

# Introduction by the Executive Editor

The idea for this report originated during preparations for the Russian-American section of the "Valdai" International Discussion Club meetings, a joint RIA Novosti and Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP) initiative. The Valdai Club is a series of meetings held regularly between specialists on Russia, prominent academics and journalists from all over the world, and their Russian colleagues representing a wide spectrum of the Russian political elite.

This report was inspired by a presentation of a project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences entitled "Rethinking U.S. Policy toward Russia" and written by a group of leading American experts on Russia and Russian-American relations led by Robert Legvold, Professor Emeritus of Columbia University.

On the basis of a systemic analysis of American interests vis-à-vis Russia, "Legvold's document" calls for a substantial revision of the American policy in favor of intensifying cooperation with Russia. Reading this in-depth research immediately prompted an idea to prepare an analogous Russian document.

This report has two aims.

**First.** To compel the Russian political elite to have a systematic discussion over what they require from their relations with the U.S., as well as how those relations could be normalized after a quarter of a century of unprecedented deterioration.

**Second.** To use an appraisal of mutual interests as the basis for an open and pragmatic dialogue with the American expert community about what the relationship between the two countries could and should look like in the new era.

The report was prepared using a significantly modified traditional methodology of the CFDP. First the authors together with a number of outside experts held a series of brainstorming sessions. On their basis a broad comparative list (originally organized in a table) of Russian and U.S. interests toward to each other was assembled. Official and academic publications on closely related issues were taken into account in this work, as were the previous CFDP studies on this subject.

Conclusions drawn from the analysis of these lists of interests were in many respects unexpected and noteworthy. Preliminary results were then discussed with a large group of experts at a "soft" situational analyses seminar. Even before its official presentation in the run-up to the July meeting of the Presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama, the report was submitted to the Government officials and experts.

This report, like the one prepared under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, is planned to be discussed in the end of June 2009 at the meeting of the Russian-American section of the Valdai Club. This work will continue not through separate tracks, but jointly, by the Russian-American expert group.

Indeed, this report's assessment of Russian and American interests is the authors' work and consciously does not claim to reflect the official point of view. The authors are open to criticism that will be taken into account in future works. The authors' task was to identify the real interests as explicitly as possible, and to move away from an approach that conceals or deliberately blurs their interpretation.

The report in its current shape comprises a text containing analysis and recommendations,

and additionally, in its Appendix, the final version of the list of Russian and American interests toward each other.

Comparative analysis of interests is by no means the only and absolute key to developing an adequate policy. Yet without it, reasonable policy proves to be impossible. Authors of the Reports in both Russia and the U.S. contributed their modest efforts to formulating such a policy. Responsibility for the final version of the text rests solely with the Executive Editor.

***Sergei A. Karaganov***