

# Global conversation with Professor Dmitry Suslov

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## “PROSPECTS FOR RUSSIA - WEST RELATIONS: A WAY OUT OF THE CONFRONTATION”



Dmitry Suslov is Deputy Director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies at the National Research Higher School of Economics.

The lecture that Professor Suslov gave us was focused on the relationship that the United States and the European Union had with Russia. Considering that even though West-Russia relationship can be studied as one topic but have many differences, the Professor decided to put focus first on the US-Russia relationship and then on the EU-Russia relationship.

Regarding the US-Russia relations, he defined the actual situation as a New Cold War that is worse than the first one under many aspects. The United States sees Russia as an enemy for the western society, accusing them of causing most of the internal problems of Western countries. Both sides see each other's actions as a direct challenge to themselves and a systematic challenge to the international order they promote. In fact the two nations saw the collapse of the USSR in different ways; the US saw it as the defeat of their biggest enemy, on the other hand Russia (as the natural heir of the USSR), saw it as a willing capitulation but didn't want to give up its status as a great power, hoping that the US and Russia would work together to rebuild the post-soviet world. This new cold war scenario brought the two nations to lower cooperation to an unprecedented minimum and even in case of necessity the collaboration is minimum (Syria = deconfliction rather than cooperation). Sanctions, remilitarization of European security and the collapse of the remaining arms control regimes are just a few examples of how bad is the situation.

The election of Donald Trump as the new president of the United States was seen positively as he wanted to eliminate the sanctions to Russia and start a more positive and collaborative relationship. Nevertheless, after Russiagate it all changed. The Trump administration was the first time, since the end of the Cold war, when a change in the US administration did not result in even a temporary improvement of relations.

This renewed confrontation has costs, like the weakening of Global Governance and the failure to resolve major conflict, but also the risk of direct military clash that is

unlikely but still possible in a much more complex strategic environment like the one we have nowadays.

The EU-Russia relations are instead a paradox. They are economically compatible and historically and culturally close. However, they do not cooperate as expected. The relations are worst in their history and are stagnating since 2014. The EU and Russia are competing for the Post-Soviet space, and Russia is seen as a competitor for the EU. At a strategic level the two nations are competing and do not cooperate, the EU refuses to recognize the EAEU (Eurasian Economic Union) and Russia prefer to make agreements with the European states rather than with the EU undermining its importance. Economically the relations are getting worse even in the fields where they should cooperate, as in the energy field where the relations have been securitized and the EU is looking for more opportunities to diminish the energy dependence. The roots of the EU-Russia relations crisis are also to be found in the Post-Cold War period. In fact, the enlargement of the European Union was considered as a challenge to the Russian interest in the area. This EU-centric model is considered by Russia as a direct threat as they consider themselves equal to the European Union. Russia offers, in fact, a model of cooperation between the EU and the EAEU rather than the association and integration model proposed by the European Union.

In the short term, the Professor opines that the West-Russia relations will deteriorate but will avoid a direct military clash. In the long term, the situation is a bit different; in the US, there will be a worsening of the relations after the Trump administration but the relations will get slowly better in the long run (At least two decades). Regarding the EU-Russia relations in the long term, we will see a steady development thanks to a bigger economic cooperation.

We thank Dimitri Suslov for giving us a new point of view in the West-Russia relations.

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