

EURASIA TASK FORCE

Stephan M. Minikes

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY PROGRAM
DINU PATRICIU EURASIA CENTER

Hitting the Reset Button on U.S.-Russia Cooperation

For many years, I have been engaged in debate with other foreign policy practitioners over the question of whether the United States and Russia should work together. An improved U.S.-Russian relationship offers the prospect not only of improved cooperation on areas of mutual bilateral interest, but also enhanced cooperation within multilateral institutions such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) where I was the U.S. Ambassador between 2001 and 2005.

Vice President Joe Biden's initial announcement on February 7, 2009, followed by Secretary of State Clinton's statement on March 7, 2009, that the United States and Russia should push the "reset" button in their relationship brought the issue into sharp focus, again. Should we be pushing the reset button? What does a resetting of relations with Moscow mean for democracy, human rights, Russia's "support" of the United States in the United Nations Security Council on North Korea and Iran, for example, Russia's continued occupation of Georgian territory and other contentious issues in U.S.-Russian relations? The extent of partnership with Russia has vexed U.S. foreign policy since the breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1991.

The U.S.-Russia relationship has been inhibited by four primary factors. First, many of us bring some historical baggage to the table as we discuss this question. I am among them. Two other factors significantly stand in the way: lack of shared values and lack of trust. All three factors are, in my opinion, trumped by a fourth consideration: both of our governments' obligation to provide for the national security of each citizen.

Historical Baggage and Divergent Values Create Mistrust

The bitter historical legacy of World War II and Europe's quick descent into the throes of a bipolar struggle for power and influence between the Soviet Union and the West has left behind a great deal of historical baggage between Moscow and Washington that impacts relations today. These tensions exist at a national level in terms of historical mythologies and national grievances, but are also carried on by decision-makers who bear their own scars. My own view of Russia and the historical legacy of the Soviet Union is influenced by my personal history.

I lived in Berlin, Germany between 1938 and 1949, first under the Nazis and then under the Soviets. I was the grandson of a Jewish woman who was murdered in Auschwitz. Under Adolf Hitler, life was horrendous. I first viewed Soviet troops as liberators. Our liberation, however, was short-lived. Under Josef Stalin, my parents and I did not fare much better than under Hitler. Stalin's views on the Baltics, Poland, Hungary, and the then-Czechoslovakia, his role in the blockade of Berlin, to name just a few examples, were completely antithetical to mine. I condemned him and the Soviet system. The Soviet Union's heavy boot of oppression stepped on everyone's throat who opposed it in whatever way. Those, and the myriad of other events that made up the mosaic of Soviet behavior, left me both discouraged and, indeed, antagonistic towards the Soviet Union.

In December 1949, World War III seemed just around the corner and West Berlin was slated to be the first victim. So, my parents packed up and we immigrated to the United States in December 1949. I breathed freedom here and

Stephan M. Minikes is former U.S. Ambassador/U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The views expressed here are his own.

quickly came to love this country. After many, many years of the Cold War, the Soviet Union finally disintegrated. In the initial euphoria some even declared the “end of history” and the inevitable spread and triumph of liberal democracy. Former President Putin, on the other hand, told Russians on April 25, 2005, that the Soviet Union’s disintegration was the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century.” Much of the Russian leadership agreed with then-President Putin. Clearly Vladimir Putin and others in the Russian leadership had their own set of values and we had ours.

These remarks demonstrate that, in addition to significant personal baggage, the leaders and populations of the United States and Russia also subscribe to a different set of ideologies. This is in part a result of the historical legacy of Russia’s czarist and Communist past. Large segments of Russian society are not prepared to accept Western concepts of, for example, democracy-building, human rights, media freedom, or an independent judiciary. The average Russian is much more comfortable having the state or the strong ruler of that state tell him what to do than is the average American.

The result of a history of conflict and disparate values is a legacy of mistrust that pervades the U.S.-Russian relationship and impedes enhanced cooperation.

There is one other consideration, however, that each state has that is its highest responsibility: the obligation to provide for the national security of each citizen; that obligation trumps the “obstacles” of personal baggage, lack of shared values and lack of trust. It is for this reason that the United States and Russia must cooperate, even though I rebel at the conclusion.

The Proper Role of Human Rights in the U.S.-Russia Relationship

The United States would not be itself if it did not remain true to its values. The United States must always speak out in support of democracy and human rights. But we should bear in mind that at the same time, as long as the United States expects a welcoming Russian response to such comments, we are bound to be disappointed. If we are to have a constructive and productive relationship with Russia, we must accept conditionality, where the United States prioritizes national security issues and puts human rights in the perspective of not being a *sine qua non* of the U.S.-Russia relationship. However, it is the essence of who we, as a nation, are. Thus, Russia needs to also take into

account U.S. concerns and sensibilities on human rights and democracy issues.

It is uncertain if this conditional approach will succeed or not, but there is no denying that the last 100 years of U.S.-Russian/Soviet relations have been less than optimal. Today, the world is changing and shrinking, offering the opportunity to build a new bilateral relationship based on common interests.

Despite the significant obstacles to cooperation and improved U.S.-Russian relations, the two countries can and must establish an improved and more cooperative relationship based on mutual national security interests. Russia just happens to be too important for us to do otherwise.

Real-Life Experience – Bilateral and Multilateral Programs

Since announcing the reset policy in early 2009, the United States and Russia have taken important steps to improve cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally. Most of our emphasis has been in the bilateral area where we have done reasonably well. But we can still do better on both fronts.

The most significant tangible product of the U.S.-Russia reset is the New START Treaty which Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed in Prague on April 8, 2010. This agreement enhances both American and Russian security by reducing the number of deployed nuclear warheads by roughly 30 percent from an upper limit of 2,200 in the Moscow Treaty of 2002 to 1,550. The allowable number of nuclear delivery vehicles will also be reduced from the existing START level of 1,600 to 800, with no more than 700 deployed at any one time. The new Treaty contains modernization and transparency measures that will build confidence and predictability on both sides, and it does not constrain the U.S. capacity to pursue missile defense programs. It contains the vital work of arms reductions pursued by both Republicans and Democrats since the end of the Cold War when the United States and Russia together possessed some 20,000 strategic nuclear warheads. It also represents a powerful example of responsible U.S.-Russia leadership in managing and reducing our remaining nuclear arsenals before and in the aftermath of the May 2010 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference.

The New START Treaty is just the latest example of a long pattern of cooperation between Russia and the United States

on arms control and non-proliferation in bilateral and multilateral fora. The efforts of Senator Lugar and former Senator Sam Nunn in helping Russia improve security at its own nuclear facilities have been immensely helpful. The United States and Russia lead the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Resolutions 1929 and 1874 of the UN Security Council regarding Iran and North Korea, respectively, would not have been possible without U.S.-Russia cooperation.

In addition to traditional arms control, the Obama administration has also sought enhanced cooperation with Russia on the civil nuclear front. In May, the administration submitted to Congress for its approval (which is still pending) the proposed text of the '123' agreement with Moscow, which would allow U.S. companies to share nuclear material with Russian companies and collaborate on research and development projects.

In the area of violent extremism and terrorism, we have stepped up joint work among our intelligence and law enforcement authorities and breathed new life into the Counterterrorism Working Group. The United States and Russia have both suffered at the hands of terrorists. We both need to address this serious problem. While more can and should be done to address this issue jointly, the cooperation is a positive sign of improved ties.

Russia has become an increasingly important partner in assisting the NATO mission in Afghanistan. This includes combating narco-trafficking, where we are working together, but where we can do much more. It also includes transit through the vitally important Northern Distribution Network on which we reached an accord last spring that provided a new air corridor that averaged about two flights a day, transporting almost 80,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. This has become increasingly important in light of Pakistan's instability and on-and-off reliability, as a means of transit of supplies and material to NATO soldiers.

Another noteworthy area of bilateral cooperation is the Presidential Commission between the United States and Russia (BPC), which is working to broaden and deepen cooperation between the two countries. Since July 2009, when it was established, over 100 meetings and exchanges have taken place under the auspices of the Commission, bringing together over 60 United States and Russian agencies. Fresh faces, at least somewhat less encumbered by history, have been brought to the table and have created or are creating new channels of cooperation to enhance

strategic stability, international security, energy efficiency, youth sports exchanges, health care, legal education and conservation efforts, particularly in the Arctic.

The counter-narcotics working group under the BPC has met three times at the level of the Russian Drug Agency Director and the Director of the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy. At a meeting on October 21 in Washington, the two sides agreed to cooperate more on fighting drug flows from Afghanistan. Other working groups have focused on expanding U.S. investment in Russia and Russia's desire for high-tech cooperation with the United States. A delegation of senior executives from Silicon Valley firms visited Moscow and Novosibirsk in February 2010 and is developing projects, including greater American involvement in the development of Russia's own Silicon Valley. Even in traditionally more contentious matters such as views of democracy and respect for human rights, the civil society working group has brought together non-governmental organization (NGO) experts and officials to focus on concrete issues that bedevil both countries, including prison management and illegal immigration.

Other areas of cooperation consist of nuclear non-proliferation, missile defense, counter-terrorism, trafficking in persons, criminality in general, energy, food and water security, dialogue on the future of European security, the proper and successful use of international organizations to which the United States and Russia both belong (like the OSCE, the NATO-Russia Council, and the UN), and people exchange programs. That is a sizeable agenda that includes issues beyond the "low hanging" fruit, but they do meet the criteria of common mutual interest where solutions will advance each of our national interests rather than pursue a "zero-sum" agenda.

Unexplored Areas of Cooperation

In other areas, the United States and Russia have failed or not yet chosen the appropriate forum for dealing with difficult issues and, thus, have not yet begun the process of negotiating cooperatively. This category would include cyber-security, counter-piracy, prison reform, judicial reform, the use of international organizations to which at least one of us does not belong (Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Council of Europe), the weight given to the position of sovereign nations on the subject of international observers on its own territory (Georgia and others), better coordination of foreign military sales, and

transparency regarding extractive industries. There is almost no end to sound ideas.

Cooperation on these issues will likely remain elusive in the short-term, but should be pursued in the long-term. Progress will need to be made in the short-term areas of practical cooperation such as the dual ratification of the New START Treaty, for the atmosphere of trust to be established to facilitate a more strategic partnership. Indeed, a failure to ratify the New START Treaty by the United States Senate or Congressional rejection of the “123” civil-nuclear agreement could deal a potentially fatal blow to the administration’s reset agenda and U.S.-Russian relations more broadly. A failure of the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship would also have significant consequences for U.S.-Russian relations within multilateral institutions like the UN, the OSCE, and the NATO-Russia Council.

Multilateralism

U.S.-Russian relations have shown more improvement bilaterally than in multilateral fora. Presidents Obama’s and Medvedev’s attendance at the NATO summit in Lisbon and President Medvedev’s attendance at the OSCE summit at Astana offer the possibility for improvements, but progress will be slow.

Despite the frequent attacks on multilateral institutions for their lack of concrete outcomes and the necessity of compromise, the Obama administration has made multilateral institutions a priority of the President’s foreign policy. He is correct to do so because, for three principal reasons, the United States must learn to make greater use of multilateral organizations. First, other nations increasingly gauge the international efforts of others by their legitimacy. The more such efforts are supported by international institutions, such as the OSCE, NATO or the NATO-Russia Council, the UN, the Organization of the American States, the Council of Europe, or the international fora that exist for the solution of commercial issues, such as the World Bank or the International Organization for Standards, the more a nation will support them. Second, as the U.S. domestic economy continues to wobble, U.S. foreign assistance will drop. Multilateral institutions must fill the resulting gap. Third, we need to use existing international institutions, and set up new ones, to affect, implement, and multiply the effectiveness of our foreign policy. A multilateral organization can uniquely provide the tools to do that.

The Case for the OSCE

The OSCE, which traces its heritage to U.S.-Soviet cooperation at the high watermark of *détente*, is the principal area where the United States and Russia can undertake the most significant improvements in relations in a multilateral institution.

The United States and Russia are both full members of OSCE. When I was the U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE, I often heard from my American colleagues that if the United States and Russia cooperated within that organization, there were few limits on what the OSCE could achieve. As U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE, I pursued a path of cooperation with my Russian counterpart. The United States failed to achieve all of its goals, but it succeeded in advancing some of its initiatives. Some in the U.S. mission criticized efforts to work constructively with Russia in the OSCE by arguing that Russia sought to dismantle the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) and other “third-basket” (or “human dimension”) elements of the organization.

Today, the United States is once again cooperating with Russia in the OSCE, in line with the objectives of U.S. foreign policy, but within the parameters of the OSCE’s mandate of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict rehabilitation and the promotion of democratization and human rights.

There are five items of cooperation between the United States and Russia that are on the OSCE agenda. Their cooperation is, in good part, a product of improved U.S.-Russian bilateral ties, but the agenda demonstrates that conflict prevention, in itself, has great benefits.

First is the Minsk Group. Its mandate is the ultimate resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, two OSCE member states. The United States and Russia, together with France, chair the group. Whereas the conflict is still not resolved, the United States and Russia are cooperating closely and in good faith on a resolution that even had a glimmer of hope for actual resolution within the past year. The Georgian conflict, which is right next door, is active, is nowhere near resolution, and very prominently involves a conflict of interests between the United States and Russia. Nonetheless, it has had no discernable negative effect on U.S.-Russian cooperation in the context of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Minsk Group.

Second is Afghanistan. U.S.-Russian cooperation in the OSCE is evident in the area of border security management and the mentorship of Afghan civil servants by OSCE member states. Russia increasingly accepts the fact that the United States is fighting a war in Afghanistan, and that a successful outcome of the conflict is in Moscow's interest. This realization has resulted in substantial cooperation in the transit, anti-terrorism and narcotics areas. While there have been serious U.S.-Russia disagreements in the OSCE on Afghanistan and the training of border security guards within Afghanistan, the two sides are negotiating cooperatively because they each see their national interest being pursued.

Third, the United States and Russia continue to work on the 1999 Vienna Document on confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs) and modernizing the Open Skies instrument, which deals with air observation for military confidence building and increased security for air transport. The parties are also working on the Agreement on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) which seeks to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Fourth, there are intense consultations between the United States and Russia to resolve the current impasse on the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty which then-Russian President Putin renounced for Russia in 2007. While the question of resurrection may be resolved in a forum other than OSCE, the current OSCE negotiations reflect the importance both nations attach to CFE. Unfortunately, significant differences still separate Russia from the United States and some of its allies.

Fifth, the two nations continue to seek solutions in the OSCE to combat terrorism. While the OSCE is a small participant in this very significant arena, the focus on this and the other four areas demonstrates that both the United States and Russia see anti-terrorism as important to their own national interests. To begin, however, the United States must strengthen the OSCE; if the answer to every question continues to be NATO, that will not happen. Vice President Biden began to nibble on this issue earlier this year when he characterized the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and OSCE as peer security organizations and briefly discussed the conflict prevention and conflict management roles of OSCE. Secretary of State Clinton has similarly hinted at a greater role for OSCE, but has yet to speak frankly on the subject; the summit in Astana offers her the opportunity to do so.

The question is: where is the action? The OSCE, for example, will not function nearly as well as it could to solve U.S. foreign policy problems unless and until (a) the United States recognizes through its actions, not just its words, that it will rely on multilateral diplomacy (and not just on NATO or the NATO-Russia Council) to carry out its foreign policy goals; (b) consistently puts in place at the OSCE someone with the seniority and clout in Washington that the United States puts into its ambassadorships to NATO or the U.N. Security Council (the present appointees, who are highly qualified, excepted); and (c) consents, both through its action and an OSCE summit at the heads of government-level, to take OSCE seriously. The upcoming OSCE summit without President Obama, will not achieve that goal, and without all three, the organization will not function as it is capable of doing – to help solve U.S. foreign policy problems.

Other Areas

With the United States and Russia providing cooperation and leadership, we can expand the G20 cooperation and our G8 Global Partnership to complete ongoing projects to secure nuclear and chemical materials in Russia, for example, and apply the lessons we have learned to other countries. We can further develop our partnership in the Arctic. We can focus more attention on our trans-Pacific connections and we can continue the cooperation in outer space, which our two countries have led for so many years. Once again, there is no limit on viable ideas.

Based on the commitment that the Obama administration has seemingly placed on working and negotiating with Russia, the suggested bilateral and multilateral agenda should be actively pursued to vastly broaden the U.S.-Russia agenda. I believe it can yield vastly more fruit than is now the case for U.S.-Russia relations and U.S. foreign policy. But there must be true action, not just the utterance of platitudes. The mentioned imperatives for the United States are essential. So is progress across the spectrum of international organizations where the United States, notwithstanding critics, both domestic and international, needs to invest more time and effort.

The making of U.S. foreign policy needs a new twist. The keys should be national interest, two-sided negotiations and pursuing what we feel good about. Other matters that are critically important to us, that go to the essence of our being, but that are not accepted by Russia, must not go to the heart of the relationship and certainly not at this time. By no means

is the issue of human rights buried; yet it cannot stand in the way. Properly balancing the two – realism and human rights – will require very skilled diplomacy, but it is the kind of challenge that America’s highly talented diplomats are well-suited to assume.

Eurasia as Part of Transatlantic Security

In the spring of 2010, the Atlantic Council launched a task force on “Eurasia as Part of Transatlantic Security” with the task of developing a coherent, effective U.S. strategy toward Eurasia. Chaired by Atlantic Council Chairman Senator **Chuck Hagel**, who as a U.S. Senator visited all five Central Asian republics, the project draws on experts from the Atlantic Council network with deep experience in Eurasia, transatlantic security and OSCE matters. To inform the task force’s policy recommendations, Atlantic Council President and CEO **Frederick Kempe** led a delegation consisting of Ambassador Ross Wilson, Damon Wilson, Boyko Nitzov and Jeff Lightfoot to Vienna, Austria, Astana, Kazakhstan and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in June to meet with government representatives, OSCE officials and members of civil society. This project seeks to shape the transatlantic debate on security in Eurasia and the future of the OSCE by publishing policy-relevant issue briefs, organizing strategy sessions with senior officials and issuing a task force report.

This project is supported by a grant from the Government of Kazakhstan, with additional support through the Strategic Advisors Group from EADS-North America and The Scowcroft Group, as well as Dinu Patriciu and other supporters of the Patriciu Eurasia Center.

The Atlantic Council's Board of Directors

CHAIRMAN

*Chuck Hagel

CHAIRMAN, INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Brent Scowcroft

PRESIDENT AND CEO

*Frederick Kempe

CHAIRMAN EMERITUS

*Henry E. Catto

VICE CHAIRS

*Richard Edelman
*Brian C. McK. Henderson
*Franklin D. Kramer
*Richard L. Lawson
*Virginia A. Mulberger
*W. DeVier Pierson

TREASURERS

*Ronald M. Freeman
*John D. Macomber

SECRETARY

*Walter B. Slocombe

DIRECTORS

*Robert J. Abernethy
Timothy D. Adams
Carol C. Adelman
Michael A. Almond
Richard L. Armitage
*Michael Ansari
*David D. Aufhauser
Ralph Bahna
Nancy Kassebaum Baker
Donald K. Bandler
Lisa B. Barry
Thomas L. Blair
Susan M. Blaustein
*Julia Chang Bloch
Dan W. Burns
R. Nicholas Burns
*Richard R. Burt
Michael Calvey
Michael P.C. Carns
*Daniel W. Christman
Wesley K. Clark
Curtis M. Coward
John Craddock

*Ralph D. Crosby, Jr.
Thomas M. Culligan
W. Bowman Cutter
Brian D. Dailey
Robert E. Diamond, Jr.
Paula Dobriansky
Markus Dohle
Lacey Neuhaus Dorn
Conrado Dornier
Eric S. Edelman
Thomas J. Edelman
Thomas J. Egan
Stuart E. Eizenstat
Julie Finley
Lawrence P. Fisher, II
Lucy R. Fitch
Barbara Hackman Franklin
*Chas W. Freeman
Carlton W. Fulford
Jacques S. Gansler
*Robert Gelbard
Richard L. Gelfond
*Edmund P. Giambastiani, Jr.
*Sherri W. Goodman
John A. Gordon
C. Boyden Gray
Marc Grossman
Stephen J. Hadley
Ian Hague
Harry Harding
Rita E. Hauser
Annette Heuser
Marten H.A. van Heuven
Mary L. Howell
Benjamin Huberman
*Robert E. Hunter
Robert L. Hutchings
William Inglee
Wolfgang Ischinger
Robert Jeffrey
*A. Elizabeth Jones
George A. Joulwan
Francis J. Kelly
L. Kevin Kelly
Robert M. Kimmitt
*James V. Kimsey
*Roger Kirk
Henry A. Kissinger
Philip Lader

Muslim Lakhani
Robert G. Liberatore
Henrik Liljegren
*Jan M. Lodal
Izzat Majeed
Wendy W. Makins
William E. Mayer
Barry R. McCaffrey
Eric D.K. Melby
Jack N. Merritt
Franklin C. Miller
*Judith A. Miller
Alexander V. Mirtchev
Obie Moore
*George E. Moose
William A. Nitze
Hilda Ochoa-Brillembourg
Philip A. Odeen
Ana Palacio
Torkel L. Patterson
William J. Perry
*Thomas R. Pickering
Andrew Prozes
Arnold L. Punaro
Kirk A. Radke
Joseph W. Ralston
Norman W. Ray
Teresa M. Ressel
Joseph E. Robert, Jr.
Jeffrey A. Rosen
Charles O. Rossotti
Stanley Roth
Michael L. Ryan
Marjorie M. Scardino
William O. Schmieder
John P. Schmitz
Jill A. Schuker
Matthew R. Simmons
Kiron K. Skinner
Richard J.A. Steele
Philip Stephenson
*Paula Stern
John Studzinski
William H. Taft, IV
Peter J. Tanous
Peter Thomas
Paul Twomey
Henry G. Ulrich, III
Enzo Viscusi

Charles F. Wald
Jay Walker
Mark R. Warner
J. Robinson West
John C. Whitehead
David A. Wilson
Maciej Witucki
R. James Woolsey
Dov S. Zakheim
Anthony C. Zinni

HONORARY DIRECTORS

David C. Acheson
Madeleine K. Albright
James A. Baker, III
Harold Brown
Frank C. Carlucci, III
Warren Christopher
Colin L. Powell
Condoleezza Rice
Edward L. Rowny
James R. Schlesinger
George P. Shultz
John Warner
William H. Webster

LIFETIME DIRECTORS

Lucy Wilson Benson
Daniel J. Callahan, III
Kenneth W. Dam
Stanley Ebner
Robert F. Ellsworth
Geraldine S. Kunstadter
James P. McCarthy
Steven Muller
Stanley R. Resor
William Y. Smith
Helmut Sonnenfeldt
Ronald P. Verdicchio
Carl E. Vuono
Togo D. West, Jr.

** members of the Executive Committee
List as of November 30, 2010*

The Atlantic Council of the United States is a non-partisan organization that promotes constructive U.S. leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting today's global challenges.

1101 15TH STREET, NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20005 (202) 463-7226

WWW.ACUS.ORG