

Academy Meetings



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A Conversation on Evolving U.S. Policy toward Russia

Robert Legvold and Thomas Graham

Welcome by Leslie Berlowitz

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Leslie Berlowitz

Leslie Berlowitz is Chief Executive Officer and William T. Golden Chair at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has been a Fellow of the American Academy since 2004.

Welcome

In 1971, in a talk at the Academy, Fellow and statesman William Averell Harriman spoke about the long arc of U.S.-Russia relations, in which he played a pivotal role. Reflecting then on his years of experience with Russian leaders, he told his audience, “Competitive coexistence with the Soviet Union is likely to continue for some time. However, bilaterally, we can reconcile our differences on a number of specific issues, and each agreement we reach will make the next one easier.” Much has changed in the almost forty years since Ambassador Harriman’s observation, but one thing has not changed: the vital importance of the complex relationship between our two countries. Our speakers tonight well understand the importance of continuing those conversations so that that arc will continue to be achieved.

During the past year, the new administrations in Washington and Moscow as well as Carnegie Corporation of New York encouraged the Academy to reexamine U.S.-Russia relations. Under the leadership of Robert Legvold, a member of the Committee on International Security Studies (CISS), the committee members prepared a strategic assessment of the bilateral relationship and created a blueprint for conceptualizing a twenty-first-century policy toward Russia. In recent months, the committee has shared its perspectives with policy-makers in the U.S. administration and in Congress, as well as with the media and other interested groups. The report that they have put together is available on the Academy’s website at <http://www.amacad.org/russiapolicy.aspx>.

I want to express the Academy's thanks to both Professor Legvold for leading this project and Carnegie Corporation of New York for its support of the Russia project.

Tonight's speakers are Robert Legvold and Thomas Graham. Robert Legvold is a leading expert on Russia and former Soviet states. He is the Marshall D. Shulman Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University and served as Director of the Harriman Institute from 1986 to 1992. Before joining the Columbia faculty, he held positions at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York and at Tufts University. He has authored or edited numerous books, most recently a collaborative volume, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Twenty-first Century and the Shadow of the Past* (2007). A foreign member of the Russian Academy of Social Sciences, he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2005 and has been an important guiding spirit for our work in security issues.

Thomas Graham is a Senior Director at Kissinger Associates. Before joining the firm in 2007, he served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia on the National Security Council staff. In these roles, he was a key White House interlocutor with the Putin government. His government service includes assignments as the Associate Director of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department and, earlier in his career, a Foreign Service Officer, with postings in Moscow and in Washington. He was a Senior Associate in the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which published two of his books: *Russia's Decline and Uncertain Recovery* (2002) and *U.S.-Russian Relations at the Turn of the Century* (2000).

I want to thank both of our speakers; we couldn't have two more knowledgeable people with us this evening to speak on U.S. policy toward Russia.



Robert Legvold

Robert Legvold is Marshall D. Shulman Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University. He has been a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences since 2005.

Presentation

Tom and I are going to talk about the U.S.-Russia relationship one year into the Obama administration. The relationship today, in my view, is in a very different place from where it was a year ago. The residual traces of what had been a seriously deteriorating relationship during the five or six years before January 2009 are still there, and they are capable of reemerging. When we started the U.S. Policy toward Russia project in April 2008, we had been through a six-year period (from late 2002) of rocky and steadily deteriorating U.S.-Russia relations, but it was still six months before the free fall in the U.S.-Russia relationship, in the context of the Russian-Georgian war in August 2008. Many in Moscow, including senior people in the leadership, thought of that war as the first proxy war against the United States in the post-Cold War period. We know now that leadership in both countries contemplated the possibility of the war escalating into a direct confrontation between the two countries.

For a number of us at the time – some in government but a number of people on the outside, especially those in the Russian field – this was not only a regrettable and dangerous state of affairs, it was also in some important respects an unnatural and even illogical circumstance given where we thought

relations were headed at the end of the Cold War. I say unnatural and even illogical because there was no deep, ideologically driven animus to sustain or support enmity between the two countries. There was no vast gap in the core international security issues that both countries faced (at least, not in theory) and there was no comparability in power between the two countries that would sustain a wide-ranging strategic rivalry. Yet there we were in January 2009, after everything that had happened, especially the events of 2008.

The question, then, is why the Obama administration prioritized U.S. relations with Russia given the other problems that it faced in foreign policy coming into office.

I think we are now at a different place; it is ambiguous in many respects, it is uncertain in other respects, but it's a different position. The difference is for two basic reasons. First is the impact of the financial/economic crisis, and second, the election of Barack Obama. I believe it's the second – that is, the new directions in U.S. foreign policy, particularly toward Russia – that is the more important of the two. For those of us involved in the project and a lot of other people in the United States and in Europe who follow the U.S.-Russia relationship, it was clear that if the trend line from Fall 2002 through 2008 was going to be broken, if that inertia was to be transformed, it would have to be because of U.S. leadership. It wasn't going to occur on the Russian side. There was too much skepticism, too much paralysis, and too great an unwillingness to try even to think about what would be necessary in order to change relations.

So it did require initiative on the part of the Obama administration. The question, then, is why the Obama administration prioritized U.S. relations with Russia given the other problems that it faced in foreign policy coming into office. In my view two reasons explain the changes undertaken by the

Obama administration. The first may be subconscious; it was never articulated by the president or his team before or after the election. But, if you think about U.S. relations with major powers, the relationship that was in greatest disrepair was with Russia. If the administration was going to begin turning around the dynamic of U.S. relations with all the great powers, particularly following the deterioration after 2003, Russia would be the hard case and, thus, the toughest test case.

The core reason, however, which was quite conscious and which *was* articulated, was managing a nuclear world. For those of you who followed the positions Obama adopted during his campaign, he was quite clear that the single most important issue he would face as president was managing a nuclear world. He did not articulate a Russia policy during the campaign, though a working group was developing one. Each time he talked about the need to address the nuclear question, both in terms of potential proliferation and managing weapons among those that already have them, he underscored Russia's important role in making progress on those issues.

What, then, did the Obama administration do once in office? I think several things. First, the president made Russia a priority – and in a way that surprised virtually everyone, including those on his Russia team. (I know this from direct contact with them at the time.) He gave as much time to Russia in those first months as he did to the problems of Iraq or Afghanistan. The first strategic reviews prepared by the administration were of Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Russia.

Second, the administration stressed the importance of Russia in U.S. foreign policy – something no prior administration had done. That has been one of the key weaknesses of U.S. policy since 1991: the failure of national leadership to articulate how ramified and substantial the stakes are in the U.S. relationship with Russia. In April, when William Burns, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, spoke in Washington, he said there is no country in the world that has a capacity to affect the success of U.S. foreign policy in more areas than Russia. He didn't say that makes Russia the most

important country for the United States, but he was arguing that no other country touched as many issues of concern to the United States.

Third, the Obama administration started by changing the tone of the relationship. That's what the speech Vice President Biden made at the Munich Security Conference was all about, the famous metaphor: the "reset."

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Fourth, the administration decided to focus on a number of core problems, which have been at the very center of U.S. foreign policy since. The first was to move quickly on a follow-on agreement for START I, which was scheduled to expire in December 2009. The other immediate issues were the war in Afghanistan, the Iranian nuclear issue, and the need to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime heading to the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Those issues then became part of an extensive agenda that the U.S. administration had outlined and negotiated with Russia in Obama's first meeting with President Medvedev in London in April 2009. The two presidents signed on to a very ambitious agenda in their joint statement, one that addressed not just START, nonproliferation, and nuclear terrorism, but everything from European security architecture to progress on the Middle East, from transnational security threats such as drug trafficking, organized crime, and corruption, to stability in South Asia, including Afghanistan, to increased economic ties. By July and the Mos-

cow summit, genuine progress had been made on a number of these issues, enough to justify moving forward with the new policy. Indeed, a framework agreement for negotiating the follow-on agreement for START I was in place. There continue to be delays in concluding the agreement, but the understanding of what the agreement was going to look like had been achieved by July 2009.

In Moscow, the two sides also established a Binational Presidential Commission. I believe this is the only presidential-level commission the United States has with any of the major powers. The commission is chaired by the U.S. Secretary of State and Russia's Foreign Minister. It has sixteen working groups, as well as subcommittees whose agendas include counterterrorism, business development, energy, nuclear energy and nuclear security, public health, management of emergencies, and other civil society issues. In fact, a civil society working group is led by one of the hardliners on the Russian side, Vladislav Surkov, and by Michael McFaul, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia and Eurasian Affairs at the National Security Council.

There is a final element of the Obama administration's policy that has not been featured much in the press, or even noticed within the expert community. That is, from the moment they took office, the president and his team have worked to engage Russia on a multilevel basis, not just government to government, but also in terms of civil society and the business community. This approach is based on the notion that until we begin to engage business communities in both countries and create stakeholders in the relationship, it will be very difficult to build a foundation that has durability and stability during moments of difficulty. In July 2009 there were actually three summits: the government to government summit; the business summit, with more than two hundred representatives from the U.S. side; and the civil society summit. Since then, there has been a continued effort to follow up on these initiatives.

So, what's happened in U.S.-Russia relations? What are the shadows and potential pitfalls? Developing the relationship is a

difficult and impacted process, and in many respects a disappointing process to both sides. But genuine, if very slow, progress has been facilitated by several factors. First, the effects of the economic crisis, which have been bracing for the Russian leadership, have shifted discourse in Moscow toward patience, sacrifice, and modesty; no longer is there boasting about Russia becoming the world's fifth most productive economy and one of the world's new financial centers. There is also reserve in Russia's recent external behavior, particularly in the way Moscow has reengaged with Europe.

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Second, the U.S. administration's decision to alter the Bush administration's approach to ballistic missile defense (BMD) in Europe has facilitated change. That said, the plans the administration have substituted are clearly not only or even primarily to please the Russians or grease the tracks of the relationship. They have their own basis. Third, Ukraine's and Georgia's NATO membership bids were simply taken off the table after the events of 2008–2009, not least because major NATO allies wanted them off the table.

The focus throughout this period has been on the immediate issues outlined earlier: the follow-on agreement for START I, Afghanistan, Iran, and nonproliferation. The START I agreement, as I understand it, is almost complete. National Security Advisor James Jones and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Michael Mullen were both recently in Moscow and are satisfied with the progress made on a couple of the re-

maining, very difficult issues. For example, there is an issue around telemetry and a technical set of issues surrounding verification of missile defense and active defense as well as the question of how the BMD issue is to be handed off to future negotiations. On Afghanistan, the issue has been the transit route, both for lethal and non-lethal supplies, in the air and on the ground. While the press has reported the effort as troubled because Russia had supposedly dragged its heels, in fact, the transit route is now up and running, and the administration is satisfied that this agreement is going to be important and productive in the near term.

On Iran, William Burns has recently declared the U.S.-Russia relationship to be working well, particularly the degree to which the United States and Russia were key in developing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) program offered to Iran for the export of low-enriched uranium in return for the eventual supply of fuel rods. The IAEA initiative, however, has not been successful to this point, and the issue becomes the imposition of sanctions. The Russians blow hot and cold on sanctions, but since Fall 2009, Medvedev has put Russia on record as saying that in circumstances where there appear to be no alternatives, Russia would support sanctions on Iran. The Obama administration is preparing to present a set of sanctions at the UN Security Council.

Therefore, in three of the four areas of U.S.-Russia relations, there has been slow progress, but real progress nonetheless. The administration also hopes to see results on the fourth issue, nuclear nonproliferation, at the Nuclear Security Conference that will be held in April 2010 under President Obama's auspices. Thus far, Russia has been cooperative and supportive of this initiative, according to White House reports. At the NPT Review Conference in May 2010, we'll see what the two sides are able to accomplish in the area of nonproliferation.

The Presidential Commission mentioned above has been very slow to start, but the administration has not used this part of its agenda as the primary measuring stick for judging whether the process is working.

Until we begin to engage business communities in both countries and create stakeholders in the relationship, it will be very difficult to build a foundation that has durability and stability during moments of difficulty.

The administration's focus is primarily on START I, Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear program, and nonproliferation as the test for whether U.S.-Russia relations can advance. The working group on business development in Russia, for example, which is critical to the multilevel approach I discussed, had its first meeting this week at MIT under the chair of U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke and Elvira Nabiullina, Russian Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Also, a major conference led by Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Igor Shuvalov and a set of U.S. counterparts was recently held to explore how, in the United States, collaboration among universities, entrepreneurs, companies, and financiers helps bring technology (nanotechnology in particular, an area that Russia is especially interested in) from the laboratory to the market.

Also important for building relationships is the degree of authority given to those at the Under Secretary level by those at the very top. There must be sufficient authority for them to pull together various bureaucracies, or, if the administration wishes to be more ambitious, to advance a real strategic dialogue. U.S. Under Secretary Burns, who is splendid in this role, and the very able Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov have just met to try to push the commission's development forward.

The more serious obstacle for the United States, in my view, is the failure to deliver on a number of high-priority items the administration had said would be addressed early in its term, including the repeal of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and moving

forward on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the 123 civil nuclear cooperation agreement. From the Russian side, progress has been complicated by its vacillation over joining the World Trade Organization as well as its uncompromising attitude on conventional arms control in Europe following the suspension of its participation in the Conventional Forces Treaty in Europe and, with it, its refusal to be part of the data exchange or monitoring arrangements set up under that agreement, among other issues.

Finally, where are the shadows and potential pitfalls of U.S. policy toward Russia? I think first and most imminent will be the familiar story of politics in both countries. Attitudes in various circles, particularly within Congress and parts of the media, remain skeptical. Even when the START I agreement is brought before the Senate, reactions to the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review and issues of nuclear modernization, including the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, will complicate the ratification process. The decision to proceed with the CTBT or the 123 agreement will be caught up in this complicated process and the trade-offs different politicians will try to engineer. We have seen a variety of criticism of the administration's new Russia policy.

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It is present at least implicitly in Senators McCain and Kyl's censure of France's tentative decision to sell the Mistral helicopter carrier to Russia. It would appear a partial motivation in the proposal of the usually moderate Senator Richard Lugar to provide defense equipment to strengthen Georgia's capacity to deal with a future Russian assault. In some quarters of the U.S. govern-

ment, support for a neo-containment policy toward Russia is still very much alive. For Russia's part, the process has been impeded by strong resistance and mistrust within security circles, including parts of the military, and by either the inability or the unwillingness of Russia's national leadership to crack bureaucratic heads.

Second, for the moment the concrete issues in the U.S.-Russia relationship (the follow-on to START I, Afghanistan, Iran, and nonproliferation) are not embedded in a larger strategic vision that will give broader guidance to the relationship. It is important for the U.S. administration to develop a strategic plan if they really do mean to put the relationship on a different footing. However, because the administration did not set out to do this at the outset, given the pressures and the normal rhythms of Washington, the prospect of moving in this direction now is probably not very good.

Third, deep, underlying sources of tension remain unattended in the relationship, in particular, the interaction between the United States and Russia within the post-Soviet space. This is the great unaddressed problem – the large elephant in the room – and until the United States and Russia directly and frankly begin working out a *modus vivendi* for their respective roles in this region, progress on all other aspects of the relationship will be impeded. This inattention, in turn, also delays efforts to address the improvements that need to be made to the European security architecture.

Fourth, what I would call Russia's strategic ambivalence, or uncertainty about where it stands in relation to the outside world, has increased. On one day, Russia recognizes the importance of Europe and Russia's economic stake in the relationship with Europe. The next day, Russia talks about Europe's diminished importance in international politics and the need to dismiss Europe and the EU and move on to other things. Russians wrestle with the question of how *they* think about their relationships with the new rising powers, particularly with Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC).

An emerging subcategory within Russia's rapport with BRIC is the Russia-China relationship. Russia is not treating this as a

fundamental strategic choice – not toying with the idea of aligning with China as an alternative to alignment with the West or the United States. Rather, more important is the extent to which a significant part of the Russian political establishment grows increasingly attracted to the Chinese political model. We have seen over the last year an increasing interest even on the part of Russia's dominant political party and others in and around Putin's circles in the way China organizes itself politically, including the role of its dominant political party. This obviously bears on the degree to which one can expect Russia to move its domestic policy in directions that will support a Western option and closer relations with the United States.

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Russia's domestic orientation recalls a favorite cocktail conversation: who's up and who's down in the Medvedev-Putin diarchy. Here, the struggle between a greater orientation toward the West or toward Asia plays out. I don't want to oversimplify by arguing that Putin represents the Asian option, Medvedev the Western. But the more that power hierarchy tilts toward Medvedev, the less likely it will be for Russia to explore the Chinese political model; the more it tilts or returns entirely to Putin, the more that option will begin to open up.

A series of very significant factors will continue to constrain how far and fast the U.S.-Russia relationship will move, but we ought to be thankful that it has moved as far as it has, and that the two countries have reversed the sharply negative and unhappy state of affairs as they stood a year ago.



Thomas Graham

Thomas Graham is Senior Director at Kissinger Associates and former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia on the National Security Council staff.

Presentation

I agree with Bob that the current administration has begun to turn the relationship around. The tone is different, and we are engaging Russia with an intensity we haven't seen since the first year of the Bush administration. However, I also think that the relationship has not progressed as far as the Obama administration had anticipated that it would when they took office a year ago. The START negotiations have dragged on somewhat longer than the administration had hoped; establishing a deal to open the Afghan air corridor has been problematic (although the situation is not nearly as severe as the press would have us believe); and although the architecture of the Presidential Commission has promise, it has a ways to go before it can be a productive part of managing this very complicated relationship. At this point, the challenge is moving beyond the rhetoric of 2009 to solidify the relationship going forward.

I want to pick up on one point that Bob mentioned: the question of strategic vision. While the current administration internally has thought through how to approach U.S.-Russia relations, neither they nor the Russian administration has provided a clear, public articulation of the strategic framework in which the two parties are conducting their relationship. This failure to articu-

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late an agenda will be increasingly problematic as we try to put real flesh onto the structure of a "reset" relationship.

Neither country has publicly articulated why the other country is important to its own national interest in a positive way. Russia knows what it doesn't want, which can be summed up in a series of "no"s: no to NATO expansion; no to missile defense in Eastern Europe; no to increasing U.S. influence in the former Soviet space; no to American interference in Russian domestic affairs. From the American standpoint, there is a much broader idea of what the positive relationship could look like, but for various reasons, including the president's own agenda, the focus is very narrow. Senior officials in Moscow (as opposed to those who are intimately involved in managing day-to-day relations with the United States) say that the United States is not really interested in engaging Russia on most of the issues that aren't important to the United States but are important to Russia.

The way we talk about common interests and shared threats can provide a foundation for a relationship going forward, but not until we clarify each country's priorities. That shared interest is not currently part of a common agenda and does not underscore the extent to which the countries will need to work together in the real world. Iran is a prime example of this lack of clarity in national priorities. For the past eight years, even when I was working in the Bush administration, the line on Iran has been,

"Russia and the United States share a strategic goal in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon." We just haven't been able to agree on the tactics of getting that done in the real world.

Part of the reason we haven't been able to agree on a strategy is that we look at this problem in different ways. For the United States, you could argue that preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is the top foreign policy priority, one that is linked in our minds to the role that Iran has played in supporting terrorist organizations, particularly in the Middle East, and also to what we see as a fairly hostile regime inside Iran. This is not a top priority for Russia. Russia's interest in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is countered by the positive role that Iran has played in not challenging Russian interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia. It's also balanced by the lucrative contracts that a segment of the Russian political elite have had in selling arms to Iran; by nuclear cooperation with Iran; and by Russia's interest in tensions between the United States and Iran, because the resulting sanctions would preclude the shipment of Iranian gas into the European markets, where Russia sends almost all of its gas and where it derives a considerable part of its federal revenue.

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This is not to say that we can't agree on a policy toward Iran; but it underscores that working collaboratively will be much more complicated than simply talking about shared threats and common interests. The United States has to consider a range of Russian interests in Iran and provide incentives for Russia to prioritize the part of the relationship that is most important to us.

I think the United States and Russia have struggled to develop a strategic vision for their relationship for several reasons. First, both sides realize that we have entered a

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period of tremendous upheaval, of uncertain duration, in international affairs. We talk about the shift in global dynamics from Europe to Asia; the historic struggle in the Middle East between forces of modernity and tradition; and the positive and negative impacts of globalization that have become more prominent over the past several years. Neither country really knows where the global system is headed and what role it will play in that system, let alone what the relationship between the United States and Russia will be.

Second, the U.S.-Russia relationship is increasingly part of a multilateral system. We're well beyond the era when U.S.-Soviet relations defined the international system. During the Cold War, we had confidence that if the United States and the Soviet Union could agree, we could get certain things done in the world. In a multilateral context, it's much more difficult for each side to calculate what the other will contribute to current international challenges. For example, although it helps the United States to have Russia on board in managing the global financial crisis, more of the U.S. administration's attention is focused on Europe, China, and India. Another question is where Russia fits into the conversation on climate change. And although Russia may be the critical "other" in U.S. nonproliferation efforts (given its nuclear arsenal, experience in nuclear weapons, and the history the United States and Russia share in managing this relationship), that fact doesn't provide the basis for a broader strategic vision of how the two countries should work together in the future.

Third, domestic policy is the top priority for both countries. In his first State of the Union Address, President Obama talked about jobs, the economy, and the financial sector. In November 2009, President Medvedev talked about infrastructure renewal, demographic decline, diversification of the economy, and a modernization program that he said was critical to Russia's survival as a major power in the twenty-first century. You also have two presidents who came to office (one elected, one selected) to deal with domestic reconstruction in their countries. Thus, building strategic relationships in a global context is secondary.

My final point (something that I find increasingly curious as you talk to Russians about this relationship) is that each country thinks the other is in decline. For the United States, the question of whether Russia really matters has been implicit since the breakup of the Soviet Union. While this

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sentiment may not be true of the president and his chief advisors, if you get down into the bowels of bureaucracy and the people who are supposed to implement policy, the conviction that Russia genuinely matters to U.S. national security is absent; people are not inclined to devote a lot of time to this relationship. In Russia, the view that the United States is in decline originated much

more recently. It's a consequence of what Russia regards as the failed policies of the Bush administration; the economic crisis and the failure of what they see as the American capitalist system; and doubts about the current U.S. administration's efficacy. However popular and even strategically appropriate the decisions on Afghanistan and Iraq might be from our standpoint now and in the future, the Russians see troop withdrawals in Iraq and the desire to draw down troops in Afghanistan next year as an abandonment of international responsibilities, a retreat in the face of a failed policy conducted by the previous administration. The question for Russia becomes: To what extent are we prepared to risk our relationship with Iran if the United States plans to remove itself from both Iraq and Afghanistan? To what extent do we want to be involved with the United States in dealing with the problem in Afghanistan if the United States is leaving in a year-and-a-half? These are real questions about the United States' commitment to the hard issues in international affairs that Russia believes define the global security environment.

I believe we can deal with these challenges, but it's important to recognize the existing barriers. The argument for better U.S.-Russia relations is future-oriented. It's about where we think the world is heading over the next ten or fifteen years, what the challenges will be for the United States, and how and under what circumstances Russia can help us over the long term in dealing with those challenges.

Question

Can you give us an update on Russia's relationship with the former Soviet republics, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)? Are there any relationships there that should concern the United States?

Robert Legvold

I think Russia's interaction with its neighbors is *the* key issue that has not been frankly or directly faced by any U.S. administration in policy toward Russia. There has been any number of positions taken in response to specific Russian actions, whether it's in the

context of color revolutions, a Georgian war, dueling pipelines, or a host of other things. But we haven't really addressed the underlying question of what kind of *modus vivendi* the United States and Russia need to implement as Russia deals with its neighbors and the outside world, whether it's NATO, the EU, the United States, or Turkey. This is a kaleidoscopic relationship that has many different pieces, continually changes, and varies enormously depending on the ways in which Russia relates to its neighbors.

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There are several categories of relationships between Russia and the states around it. First, there is the quasi-partnership, the marriage of convenience or failure of alternatives, such as aspects of the Russian-Armenian relationship because of Armenia's generally secure environment; the Central Asians, beginning with the Kazakhs, which have chosen a close working relationship with the Russians without doing Russia's bidding; or Belarus, which for much of the time casts its lot with Russia by rejecting any Western options.

Other states, including Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and, at times, Uzbekistan, have been very uncomfortable in the face of the Soviet legacy and the ongoing Russian effort to maintain a dominant influence and a *droit de regard* over the states' actions. That picture, however, is continually changing. In the upcoming Ukrainian election, Russia has not been an issue because either of the candidates who wins will attempt to build a constructive and working relationship with Russia that will deemphasize Western relations in terms of NATO membership and the EU.

At the same time, some of the countries that have been very close to Russia have grown restless and resistant and have refused to cooperate with Russia on new initiatives. Russia and Belarus are in the middle of a tug-of-war over oil. Moreover, the Russian-Belarus relationship was key in Russia's plans for a "Collective Security Treaty Organization" that included a cooperative military enterprise among several of the post-Soviet states. As of last summer, the Belarusians have boycotted one important piece of that alliance.

There is a tendency in the outside world to oversimplify Russia's relationship with its neighbors by assuming that Russia's fundamental motivation is a neo-imperialist objective to reestablish its sway within the region, using energy or arms if necessary (as the Georgian war proved, according to this line of thinking). That's the way we should analyze Russia's relationship with this region: to what extent it is succeeding or failing in this neo-imperialist agenda. This is not to say that the Russians don't believe they ought to be *the* most dominant power within the region, but the question is the extent to which they exclude the outside world in their agenda and, conversely, the extent to which they are willing to work with other countries that are engaged in the region.

Question

What kind of broader agenda do you think might actually lead the Russians to be more cooperative on dealing with Iran?

Thomas Graham

Part of the challenge is to establish a *modus vivendi* with Russia in the former Soviet space, particularly in the Caucasus and Central Asia, an area where the Russians believe Iran has played a more or less positive role, and where the United States, over the past eight to ten years, has played a largely negative role. Demonstrating that we can find a way to manage the relationship productively in that part of the world lessens Iran's advantage.

We need to understand that Russian gas will be an important part of Europe's energy equation in the future.

We also need to move forward much more rapidly on civil nuclear cooperation. The 123 agreement that was negotiated toward the end of the Bush administration, submitted to Congress, then withdrawn in the wake of Russia's war with Georgia needs to be resubmitted. It provides a framework that allows the United States to facilitate working together on civil nuclear energy, both bilaterally and also, presumably, in developing countries. If we were able to put together a joint venture between Rosatom on the Russian side, and Westinghouse or General Electric on the U.S. side to build nuclear reactors as part of the nuclear renaissance in developing countries, this initiative would also give Russia an alternative to broadening its nuclear relationship with Iran.

Also, we cannot continue to present the great dependence Europe has on Russian gas as a major threat to Europe's security and the transatlantic relationship. We need to understand that Russian gas will be an important part of Europe's energy equation in the future, and we need to assure Russia that if the relationship with Iran does improve, Russia will play a role in the development of Iranian resources and the export of those resources to European markets.

Finally, the extent to which the current U.S. administration can engage Tehran directly raises concern in Moscow about where Iran's interests are headed, which I think is helpful in encouraging Russia to think more creatively about how it works with us. In crude terms, if we normalize our relationship with Iran, Iran is more likely to look to the West and the United States for nuclear cooperation and arms (as the Shah did thirty or forty years ago) than they are to Moscow. Together, these considerations change the matrix that Moscow calculates from and begin to increase the chance that Russia will work with us on dealing with Iran's supposed nuclear weapons program.

Question

Given the backsliding on democracy-building and human rights in the Russian Federation and throughout the former Soviet space today, is there anything the United States can do to nudge Russia toward a more reasonable path?

Thomas Graham

The Obama administration's efforts to set up a working group on civil society as part of the bilateral presidential structure brings our civil societies together to discuss issues that are of common concern to us and to reach out to a broader segment of the Russian population and Russian political elites in a way that is not seen as lecturing, but as an exchange of experience that helps each country deal with current crises.

I would like to see this working group identify a set of issues for American NGOs and Russian NGOs to work on together. I would like to see them think about immigration, the role of the press, and corruption, all of which, we can argue, are problems in both societies that need to be addressed by experts so that each country can provide for a more productive and open society. I think the U.S. administration is off on the right foot on this effort.

Question

What is the impact of the rise of China as a major power on the relationship between Russia and the United States, and how has it affected Russian foreign policy?

Robert Legvold

China's emergence as an economic power is critical to Russian foreign policy. Russia's relationship with China, though semi-independent, is, in an important respect, a function of the relationship with the West. At the outset of an independent Russia, you had a Yeltsin/Kozyrev orientation toward the Atlantic community called the "pro-Atlanticist" position. During that period of time, Kozyrev was prepared to go to China in the context of this pro-Western policy and lecture China on how it should change domestically. In 1993, greater cooperation with China began to occur at the same time that

undulating curves appeared in Russia's relationship with the West during the Clinton administration: up and down from the beginning through NATO enlargement, to some improvement, before Fall 1998, and so on. At each of the low points, the Russia-China relationship moved to the next stage, from friendship, to strategic partnership, to, ultimately, the treaty the two countries signed. Improvements in the relationship were accompanied by media reports that depicted Russia as turning toward China and potentially creating an alignment against the United States. I don't think the Russians ever believed that it would be wise, let alone feasible, for them to draw the Chinese into an alternative strategic alignment against the West.

A relationship with the West is critical to Russia's interests in Europe, the United States, and Japan, and it also affects Russia's options with respect to China.

But what did happen over that period of time was the emergence of what I would call parallel foreign policies. There is no country with which Russia has more common positions in international politics than China. And frankly, among the major powers, there is no country with which China has more common interests, whether it's dealing with rogue states, attitudes toward NATO, security ties between the United States and Japan, or parallel issues in the cases of Russia/Chechnya and China/Tibet, or even Taiwan. But convergence of foreign policy and economic interest stops short of strategic alignment.

The new factor is the degree to which, within an important part of Russia's political establishment, there is an affinity for the way China conducts its affairs, particularly managing its system at home.

Even with Russia's ambivalence about whether the United States is a fading power and whether Europe can be dismissed, the West is still *the* dominant force in interna-

tional politics. A relationship with the West is critical to Russia's interests in Europe, the United States, and Japan, and it also affects Russia's options with respect to China. China is now part of a three-way game.

Thomas Graham

China's ability to invest in the Russian economy has changed rather dramatically over the past couple of years. Ten years ago we made the argument that if Russia wanted to modernize, it needed the investment, expertise, and know-how it could find only in the West. That's no longer true: China invests in the development of resources in Siberia and far eastern Russia, and you can find Chinese businessmen in Moscow. Changes in the economic relationship could have long-term implications for how Russia deals with China and how China decides to deal with Russia as part of its broader foreign policy stance.

Question

Does Russia have a policy toward North Korea as a participant in the six-party talks?

Thomas Graham

The Russian position on North Korea is "talk to the Chinese."

Robert Legvold

In the last years of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev literally wrote off the North Koreans; he didn't renew the bilateral security treaty and he made an arrangement with South Korea at North Korea's expense. It was quite clear, given the direction of Gorbachev's Westpolitik, that the Soviet Union had chosen South Korea over North Korea. But in the late-Yeltsin and particularly the early-Putin years, there was an effort to restore the relationship with North Korea, though North Korea remains suspicious of Russia. There's no question that the dominant player among the six parties is China. Russia's response to the nuclear issue in North Korea parallels China's; China has the lead and Russia is its partner in dealing with North Korea on the nuclear issue, including in the context of the six-party talks and in the UN Security Council.

Question

This question is on behalf of the youngest members in the audience. When did you become interested in studying the Soviet Union and Russia, and how would you advise our students?

Thomas Graham

I came of age in the late 1950s and early 1960s, so the Cold War and Sputnik are the things I remember from my childhood that initially sparked my interest in the Soviet Union and Russia. The first exchange programs set up under the Eisenhower administration with Khrushchev let us reach out to the Soviet Union and Russian citizens in a way we hadn't previously. In addition, I was fortunate to go to one of the few high schools in the United States in the early 1960s (in Princeton, New Jersey) that offered Russian as a foreign language.

We need to assure Russia that if the relationship with Iran does improve, Russia will play a role in the development of Iranian resources and the export of those resources to European markets.

I think it is extremely important to focus on the language, culture, and history – this is where the real richness of Russia is, in any event, and this provides a foundation for understanding how Russians think. When they understand that you appreciate their culture and history, that appreciation is reciprocated. In graduate school in the 1970s, a lot of people my age made the mistake of becoming Soviet experts, and in 1991, they had an entire library of books that were basically useless. I studied political science at Harvard University and wrote my dissertation on a Russian existential philosopher (which I managed to justify as a political science dissertation); and that project led me into Russian thought and

the much broader understanding of the history and culture that became important after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

My advice would be to study the language, literature, and culture. If you have the opportunity to travel, take advantage of it. It's a fascinating society, and it's going to be an important country for the United States going forward.

Robert Legvold

I was much less prescient or thoughtful as a high school student than Tom was. My interest began to emerge when I was in college, in a rather conventional and not very imaginative way, because the Soviet Union was at the center of U.S. foreign policy and international relations. (Were I a sophomore in college right now, I would almost certainly have chosen to study China.) My initial aspiration was to go into the Foreign Service; I changed my mind once I found out there was a way to be a permanent student. Even those of you who have not made Russia or the U.S.-Russia relationship an important part of your career have most likely been exposed to it, and have either studied the Russian language, literature, or culture, or have traveled there. Travel in particular gets it in your blood. There is something enormously engaging about Russian culture and society, and maybe also because U.S. relations with that country have long been as complex – and at times tension-filled – as they have been important. But I have never for a day regretted the career choice that I made. ■

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