard Cheney's Vilnius speech (2006) vs Vladimir Putin's Munich speech (2007), Magnitsky Act (2012) vs Dima Yakovlev law (2012), the cases of Victor Bout, Konstantin Yaroshenko and others [9] vs the Edward Snowden affair, and so on and so forth, not to speak of the sanctions imposed with regard to the Ukrainian crisis.

It can hardly be more obvious that Russia and the US have different ideas of geopolitics and geo-economics, the developments on the international scene as well as their role therein. Luckily, they both have been pragmatic and smart enough not to break of the relations, continuing the negotiations. Will it also be the case in the future? Even if the bets be off, our forecast would be guardedly positive.

Conclusions

Having taken a brief look at the history of relations between Russia and the United States of America, we take the liberty of deriving therefrom the following findings.

First, as far as the current juncture and instability on the world arena are concerned, things are not that bad as they are sometimes treated and expounded. After having been on the verge of a direct armed conflict (Cuban Missile Crisis), not to mention the actual military actions in different parts of the world during the 20th century and the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War, the recent tensions should not cause exaggerated concern. It took the Russians and Americans quite a long time to establish a partnership (which sometimes got fragile) and to overcome much trickier gridlocks. In a nutshell, just look at what the parties have already gone through. Therefore, the odds for finding a way-out (*modus vivendi* and *operandi*) in today's crises do not appear to be too low. In the final analysis, Cassandra should probably take a rest (at least for the time being), since in geopolitics there is no place for strong feelings, even if in everyday live those feelings may be hard to avoid. By and large, the incumbent Heads of State, Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, seem to realize it.

Second, it may sound as a platitude, but there is always space for improvement, especially given the circumstances. The countries, which have achieved a lot over more than 200 years, shall try to do even better looking for a common ground. Above all, they shall never stop the negotiating process both on a bilateral and multi-

lateral basis, no matter what may come and how tense the atmosphere may get. The idea of interstate communication is simple: 'agree to disagree', but keep negotiating.

Third, in concrete terms the following areas appear to have a lot of potential for mutually beneficial cooperation with recourse to a pragmatic approach:

- 1) improve the ties with Russian compatriots in the US (one-way track, since there are not too many Americans living in Russia), particularly with those who still regard modern Ukraine as their 'urheimat';
- 2) give momentum to existing projects and launching new ones in the field of technical cooperation and modernization;
- 3) strengthen the economic links between the countries.

The third track, which we have scarcely touched upon in the present work, definitely needs a deeper insight for further consideration. Just to give a rough idea of the bilateral business cooperation one can state that in 2015 the total trade turnover amounted to some 26 billion USD [8] — a sum not to be neglected in any analysis of the world economy and international flow of goods and services.

It would also be correct to complete the above items with the standard formula 'as well as other measures': nuclear agenda, human rights, law enforcement etc. All in all, the list can surely be defined as an open one.

Last but not least, before making a full stop in the present article we also would like to stress the crucial importance of the personal dimension of relations between the two countries. As we have seen from history, the identity of individuals in charge of policy-making and decision-taking has always played a significant role. It concerns not only those who define the general course and strategy, but also people coping with the respective problems on a day-to-day basis. Talking about the latter, we especially mean ambassadors. In this context, with regard to their CVs the incumbent Russian post-holder Sergey Kislyak as well as his counterpart John Tefft give the impression of being the right men for the job.

To sum up, we would like to point out once again that this article does by no means pretend to provide an in-depth insight into the nature of US-Russian relations and international communication. Its principal goal was to give a holistic picture thereof with regard to the memorable date Russians and Americans might celebrate this year. Emphasizing the imperishable value of further research in this field, we think that it will also remain key in the years to come. However, we look forward that in the near future the outlined problems will become history.

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