

WebMemo



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Reset Regret: Heritage Foundation Recommendations

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The Obama Administration and Congress need to recognize that its “reset” policy with Russia, which requires huge payoffs for small results, is in dire need of a reassessment. The U.S. should pursue its national interests in relations with Moscow instead of chasing a mirage. The U.S. and Russia have mutual interests in opposing Islamic radicalism and terrorism, nonproliferation, counter-narcotics, boosting trade and investment, and expanding tourism, business, and exchanges.

Russia can benefit from access to U.S. science—especially health sciences, technology, and investment—if Moscow improves its foreign and domestic policies. However, Congress and the Administration should not tolerate Russian mischief, either domestic or geopolitical. The U.S. should not shy away from articulating its priorities and values to its Russian partners—and play hardball when necessary.

Reset Regret: U.S. Should Rethink Relations with Russian Leaders

Ariel Cohen, Ph.D.

June 15, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/06/Reset-Regret-US-Should-Rethink-Relations-with-Russian-Leaders>

For the past two years, the Obama Administration has touted its Russia “reset policy” as one of its great diplomatic achievements. The President spent an inordinate amount of time cultivating Russian

President Dmitry Medvedev and making him his principal diplomatic interlocutor—despite the fact that Medvedev is Prime Minister Vladimir Putin’s appointed protégé with no political base of his own.

To uphold the “reset,” the Administration agreed to cut U.S. strategic nuclear forces under New START, abandoned missile defense deployment in Poland and the Czech Republic, engaged Russia in missile defense talks, pursued a policy of geopolitical neglect in the former Soviet Union, and toned down criticism of political freedom violations in Russia. However, Putin remains Russia’s “national leader” and the real power behind—and on—the throne. Top White House and State Department officials now privately recognize that they bet on the wrong horse, as it is unlikely that Medvedev will wield any real power beyond the spring of 2012. However, the Administration cannot publicly admit that this bet failed, as it would undermine the very notion of this over-personalized “reset.”

Yet the reality that Medvedev has a limited capacity to deliver and is unlikely to continue in office means that the U.S. should rethink its strategy for engaging with Russia’s leadership.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
<http://report.heritage.org/wm3334>

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Reset Regret: Obama's Cold War–Style Arms Control Undermines U.S.–Russian Relations

Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., Baker Spring,
and Michaela Bendikova

June 20, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/06/Cold-War-Style-Arms-Control-Undermines-US-Russian-Relations>

The Obama Administration's "reset" policy has been merely a list of concessions to a regime in Moscow that is seeking Soviet-like superpower prestige and status through forced nuclear equality with Washington. This approach has far-reaching negative implications for U.S. security and foreign policy as well as for the security of U.S. allies. The problems associated with Obama's Cold War–style arms control approach are particularly apparent in the areas of strategic arms, missile defense, and short-range nuclear weapons.

Instead of focusing on Cold War–style arms control, the United States and Russia should adopt fundamentally defensive strategic postures based on the "protect and defend" strategy. This defensive posture would employ offensive and defensive forces, both conventional and nuclear, to defeat any strategic attack on the U.S. and its allies. In addition, it would offer opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation based on a realistic assessment of Russia's intentions and capabilities rather than on futile hope and nonexistent change.

Reset Regret: Moral Leadership Needed to Fix U.S.–Russian Relations

Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., and Donald Jensen, Ph.D.

June 30, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/06/Reset-Regret-Moral-Leadership-Needed-to-Fix-US-Russian-Relations>

The discussion about democracy, human rights, and the rule of law has careened through at least three phases in U.S. relations with Russia, each one resulting in sometimes jarring shifts in Washington's approach to Moscow.

In order to reaffirm America's interests, when dealing with Russia, the U.S. should concentrate on

the values of freedom and justice. The Administration needs to stop its policy of "pleasing Moscow" and instead add pressure on Russia to start a "reset" of its own policies that currently disregard human rights, democracy, and good governance. The U.S. should deny visas to corrupt Russian businessmen, examine their banking practices and acquisitions, and target Russian police and prosecutors who fabricate evidence, and judges who rubber stamp convictions.

It is, thus, in the American national interest to attend to broader international concerns such as freedom and justice when dealing with Russia. The current regime stands squarely against these objectives and, therefore, against U.S. interests.

Reset Regret: Russian "Sphere of Privileged Interests" in Eurasia Undermines U.S. Foreign Policy

Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., and Stephen Blank

July 21, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/07/Reset-Regret-Russian-Sphere-of-Privileged-Interests-in-Eurasia-Undermines-US-Foreign-Policy>

For many years, Russian diplomats have openly proclaimed that the former Soviet republics that make up the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are not truly sovereign states. Russian analysts have stated that Russia regards the Obama Administration's "reset" policy as a U.S. admission that the CIS is within Russia's sphere of influence.

It is clear that Washington needs a new approach to Eurasian foreign policy to prevent an emergence of a Russian sphere of influence or another regional hegemony. The United States should boost its diplomatic support of sovereign states, such as Ukraine and Georgia, and expand a real commitment to the region. Specifically, Washington should provide political support to East–West energy pipelines and uphold sovereignty and territorial integrity under international law—even if this upsets Russia—while at the same time becoming an active mediator in the Transnistria and South Caucasus disputes.

Reset Regret: Russian Global Strategy Undermines American Interests

Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., and Stephen Blank

August 3, 2011

<http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2011/08/Reset-Regret-Russian-Global-Strategy-Undermines-US-Interests>

According to the Obama Administration, the U.S. is not competing with Russia for global influence. Unfortunately, Moscow has not received the memo. Instead, Russia attempts to extend its influence to constrain U.S. policy. Russian leaders like Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov habitually invoke a “poly-centric” or multipolar model of the world, with Russia working with its partners toward a future where U.S. power is so diminished that it cannot act without Moscow’s permission.

Moscow has continuously promoted in word and deed the idea that there is or should be a multipolar world order that constrains U.S. foreign policies. Moscow’s concept of multipolarity entails an uncontested sphere of Russian influence in the CIS and with key actors in critically important regions: Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America.

Reset the Reset. A “reset” policy that ignores Russia’s global efforts to undermine the U.S. recalls the ill-fated *détente* of the 1970s. It ran aground on Russian expansionism and wars in the Third World, especially Afghanistan. Despite profound changes since then, Russia’s basic anti-American strategic orientation, “reset” rhetoric aside, seems to be the same. In the trying times ahead, when it comes to global challenges, the U.S. should relearn and practice international balance-of-power politics.