

Inquiring Minds topic 26 July 2013 – U.S-Russia Relationship Moderator: Bill Bartholet

From the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:

Priorities for Russia-U.S. Relations: A Statement by Former Ambassadors to Washington and Moscow

[John Beyrle, James F. Collins, Jack Matlock, Thomas Pickering, Alexander A. Bessmertnykh, Yury V. Dubinin, Viktor G. Komplektov, Vladimir P. Lukin Other Publications April 12, 2013]

Summary

Deepening economic engagement and making progress on missile defense should be central policy priorities for Russia and the United States in their bilateral relations.

Last week, we former ambassadors to Washington and Moscow from Russia and the United States gathered in Moscow to discuss and consider fundamental questions concerning our countries' bilateral relations and the international context in which they exist. When we last met two years ago in Washington, we welcomed the concrete steps our governments had taken to redirect relations toward a constructive path but noted that much remained to be done.

In our current talks, we welcomed further significant accomplishments by our two governments that have put in place a strong foundation for cooperation in the future. The new strategic arms agreement is being implemented and continuing to reduce the nuclear arsenals of both countries. The 123 agreement is in force and expanding our civilian nuclear cooperation. With strong U.S. support, Russia completed its formal entry into the World Trade Organization, and the level of mutual trade and investment is increasing. Russian-U.S. cooperation on Afghanistan has made the fight against terrorism and narcotics in that country more effective. And the signature of a major agreement on visas has made it easier for the citizens of both countries to visit and do business with each other.

Against that backdrop of real achievement, we took a sober view of the strains that continue to complicate today's relations. We agreed that the level of hard rhetoric and the high degree of mistrust that were once the norm in our relations have diminished, and the heads of our countries have expressed a desire to build a stable *modus vivendi* that takes into account the interests and national security of each state and its allies as well as world peace.

On the other hand, we noted that the experience of the recent past shows that serious irritants and differences still can disrupt our bilateral relations. We agreed that these issues often stem from failure to conduct our relations in ways consistent with principles of equality and mutual respect. In discussing the global context for our relations, we stressed the reality of rapid change, and we agreed that one of the pressing tasks for us today is to coordinate better mutual bilateral and multilateral steps as we address the problems of a changing and complex global environment.

Cooperation is essential as both nations face today's challenges. The consequences of the global economic crisis linger. Shifting balances of economic, political, and military power reshape the

international environment in unpredictable ways. The upheaval in the Arab Middle East has suddenly made that region a source of unpredictable and rapid change. Global problems—terrorism, climate change, and transnational crime—demand coordinated multilateral action. Nuclear proliferation and the uncertainties of dependence on increasingly complex technologies present familiar and new challenges to the status quo and global stability.

In these circumstances, our discussions focused on how our two governments can build on the positive foundation for cooperation that has been created over the last several years and bring focus to an agenda that can address productively the challenges both our countries now face. The full agenda we confront is the result of a mutual acknowledgement that stability and predictability in our countries' relations and progress on mutually beneficial steps will benefit both of our peoples as well as global peace and security.

Our long experience working in each other's countries came largely during the era when questions of strategic stability and arms control constituted the center of gravity in affairs between us. Today, we welcome the fact that a healthy and fundamental shift is taking place in which questions of trade, investment, and economic cooperation are becoming central. We agreed that the sustainable, long-term improvement in relations that our people seek must be built on a strong foundation of growing commercial interaction. Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization is a vital component of this, and the long-overdue repeal of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment allows American business to take full advantage of new opportunities for trade and investment.

But far too many obstacles to doing business still exist in both countries, and we need to do a better job of breaking down the barriers that prevent the enhancement of our scientific and technological cooperation. Although bilateral trade balances hit record levels since our last meeting, we are dismayed to see what a small fraction they still constitute of our foreign trade levels overall. We call on the governments and business communities in both countries to work together on a set of ambitious, concrete goals aimed at tripling our trade and investment over the next five years. We also support greater U.S. and Russian mutual involvement in trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific trade and investment mechanisms.

The world is no longer hostage to tense relations between Moscow and Washington, but the global community is still concerned to see these relations put on a stable foundation. Our two countries hold a special and unique responsibility for maintaining strategic stability in a changing global threat environment. The development of a reliable foundation for a regime of nuclear nonproliferation and nonproliferation of other weapons of mass destruction depends to a large degree on how Russia and the United States interact.

We considered in detail existing disagreements in the search for compromise on ballistic missile defense, and we agreed that efforts to find a mutually acceptable formula must be intensified. We believe that with the U.S. decision to restructure its missile defense posture in Europe, our two sides should urgently take advantage of the opportunity to end the division ballistic missile defense has brought to relations for more than a decade. Our nations should set as a goal achieving the highest level of cooperation sufficient to assure that these systems will not undermine deterrence and strategic stability but will retain the capacity to deal with limited ballistic missile threats from proliferating states with the appropriate level of interceptors.

We are greatly encouraged by the mutual steps taken by our governments over the last several years to continue the trend of strategic arms reduction begun almost three decades ago. The habits of cooperation built through such negotiations and verification regimes pay dividends beyond the actual reductions. This process must continue, and we believe that setting a lower number of operational warheads and delivery vehicles for each side would build further on the momentum toward the lower levels achieved in New START.

One of the pressing tasks for us today is to strive to coordinate the bilateral and multilateral steps we must take to manage challenges to international peace and security. Few international problems are manageable without cooperation among the major powers. We agreed that further cooperation is essential to ensure that the leadership in both Iran and North Korea understands our joint view on the imperative of compliance with international norms and agreements regarding the nuclear programs in both countries and to avoid precipitation of conflict by accident or miscalculation.

On Syria, we believe invigorated joint efforts toward political settlement to permit early necessary steps at negotiations without preconditions or linkage could prove critical in moving toward peace. Russia and the United States should work together along with others to: develop negotiations without preconditions or linkage of one measure to another; seek an immediate humanitarian ceasefire monitored by the United Nations; assure protection for all minorities in Syria; and establish a representative, transitional government.

We took note as well of the impending change in the role of the U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan and the transfer to Afghan authority of responsibility for their own security. Cooperation on Afghanistan has been a strong positive element in U.S.-Russian cooperation over the last years. It will be important now for our two governments to continue discussions and joint work to ensure a future of peace and stability for this region.

In discussing bilateral relations, we found disturbing the recent deterioration in the atmosphere of relations and the growing trend toward a focus on issues that divide us. Some legislation enacted in both countries does not help the desirable expansion of contacts and engagement between our two societies. We believe this matter requires urgent attention, and we call for a renewed level of parliamentary exchange between Moscow and Washington involving both members and senior staff.

We noted the positive contribution the Bilateral Presidential Commission has made to expanding contacts and cooperation, giving impetus to more effective work among the agencies of the two governments and stimulating broader exchanges among the Russian and American people in education, science, sports, and the arts. Modernizing this mechanism further by upgrading the leadership and moving in the direction of a more active search for joint projects in areas of mutual self-interest will add an important element to the structure of Russian-American stability.

We believe that our two countries are on the threshold of an important new period in relations. Two decades after the Cold War and the great changes that have reshaped the economic, political, and security maps of the Euro-Atlantic region, new opportunities exist to create a more stable, productive, and secure future. Creative professional diplomacy is a reliable instrument for achieving these goals and making the most from these possibilities. The character of the coming era will largely depend on it. But

in the end, ambassadors, diplomats, and decision-makers must recognize that all of our work aimed at making relations between Russia and the United States more constructive and more productive depends increasingly on active and informed support from our societies as a whole.

U.S.-Russia ties: Better than you think

By **Jeffrey Mankoff**, Special to CNN – 6 June 2013

Editor's note: Jeffrey Mankoff is deputy director and fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Russia and Eurasia Program. The views expressed are his own.

Faced with an increasingly complex international environment, President Barack Obama is quietly re-emphasizing one of the main priorities of his first term: trying to build a cooperative relationship with Russia. This may come as a surprise – after all, the atmosphere between the two countries has been decidedly frosty the past year. But although the high-profile outreach of the first-term “reset” may have been set aside, the Obama administration has been pursuing low key, concrete cooperation on issues ranging from Syria to Afghanistan to counter-terrorism. And, freed from the political baggage surrounding the reset, such cooperation is likely to prove more sustainable – and more effective at advancing U.S. interests.

Obama's first term got off to a good start. Washington and Moscow agreed to cut their nuclear forces under the New START agreement, and Russia also provided logistical support for U.S. efforts in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, at the United Nations, Russia supported Iran sanctions and ultimately acquiesced to U.S. requests for intervention in Libya. This cooperation was symbolized by the bright red (but mistranslated) reset button that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented to her Russian counterpart in Geneva in 2009. As several of Obama's other first term international initiatives fell by the wayside, the U.S.-Russia reset became one of his highest profile foreign policy achievements.

But this made the reset vulnerable when the political winds in Moscow and Washington shifted. Disputed Russian parliamentary elections in December 2011 brought massive protests into the streets of Moscow. Russia's presidential transition six months later saw Vladimir Putin replace Dmitry Medvedev, with whom Obama had developed a close working relationship.

Not only did Putin's previous tenure in the Kremlin coincide with a worsening of U.S.-Russian relations (culminating with the August 2008 war in Georgia), but the returning president now turned to anti-American populism to shore up his tenuous legitimacy. This included unprecedented harassment of new U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul, previously the architect of the reset at the White House. Putin's new government also cracked down on civil society groups, especially those with ties to the West. USAID was expelled, and NGOs receiving funds from abroad were required under a new law to register as foreign agents.

More from GPS: [How Russia fears being forgotten](#)

The U.S. Congress, meanwhile, was working to pass a bill imposing visa and financial sanctions on Russian officials implicated in the death of Sergei Magnitsky, a lawyer investigating a tax fraud scheme implicating several high-ranking figures when he was arrested and subsequently died in prison. Though the Obama administration believed that the so-called Magnitsky Act was unwise (and duplicated steps it was already taking), its options were constrained by the bill's bipartisan support on Capitol Hill and election year politics, including Republican Party nominee Mitt Romney's invocation of Russia as Washington's "number one geopolitical foe."

Making matters worse was the escalating crisis in Syria, where U.S. demands for the departure of President Bashar al-Assad ran headlong into Russian support for a strategic ally and opposition to foreign intervention, despite a mounting humanitarian disaster. In the last few weeks, Russia's very public expulsion of an American diplomat accused of espionage has contributed further to the perception of crisis in U.S.-Russian relations.

Behind the scenes though, Obama has sought to boost cooperation, and early indications are that these efforts are succeeding. He announced the cancellation of phase 4 of the planned U.S. missile defense system in Europe, and limited the application of the Magnitsky law to a small number of fairly minor officials.

U.S. National Security Advisor Tom Donilon then traveled to Moscow carrying a letter from Obama to Putin laying out new initiatives for cooperation, including heightened transparency on U.S. missile defense plans, further nuclear reductions, a new communication channel between the U.S. vice president and the Russian prime minister, and the creation of a secure video link for communications between the White House and Kremlin. Putin and Secretary of State John Kerry then agreed to co-sponsor a conference seeking a negotiated end to the bloodshed in Syria. Donilon's counterpart Nikolay Patrushev was just in Washington, with a letter from Putin emphasizing the need to find an agreement on missile defense.

This diplomatic activity underscores Obama's recognition that Russian cooperation is necessary on several issues that will shape his legacy. The Boston Marathon bombing brought a renewed focus on the need for cooperation between intelligence services to counter terrorism. Russian intelligence and logistical cooperation will be especially critical during and after the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. While prospects for Syria's future remain very uncertain, U.S.-Russian cooperation represents the only plausible path to a negotiated end to the conflict (despite al-Assad's statement implying that he had received advanced S-300 air defense units from Moscow, Putin told European Union leaders this week that Russia had in fact suspended their delivery).

Unlike the reset, Obama is wisely keeping his outreach to Moscow low profile this time. Yet if a more cooperative relationship with Moscow leads to stronger intelligence cooperation, a deal on missile defense, and a viable Syrian peace process, it may come to stand as a key foreign policy achievement of Obama's second term too.

Also – view <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/USandR>