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News **Media reports** Social networks

## Media reports

[GF Home](#) / [News and media reports](#) / [Media reports](#)



[Back to newsline](#)

## Conferences

29 March 2016

### Mikhail Gorbachev: Don't isolate Russia in this climate of Cold War rhetoric – we must all work together

If a global poll were taken today asking people whether the world is going in the right direction, the answer, I think, would be a resounding No. Five years after popular movements emerged throughout the Arab world, memories of the Arab Spring have a bitter taste. In Syria, war has raged for half a decade and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, scattering refugees across Europe.

Chaos and extremism reign in Libya. Blood continues to be shed in eastern Ukraine.

For leaders trying to deal with these problems, never have the challenges been more complex. Not only is the world more interconnected than ever, it is also changing rapidly. Globalisation, mass migration and the internet – all have made it more difficult for individual governments to address the crises of our time.

It's not just imagined scenarios. The United States is planning to deploy over bn (£2.07bn) worth of additional heavy weapons and equipment in central and eastern Europe – one example of the collapse of trust in international affairs.

A militaristic mindset, it seems, has infected politics and the media. For two decades governments have been too ready to resolve disputes with force or the threat of force. Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya and other interventions have brought more harm than good. Yet we fail to learn the right lessons. International discourse, full of harsh polemics and mutual accusations, smacks of a propaganda war. In such an environment, dialogue – the most effective cure for the world's ills – becomes almost impossible.

Despite all this, I see reason to be hopeful. Even last year, as war ravaged the Middle East and relations between Russia and the West deteriorated, green shoots were visible.

Negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme – unthinkable a decade ago – ended in success. After years of inaction, important agreements were finally reached at the Paris conference on climate change. In recent weeks, the US and Russia edged towards a ceasefire in Syria; President Putin announced the withdrawal of most Russian forces. The truce is fragile, but it now seems we are heading in the right direction.

I hope from all this our Western partners now understand that it is pointless trying to isolate Russia. As an indispensable actor in addressing major problems, Russia cannot be isolated – the world needs us. What Europe now needs most, in the face of a global threat from terror, is co-operation. If terror cells – like the one behind last year's Paris atrocities – heed no borders, neither should our efforts to combat them. Information, resources, expertise must be shared.

A new grand agreement, like the Helsinki Accords of 1975 and the 1990 Paris Charter, would help modernise European leaders' approach to security. After all, the threats we face have changed beyond all recognition in the last 25 years. A new agreement would help leaders work together to prevent disagreements degenerating into conflicts, and conflicts into armed hostilities of the kind seen in Ukraine and Syria.

Russia, in the grip of a financial crisis, would certainly benefit from a healthier international atmosphere. Sanctions have crippled Russia's economy, as has the falling price of oil. But tempting as it is to blame our woes on external pressures, Russia must face the fact that the crisis is mostly of its own making. Economic prosperity is unachievable without political reform.

What we now lack, above all else, is democracy. In the world today, it seems democracy is not in a good condition. Yet I am convinced that without the democratic process – without involving the people in a search for solutions – we cannot break the vicious cycle of self-created problems that holds us back.

We need to overcome the authoritarian trend in our politics. It is not, of course, a recent phenomenon in Russia. In the 1990s we saw the emergence of one-man rule, with a constitution biased towards executive and presidential powers, making it easy for the president to be elected and re-elected again and again. A firm hand, we were told, was needed to conduct reforms. The result? The economic crash of 1998.

Then came further re-centralisation of power, enacted supposedly to stabilise Russia and aid economic recovery. Losing parliamentary and judicial independence, democracy and an independent media was a heavy price to pay for the temporary stability of an economy that would soon find itself in crisis again.

It is clear that the current model of government in Russia does not work – politically or economically. It does not allow for



**The End of the Cold War and the World Today. International conference.**

## News

### Mikhail Gorbachev's Posle Kremlya published in English

8 April 2016

### In memory of Hans Dietrich Genscher

1 April 2016

### The End of the Cold War and the World Today international conference

25 March 2016

### Anna Nemtsova. Gorbachev Sings!

### And Denounces New Stalinism

The Daily Beast, 07.03.2016  
9 March 2016

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## Gorbachev in the news media

### Recent articles in the Russian media about Mikhail Gorbachev and Perestroika

### Georgie Anne Geyer. Gorbachev Demands Real Democratic Reform in Russia

Yahoo News, 15.04.2013

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## Books



**Mikhail Gorbachev. Memoirs**

alternative ideas or new leaders. All decisions should not be left to one person because no one person has all the answers.

To return to the path of real democracy we must resist the urge to divide society into good and bad, the red and the blue, patriots and liberals. Just as governments must co-operate to face global terrorism, we Russians must work together to pursue our common goals.

[The Independent, 18 March, 2016](#)

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**Raisa Gorbachev.**  
I hope. Reminiscences and Reflections



**Mikhail Gorbachev.**  
The Road We Traveled. The Challenges We Face

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