

A proposal for a debate resolution on

# **Substantially Changing U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Russia**

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*“For us in Russia communism is a dead dog. For many people in the West, it is still a living lion.” - Alexander Solzhenitzen*

The quote above tells us a lot about U.S. – Russian relations and the attitude of the West toward Russia. For much of most living people’s memory, Russia was a communist country and a constant threat to the United States and the West. “We” did not trust “them” and “they” did not trust “us”. For many Americans and those in power in both America and the West, trust is still an issue. Even though the Soviet Union is gone and a somewhat democratic Russia has emerged, relations are still tense. United States foreign policy toward Russia has changed since the fall of the Soviet empire, but has not changed quickly nor significantly. It is time for the government of this nation to substantially change its foreign policy toward Russia, which will lead to better relations between the two countries.

This topic was last debated at the high school level during the 1998-99 school year. Much has changed in Russia and in U.S. – Russian relations since this topic was last debated. Russia is a former superpower with weapons of mass destruction at their disposal. They have allied themselves with anti-American governments in countries such as Venezuela, Iran, and Lybia. Russia is a threat. It is only through increased diplomacy and substantial changes in our foreign policy toward Russia that relations will improve. This topic needs to be debated.

## **POLITICAL HISTORY OF RUSSIA (POST SOVIET UNION)<sup>1</sup>**

**1991**

Soviet Union disintegrates; 14 former republics become independent nations.  
Russian Federation formed; Boris Yeltsin appointed, later elected president

**1992**

Yeltsin ends supremacy of Communist Party, privatizes state-run enterprises, guarantees free press; businessmen, mobsters begin to take over economy, massive corruption sets in

**1994-  
1996**

Russia invades breakaway province of Chechnya; humiliated, withdraws with heavy casualties

**1998**

Russian stock market crashes, economy collapses

**1999-  
2000**

Second Chechen war, Russia crushes rebels; Vladimir Putin elected president

**2000**

Russian Orthodox Church bestows sainthood on Czar Nicholas and 1,000 others killed by Communists

**2002**

Chechen rebels seize a crowded Moscow theater and detain 763 people. Armed and wired with explosives, the rebels demand that the Russian government end the war in Chechnya. Government forces storm the theater after releasing a gas into the theater that kills not only all the rebels but more than 100 hostages.

**2003**

Chechens vote in a referendum that approves a new regional constitution making Chechnya a separatist republic within Russia. Agreeing to the constitution means abandoning claims for complete independence, and the new powers accorded the republic are little more than cosmetic.

**2004**

President Vladimir Putin is reelected with 70% of the vote. In September, dozens of heavily armed guerrillas seize a school in Beslan, near Chechnya, and hold about 1,100 young schoolchildren, teachers, and parents hostage. Hundreds of hostages are killed, including about 156 children.

**2006**

Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev, who was responsible for the horrific Beslan terrorist attack, is killed.

**2007**

Former president Boris Yeltsin dies in April.

**2008**

Dmitri Medvedev is elected president, succeeding Vladimir Putin. Medvedev nominates Putin as prime minister.  
Russia enters the conflict between Georgia and a breakaway region, South Ossetia, with troops and tanks pouring into South Ossetia to support the region in August.  
Russia intensifies its involvement, moving troops into Abkhazia, another breakaway region, and launching airstrikes at Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. Dozens are killed, hundreds are wounded, and thousands of people in South Ossetia flee their homes.  
President Medvedev orders an end to military action in Georgia, although

sporadic fighting continues.

Russian tanks occupy Gori, a strategic town 40 miles from Tbilisi, and hundreds of Russian soldiers cross the border into South Ossetia. Leaders of EU nations, the United States, and NATO have warn Russia to end the conflict in Georgia.

Medvedev signs a revised cease-fire, but Russian troops remain in Georgia. Georgia demands that a provision in the original agreement be amended to allow only those Russian peacekeepers who were in Georgia before the hostilities began to remain. The deal is tentative at best.

After the December 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation became its successor state, inheriting its permanent seat on the UN Security Council, as well as the bulk of its foreign assets and debt. By the fall of 1993, politics in Russia reached a stalemate between President Yeltsin and the parliament. The parliament had succeeded in blocking, overturning, or ignoring the President's initiatives on drafting a new constitution, conducting new elections, and making further progress on democratic and economic reforms.

In a dramatic speech in September 1993, President Yeltsin dissolved the Russian parliament and called for new national elections and a new constitution. The standoff between the executive branch and opponents in the legislature turned violent in October after supporters of the parliament tried to instigate an armed insurrection. Yeltsin ordered the army to respond with force to capture the parliament building and crush the insurrection. In December 1993, voters elected a new parliament and approved a new constitution that had been drafted by the Yeltsin government. Yeltsin remained the dominant political figure, although a broad array of parties, including ultra-nationalists, liberals, agrarians, and communists, had substantial representation in the parliament and competed actively in elections at all levels of government.

In late 1994, the Russian security forces launched a brutal operation in the Republic of Chechnya against rebels who were intent on separation from Russia. Along with their opponents, Russian forces committed numerous violations of human rights. The protracted conflict, which received close scrutiny in the Russian media, raised serious human rights and humanitarian concerns abroad as well as within Russia. After numerous unsuccessful attempts to institute a cease-fire, in August 1996 the Russian and Chechen authorities negotiated a settlement that resulted in a complete withdrawal of Russian troops and the holding of elections in January 1997. A peace treaty was concluded in May 1997. Following a number of terrorist incidents blamed on Chechen separatists, the Russian government launched a new military campaign into Chechnya. By spring 2000, federal forces claimed control over Chechen territory, but fighting continues as rebel fighters regularly ambush Russian forces in the region. Throughout 2002 and 2003, the ability of Chechen separatists to battle the Russian forces waned but they claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist acts. In 2005 and 2006, key separatist leaders were killed by Russian forces. The situation stabilized after Ramzan Kadyrov was confirmed

as Chechen President, although small-scale fighting continues between rebel forces and local law enforcement.

On December 31, 1999 Boris Yeltsin resigned, and Vladimir Putin was named Acting President. In March 2000, he won election in his own right as Russia's second president with 53% of the vote. Putin moved quickly to reassert Moscow's control over the regions, whose governors had confidently ignored edicts from Boris Yeltsin. He sent his own "plenipotentiary representatives" (commonly called 'polpred' in Russian) to ensure that Moscow's policies were followed in recalcitrant regions and republics. He won enactment of liberal economic reforms that rescued a faltering economy and stopped a spiral of hyperinflation. Putin achieved wide popularity by stabilizing the government, especially in marked contrast to what many Russians saw as the chaos of the latter Yeltsin years. The economy grew both because of rising oil prices and in part because Putin was able to achieve reforms in banking, labor, and private property. During this time, Russia also moved closer to the U.S., especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In 2002, the NATO-Russia Council was established, giving Russia a voice in NATO discussions.<sup>2</sup>

## **HOW RUSSIA HAS CHANGED SINCE THE 1990's<sup>3</sup>**

- No longer a country suffering the disorienting effects of economic collapse but one with nearly ten years of rapid economic growth, although now threatened by a deepening economic crisis.
- No longer a supplicant to the IMF, with razor thin reserves, and an inability to meet Paris and London Club debt, but one with the world's third largest reserves (even after the fall 2008 financial crisis).
- No longer an object of foreign assistance, but a member of the club with substantial sovereign wealth funds.
- No longer a country without the wherewithal to sustain an active foreign policy, but one whose oil and gas wealth has been parlayed into a major foreign policy instrument—although here too the economic crisis challenges the durability of this assumption.
- No longer a country whose leadership is picking its way uncertainly through the steps toward a more democratic order, but a politically consolidated regime preoccupied with reinforcing the centralization of power and managing the evolution of civil society.
- No longer a country agitated over its prospects of being integrated with (if not into) the West, but one abjuring strategic alignment and content to play the field among all major power centers.
- No longer a country with a fleeting, ambivalent, and unsystematic approach to the post-Soviet space, but one motivated by a determination to preserve and enhance Russian influence throughout the area, buttressed by the coordinated use of Russia's foreign policy instruments to this end.

As noted, the global economic crisis that has engulfed Russia casts a shadow over these assumptions. Still, any basic shift in domestic political trends or the thrust of foreign policy that may follow will simply heighten the contrast with the Russia of the 1990s.

# FACTS AND FIGURES<sup>4</sup>

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Russian Federation

## **Geography**

**Area:** 17 million sq. km. (6.5 million sq. mi.); about 1.8 times the size of the United States.

**Cities:** Capital--Moscow (pop. 10.4 million). Other cities--St. Petersburg (4.6 million), Novosibirsk (1.4 million), Nizhniy Novgorod (1.3 million).

**Terrain:** Broad plain with low hills west of Urals; vast coniferous forest and tundra in Siberia; uplands and mountains (Caucasus range) along southern borders.

**Climate:** Northern continental.

## **People**

**Nationality:** Noun and adjective--Russian(s).

**Population (January 2009):** 141.9 million.

**Annual growth rate (2009 est.):** -0.467% (population declining).

**Ethnic groups:** Russian 79.8%, Tatar 3.8%, Ukrainian 2%, other 14.4%.

**Religion:** Russian Orthodox, Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, Protestant, Buddhist, other.

**Language:** Russian (official); more than 140 other languages and dialects.

**Education (total pop.):** Literacy--99.4%.

**Health:** Life expectancy (2007 est.)--67.5 average; 61.4 yrs. men, 73.9 yrs. women.

**Work force (90.152 million, 2007 est.):** Production and economic services--84%; government--16%.

## **Government**

**Type:** Federation.

**Independence:** August 24, 1991.

**Constitution:** December 12, 1993.

**Branches:** Executive--president, prime minister (chairman of the government).

Legislative--Federal Assembly (Federation Council, State Duma). Judicial--

Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, Supreme Court of Arbitration, Office of Procurator General.

**Political parties:** After a shakeup in late 2008 dissolved and combined several parties, seven registered parties remain: United Russia, the Communist Party (KPRF), the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), Just Russia, Yabloko, Patriots of Russia, and the new Right Cause party. Yabloko, which favors liberal reforms, and Patriots of Russia failed to clear the 7% threshold in 2007 to enter the Duma.

**Subdivisions:** 21 autonomous republics, 47 oblasts, 2 federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg) and 14 autonomous territories and regions.

**Suffrage:** Universal at 18 years.

## **Economy**

**GDP (2008):** \$1.67 trillion.

**Growth rate (2008):** 5.6%.

**Natural resources:** Petroleum, natural gas, timber, furs, precious and nonferrous metals.

**Agriculture:** Products--Grain, sugar beets, sunflower seeds, meat, dairy products.

**Industry:** Types--Complete range of manufactures: automobiles, trucks, trains, agricultural equipment, advanced aircraft, aerospace, machine and equipment products; mining and extractive industry; medical and scientific instruments; construction equipment.

**Trade (2008):** Exports--\$368 billion: petroleum and petroleum products, natural gas, woods and wood products, metals, chemicals. Major markets--EU, CIS, China, Japan. Imports--\$256 billion: machinery and equipment, chemicals, consumer goods, medicines, meat, sugar, semi-finished metal products. Major partners--EU, NIS, Japan, China, U.S. U.S. exports--\$9.3 billion. Principal U.S. exports (2008)--oil/gas equipment, autos/parts, meat, aircraft, electrical machinery, medical equipment, plastics, cosmetics, and chemicals. U.S. imports--\$26.7 billion. Principal U.S. imports (2008)--oil (64%), chemicals, aluminum, iron/steel, precious stones, nickel, fish and crustaceans, copper, base metals, and wood.

## People

Russia's 141.9 million citizens descend from more than 100 ethnic groups. Russian is the official language of Russia and is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Russian is also the language of such giants of world literature as Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn.

Russia's educational system has produced nearly 100% literacy. About 7 million students attended Russia's 1,090 institutions of higher education in 2006, but continued reform is critical to producing students with skills to adapt to a market economy. Because great emphasis is placed on science and technology in education, Russian medical, mathematical, scientific, and space and aviation research is still generally of a high order. The number of doctors in relation to the population is high by American standards, although medical care in Russia, even in major cities, is generally far below Western standards. The unraveling of the Soviet state in its last decades and the physical and psychological traumas of transition during the 1990s resulted in a steady decline in the health of the Russian people. Currently Russia faces a demographic crisis as births lag far behind deaths. While its population is aging, skyrocketing deaths of working-age males due to cardiovascular disease is a major cause of Russia's demographic woes. A rapid increase in HIV/AIDS infections and tuberculosis compounds the problem. In 2007, life expectancy at birth was 61.4 for men and 73.9 for women. The large annual excess of deaths over births is expected to cut Russia's population by 30% over the next 50 years.

The Russian labor force is undergoing tremendous changes. Although well educated and skilled, it is largely mismatched to the rapidly changing needs of the Russian economy. Official unemployment dropped to its lowest rate of 5.4% in May 2008, and labor shortages appeared in some high-skilled job markets. The economic crisis which began in late 2008, however, quickly reversed this trend and the ranks of unemployed swelled to an International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated 9.5% in the first quarter of 2009; 1.8 million Russian lost their jobs in the first quarter of 2009 alone. Unemployment is highest

among women and young people. Following the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic dislocation it engendered, the standard of living fell dramatically. However, real disposable incomes have doubled since 1999, and experts estimate that the middle class constitutes approximately one-fourth of the population. The economic crisis, however, caused real disposable incomes to drop by 6.7% year-on-year in January 2009, and wages fell by 9.1% year-on-year in January 2009. Unpaid wages as a share of total enterprise turnover tripled to 0.12% in December 2008 compared to August 2008. The stock of wage arrears reached 8.7 billion rubles in April 2009, but still was not at levels seen in the 1990s. A World Bank study notes that poverty fell by 8.5% or 12.5 million people between 2002 and 2006, based on a poverty line of 1,056 rubles per capita per day in 2003. However, data collected between January and September 2008 indicates 13.5% of the population, approximately 19 million people, continue to live below the subsistence minimum of 4,630 rubles per month. About 25% of the population is highly vulnerable to poverty, as vulnerability to low levels of income remains high and a large number of people are concentrated around the poverty line, according to the World Bank.

Moscow is Russia's capital and largest city. Moscow is also increasingly important as an economic and business center; it has become Russia's principal magnet for foreign investment and business presence. Its cultural tradition is rich, and there are many museums devoted to art, literature, music, dance, history, and science, as well as hundreds of churches and dozens of notable cathedrals.

The second-largest city in Russia is St. Petersburg, which was established by Peter the Great in 1703 to be the capital of the Russian Empire as part of his Western-looking reforms. The city was called Petrograd during World War I and Leningrad after 1924. In 1991, as the result of a city referendum, it was renamed St. Petersburg. Under the tsars, the city was Russia's cultural, intellectual, commercial, financial, and industrial center. After Lenin moved the capital back to Moscow in 1918, the city's political significance declined, but it remained a cultural, scientific, and military-industrial center. The Hermitage, formerly the Winter Palace of the tsars, is one of the world's great fine arts museums.

Russia has an area of about 17 million square kilometers (6.5 million sq. mi.); in geographic terms, this makes Russia the largest country in the world by more than 2.5 million square miles. But with a population density of about 22 persons per square mile (9 per sq. km.), it is sparsely populated, and most of its residents live in urban areas.

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD RUSSIA**

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall nearly 20 years ago, U.S. policy toward Russia and its neighbors has become fragmented, inconsistent and fleeting. Yet, Russia and other former Soviet states are increasingly important in the international arena, particularly with respect to energy security, nuclear nonproliferation, illicit trade, and terrorism,” said

Leslie Berlowitz, Chief Executive Officer and William T. Golden Chair of the American Academy.<sup>5</sup>

Barack Obama has an opportunity to establish a new relationship with Russia that will make the world a safer place. With ties between the two countries being the most strained they've been in decades, the U.S. president seems to recognize there must be changes in his country's approach to Russia. The Russians themselves seem uncertain about the direction of U.S. policy. Since Obama was elected, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev vowed to place missiles on the border of the European Union in response to any United States missile defense radar in Poland and Czechoslovakia, then decided to pull them back. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has blamed the United States for the global financial crisis and also expressed optimism about the new U.S. president. Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov welcomed a conciliatory foreign policy speech from Vice President Joe Biden at the same time that his country, by pressuring Kyrgyzstan to kick out a U.S. military base, made it clear that Moscow wants to be included in any dialogue about Central Asia. The current tension between the United States and Russia is not necessary, nor was it inevitable. As a former senator, and as someone who has invested a lot of time and hope in the opportunities opened up by the fall of the Berlin Wall, I regret that the last 16 years have produced a series of strategic blunders leading to a gigantic missed opportunity. The truth is that we have badly mismanaged our relations with Russia since 1992, and our actions may have created a self-fulfilling prophecy of a more contentious relationship between our two countries. That would be a terrible outcome. We need Russia to work with us to reduce each of our stockpiles of nuclear weapons, to control nuclear proliferation, to safeguard nuclear materials, to fight the war against Islamic terrorism, and to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power. Instead, U.S. policies toward Russia under the last two presidential administrations have ignored Russia's stated national interests even as they have aggravated age-old ethnic hatreds and continued to promote Cold War-era military projects.<sup>6</sup>

Fifteen years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, "U.S.-Russia relations are clearly headed in the wrong direction," finds an Independent Task Force on U.S. policy toward Russia sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations. "Contention is crowding out consensus. The very idea of a 'strategic partnership' no longer seems realistic," it concludes. The bipartisan Task Force was chaired by former Senator John Edwards and former Congressman and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Jack Kemp and directed by Council Senior Fellow Stephen Sestanovich. The Task Force notes significant recent economic progress in Russia. "Between 2000 and 2004 the number of Russians living below the government's poverty line dropped from forty-two million to twenty-six million. The national unemployment rate--over 10 percent in 2000--is now about 7 percent...[and] a middle class appears to be emerging." At the same time, when President Bush has made democracy a goal of American foreign policy, Russia's political system is becoming steadily more authoritarian, the Task Force charges. "The political balance sheet of the past five years is extremely negative. The practices and institutions that have developed over this period have become far less open, pluralistic, subject to the rule of law, and vulnerable to the criticism and counterbalancing of a vigorous opposition or independent media." As Russia prepares to host the G8 summit this summer, the

report, Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do, affirms that Russia's cooperation is central to achieving American interests. "On a whole host of issues--Iran, energy, HIV/AIDS, and preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction--it's vital to have Russia on our side," said Kemp. "The G8 summit may be a watershed on many of these issues--Iran and energy in particular. It's a real opportunity to lock in more helpful Russian policies. But if we don't see progress, people are going to ask what Russia is doing in the G8 in the first place." "U.S.-Russia cooperation can help the United States handle some of the most difficult issues we face," said Edwards. "Yet regrettably, cooperation is becoming the exception, not the norm. This report is a wake-up call that we need to get U.S.-Russia relations back on track to meet the challenges that face both of our countries." Consistent with this, the report argues, "Although President Putin is presiding over the rollback of Russian democracy, the United States should work with him to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and to keep terrorists from attacking either his country or ours." The Task Force is comprised of many of the nations preeminent Russia scholars and policy practitioners. It applauds recent Russian support for containing Iran's nuclear program and cooperative initiatives to secure nuclear materials, but cautions that "U.S.-Russia relations are now marked by a growing number of disagreements. The partnership is not living up to its potential."

*The areas of most concern include:*

**De-democratization:** The report finds that Russian political institutions are becoming "corrupt and brittle." As a result, "Russia's capacity to address security concerns of fundamental importance to the United States and its allies is reduced. And many kinds of cooperation--from securing nuclear materials to intelligence sharing--are undermined."

**Energy supplies:** "Russia has used energy exports as a foreign policy weapon: intervening in Ukraine's politics, putting pressure on its foreign policy choices, and curtailing supplies to the rest of Europe. The reassertion of government control over the Russian energy sector increases the risk this weapon will be used again."

**The war on terror:** The Task Force finds "a seeming Russian effort to curtail U.S. and NATO military access to Central Asian bases," a sign that Russia is retreating from the idea that "success in Afghanistan serves a common interest."

*The report recommends:*

**Democratization:** "To go beyond mere expressions about the rollback of Russian democracy, the United States should increase--not cut--Freedom Support Act funds, focusing in particular on organizations committed to free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections."

**G8:** "To protect the credibility of the G8 at a time when many are questioning Russia's chairmanship, the United States should make clear that this role does not exempt Russian policies and actions from critical scrutiny. Keeping the G8 a viable international forum will require a de facto revival of the Group of Seven (G7). Without creating a new forum, the United States and its democratic allies have to assume a stronger coordinating role within the old one."

**Energy policy:** “The United States cannot expect Russian energy policy to substitute for its own. If America and its allies lack a comprehensive strategy to increase supplies of energy, diversify the number of suppliers and transport routes, and promote energy efficiency, they will only increase Russia’s ability to exploit its market position for political purposes.” The report adds, “To limit the use of oil and gas exports as an instrument of coercion--and as a prop for authoritarianism--the United States needs to agree with other governments, especially our European allies, on measures to assure that state-controlled Russian energy companies act like true commercial entities.”

**Trade and the WTO:** “We strongly favor accession, but on this condition: It must not be a political present,” says the Task Force. “Accession will promote further liberalization of the Russian economy and should signify full Russian acceptance of a rules-based international trading system....American negotiators should not, however, attempt to resolve important remaining issues under the pressure of an artificial deadline, least of all the deadline of this year’s G8 summit....It would be far better for the G8 meeting to come and go without Russia in the WTO, than to bring Russia into the organization on preferential terms.”

**Iran:** “A Russian policy that limits nuclear cooperation with Iran to nonsensitive technologies would justify dropping our historic objections to the Bushehr reactor.” For its part, Russia needs to accept that “the international community may soon face an Iran so determined to produce fissile material that all nuclear cooperation between Moscow and Tehran, including the Bushehr reactor, should cease.”

**Russia’s neighbors:** “The United States should cede no veto or undue deference to Russia over American relations with the states of the Russian periphery....There is nothing legitimate about limiting the opportunity of its neighbors to deepen their integration into the international economy, to choose security allies and partners, or to pursue democratic political transformation.” The report further recommends, “Post-Soviet states that share America’s approach to major international problems and can contribute to resolving them should be able to count on greater support.”

“Since the end of the Cold War, successive American administrations have sought to create a relationship with Russia that they called a ‘partnership.’ This is the right long-term goal, but it is unfortunately not a realistic prospect for U.S.-Russia relations over the next several years,” says the report.

In the short run, the United States needs to see Russia for what it is now. “The real question that the United States faces in this period is not how to make a partnership with Russia work, it is how to make selective cooperation--and in some cases selective opposition--serve important international goals,” concludes the report.<sup>7</sup>

An American commitment to improving U.S.-Russian relations is neither a reward to be offered for good international behavior by Moscow nor an endorsement of the Russian government’s domestic conduct. Rather, it is an acknowledgement of the importance of Russian cooperation in achieving essential American goals, whether preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, dismantling al-Qaeda and stabilizing Afghanistan, or guaranteeing security and prosperity in Europe. Success in creating a new and cooperative relationship with Russia can contribute to each of these objectives and many others. Failure could impose significant costs.<sup>8</sup>

## **THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

President Obama made a trip to Russia in early July 2009 and met with both Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev and Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. President Obama quickly found out that it is hard to tell who is really in charge in Russia, Medvedev or Putin. So, he dealt with both. While in Russia, Mr. Obama was able to come to some agreement in regard to weapons of mass destruction with the Russians and was able to begin charting a new course on U.S. – Russian relations.

Following the trip, MSNBC reported on July 7, 2009, “For two days, President Barack Obama pressed the reset button with Russia. The results: He ended up getting the expected agreement on deep cuts in nuclear arsenals, but he is leaving Moscow with few assurances of Kremlin help in solving other issues key to his foreign policy agenda. He is also leaving behind a spark he hopes will blaze to life and thaw U.S. relations with a former superpower with a chip on its shoulder. But his two days of summitry produced no unexpected breakthroughs. Throughout the meetings and speeches, Obama stayed on message: The United States and Russia have too many overlapping interests to move through the coming decades at odds. The time for confrontational Cold War thinking is well-past. America wants Russia to be "strong, peaceful and prosperous."

He told the graduating class at Moscow's New Economic School that the United States and Russia were not "destined to be antagonists," but he predicted — nevertheless — hard bargaining as the two nations work to overcome a long history of estrangement. "It is difficult to forge a lasting partnership between former adversaries. But I believe on the fundamental issues that will shape this century, Americans and Russians share common interests that form a basis for cooperation," he said. On several issues key to Obama foreign policy, the Russians were unbending, at least for now.

- While they agreed to join the U.S. in reassessing the threat from Iran's nuclear ambitions, there was no hoped-for Kremlin offer of direct intervention with Tehran. The Russians make significant profits from arms sales to Iran and the construction a nuclear complex for electricity generation.

- On the flash point issue of Georgia, where the Russian army crushed the tiny country's military a year ago, the Kremlin rejected U.S. complaints about Russian insistence that breakaway Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain free of Georgian control. Moscow, meantime, remained angry over U.S. refusal to back away from support for Georgia's hopes to join NATO.

- Nor did there appear to have been progress in the dispute over arms control. While preparing a START I replacement treaty that would cut nuclear arsenals by about one-third, Moscow and Washington remained fundamentally at odds over U.S. plans for creating a missile defense system in Eastern Europe. U.S. officials discount Russian complaints about American intentions. But Moscow was still saying the two issues must be linked or a final agreement on cutting nuclear warheads and delivery systems could be in jeopardy. Washington insists missile defense is designed to protect U.S. allies against a potential nuclear attack by Iran. The Russians say such a system would put them at a disadvantage by unbalancing offensive nuclear parity.

The two sides did agree to far greater cooperation on Afghanistan, where Obama is bolstering U.S. troop strength in the fight against Taliban militants and other al-Qaida

allied groups. Part of the deal will allow the U.S. to fly, without transit charges, American troops, weapons and other lethal war materiel across Russian territory. Such U.S. overflights had been limited to non-lethal supplies for the U.S.-led NATO force in Afghanistan, a country from which Russia withdrew in defeat 20 years ago after a decade-long occupation.<sup>9</sup>

Combined, the U.S. and Russia possess more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. But under yesterday's agreement, the START successor treaty would "reduce the ceiling on strategic warheads to somewhere between 1,500 and 1,675 warheads within seven years, down from the current ceiling of 2,200 warheads by 2012." The accord also places limits on delivery systems, such as land and submarine-based missiles and bombers, to "somewhere from 500 to 1,100, down from the 1,600 currently allowed." More importantly, the new framework maintains the critical verification mechanisms contained within START I. "They've hit the sweet spot in finding numbers that will be a significant reduction and likely to get the necessary support in their respective parliaments," said non-proliferation expert and Ploughshares Fund President Joseph Cirincione. Obama and Medvedev also signed agreements allowing "the transit of U.S. military personnel and weapons through Russia to Afghanistan" and restoring military-to-military ties that were suspended after Russia's invasion of neighboring Georgia last year. Missile defense remains a sticking point, but progress was made yesterday. While Russia objects to U.S. plans to place anti-missile batteries and radar stations in Poland and the Czech Republic, Medvedev said he "believed that Russia had made progress on the issue, saying the United States had acknowledged that negotiations on arms control would be connected to the missile defense program. did not acknowledge any change in the American position," but he did offer language on the issue that the Russian leadership found agreeable. "I believe that over time we will end up seeing that the U.S.-Russian positions on these issues can be reconciled and that in fact we have a mutual interest in protecting both our populations," Obama said of missile defense. Indeed, both leaders issued an unexpected joint statement in response "the challenge of ballistic missile proliferation," pledging that the U.S. and Russia will "analyze the ballistic missile challenges," "cooperate on monitoring the development of missile programs around the world," and establish "the Joint Data Exchange Center, which is to become the basis for a multilateral missile-launch notification regime."<sup>10</sup>

## **POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS**

1. The United States federal government should substantially change its foreign policy toward Russia.
2. The United States federal government should significantly improve its foreign policy toward Russia.
3. The United States federal government should significantly improve its foreign policy toward Russia in one or more of the following areas: economic policy, energy policy, human rights policy, and military/defense policy.
4. The United States federal government should significantly improve its military/defense policy toward Russia.

## **TIMELINESS**

Even though this topic will be debated well over a year from now, there has been no indication from President Obama or from the Russian government that relations will change much over that period of time. Relations with the Russian government have been tenuous since the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1991. With the nuclear capabilities of the Russian Federation and the sheer size of its economic impact, relations will continue to evolve for years to come.

## **SCOPE**

The relationship between the United States and Russia is one that affects not only all Americans, but potentially, the entire world. Whether citizens of this nation realize it or not, Russia is still a threat to this country, both economically and in regards to safety. Those who were born before the year 1980 more than likely vividly remember the Cold War and the threat that arose from that tenuous situation. Those born since need to know that Russia, while labeled a democracy, grows more and more authoritarian in nature. It is important that the current generation of young people in this country understand the importance of the relationship between these two countries.

## **QUALITY**

This topic is of high importance not only to the United States, but worldwide. This topic deals with two nations that are former arch-enemies and who still do not see eye to eye on a wide array of issues. Russia has become “friends” with rogue nations such as Venezuela, Iran, and Lybia – nations hell bent on destroying the United States. This topic needs to be debated now more than ever. If relations between the United States and Russia are not improved significantly in the next five years, there could be dire consequences.

## **MATERIAL**

Volumes of material exist on this topic as well as thousands of websites, including websites of the federal government. Students will have no problem finding legitimate sources of information in order to debate this topic.

## **INTEREST**

This topic is not only a national problem, but an international one as well. It is important that students realize the dangers of not improving relations with Russia. Today's student's have little knowledge of the Soviet Empire and do not understand the significance of a Russia that is still in its infancy when it comes to democracy. Once students begin researching this topic, I am confident that they will become interested in it. There are many areas that can be researched and many problems that can be solved. I know that this will be an interest to coaches, in that most of us remember living in constant fear of the Soviet Union.

## **RESEARCH AND ACCESS**

There is a great deal of literature available on Russian foreign policy. A Google search of "U.S. Russia Foreign Policy" yields 26,800,000 hits. Barnes and Noble has 1,088 books available on the topic. The United States Department of State ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)) has a tremendous amount of information in regards to this topic.

### Google Hits (As of June 7, 2009)

"Russian Foreign Policy" – 28,400,000  
"US Russia Relations" – 142,000,000  
"US Russian Relations" – 29,300,000  
"US Russia Foreign Policy" – 26,800,000  
"United States Russia Foreign Policy" – 11,800,000  
"United States + Russia" – 141,000,000  
"Russia Relations" – 23,400,000

### Useful Online Resources

United States Department of State – [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)  
International Monetary Fund – [www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org)  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)  
United Nations – [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)  
Embassy of the Russian Federation – [www.russianembassy.org](http://www.russianembassy.org)  
US AID – [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)  
World Trade Organization – [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)

# **BALANCE**

## **POSSIBLE AFFIRMATIVE CASE AREAS**

- a. Energy policy
- b. Increase “Freedom Support Act” funds to Russia
- c. Ratify and implement the U.S. – Russian Civil Nuclear Agreement
- d. Revive the Group of Seven (G7)
- e. Bring Russia into the World Trade Organization (WTO)
- f. Iran
- g. Russia’s neighbors
- h. Repeal/revise Jackson/Vanik Amendment
- i. Ballistic Missile Defenses in Central Europe
- j. Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
- k. Climate change
- l. Small arms flow
- m. Drug Trade
- n. Human trafficking
- o. NATO – deny Ukraine and Georgia membership
- p. Partner with Russia on space exploration
- q. Increase the scope of the U.S. – Russia Counterterrorism Working Group
- r. Negotiate and Ratify a Bi-Lateral Investment Treaty
- s. Human rights
- t. Terrorism
- u. HIV/AIDS
- v. Oil/energy

## **NEGATIVE GROUND**

### **Case Arguments**

A variety of case-based arguments can be run by negative teams. For example, evidence exists that Russia has no intentions of decreasing the number of WMD’s that they currently have at their disposal. Also, it could be argued that reorganizing the G7 would actually do more to hurt U.S. – Russian relationship than help. Another case argument example involves ballistic missile defenses in Central Europe. There is a great deal of evidence available stating that Russia will never allow this to be built or put into operation. The number of case arguments are countless and negatives should have no problems running case arguments on this topic.

### **Disadvantages**

The most common disadvantages likely to be used on this topic will include nuclear, Malthus, budget deficit/spending, China, terrorism, and war. Negatives will construct disadvantages that claim that any change in U.S. foreign policy toward Russia will cause an escalation in tension that will lead to war and possibly nuclear war. Negatives will

claim that the United States trying to assert its influence in Russia will have countless negative effects and do more harm than good.

### **Counterplans**

Counterplan ground under the proposed resolutions will mostly deal with changing the agent of action. Much evidence exists which shows that organizations such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organization have a better chance at solving relational problems between the U.S. and Russia. Counterplans will also deal with not changing the status quo; arguing that the current relationship between the two nations is working. Still, other counterplans will be run stating that it is much more important to substantially change foreign policy with countries such as China, Iran, or Venezuela; arguing that these nations pose much more of a threat to the United States than does Russia.

### **Kritiks**

A few of the possible kritiks under the proposed resolutions include statism, capitalism, Zizek, and Nietzsche.

## **DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS**

### **“Foreign Policy”**

**foreign policy** – *n.* a policy pursued by a nation in its dealings with other nations, designed to achieve national objectives. Dictionary.com Unabridged.

**foreign policy** – *n.* The diplomatic policy of a nation in its interactions with other nations. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**foreign policy** – *n.* a policy governing international relations. WordNet 3.0.

**foreign policy** - *n.* the policy of a sovereign state in its interaction with other sovereign states. Merriam-Webster Online.

**foreign policy** – *n.* A policy governing international relations. Webster’s Online Dictionary.

### **“Toward”**

**toward** – *prep.* with respect to; as regards. Dictionary.com Unabridged.

**toward** – *prep.* with regard to; in relation to. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**toward** – *prep.* with direction to, in a moral sense; with respect or reference to; regarding; concerning. Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary.

**toward** – *prep.* in relation to. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

### **“Substantially”**

**substantially** – *adv.* 1 to a great or significant extent. 2 for the most part; essentially. Compact Oxford English Dictionary.

**substantially** – *adv.* to a large degree. Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary.

**substantially** – *adv.* considerably; in an extensive, substantial, or ample way.

**NOTE:** definitions for the word “substantially” are countless and definitions can be found which state that in order to be substantial, the amount in question must be anywhere from 5% to 99%.

### **“Significant”**

**significant** – *adj.* important; of consequence. Dictionary.com

**significant** – *adj.* Having or likely to have a major effect; important. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**significant** – *adj.* having or likely to have influence or effect; also : of a noticeably or measurably large. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

### **“Improve”**

**improve** – *v.* to bring into a more desirable or excellent condition. Dictionary.com.

**improve** – *v.* to increase in value, excellence, etc.; become better. Random House Dictionary.

**improve** – *v.* to make improvements, as by revision, addition, or change. Random House Dictionary.

**improve** – *v. tr.* to raise to a more desirable or more excellent quality or condition; make better. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**improve** – *v. intr.* 1. to become better. 2. To make beneficial additions or changes. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

### **“Economic Policy”**

**economic policy** – *n.* a government policy for maintaining economic growth and tax revenues. WordNet 3.0.

## “Human Rights”

**human rights** – *n.* fundamental rights, esp. those believed to belong to an individual and in whose exercise a government may not interfere, as the rights to speak, associate, work, etc. Random House Dictionary.

**human rights** – *pl.n.* The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**human rights** – *pl.n.* rights (as freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution) regarded as belonging fundamentally to all persons. Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary.

## “Should”

**should** – *aux. v.* must; ought (used to indicate duty, propriety, or expediency). Dictionary.com Unabridged.

**should** – *aux. v.* Used to express obligation or duty. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**should** – *aux. v.* 1 used in auxiliary function to express obligation, propriety, or expediency. 2 used in auxiliary function to express what is probable or expected. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

## “Change”

**change** – *v.* to make the form, nature, content, future course, etc., of (something) different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone. Dictionary.com Unabridged.

**change** – *tr. v.* 1 To cause to be different. 2 To give a completely different form or appearance to; transform. 3 To lay aside, abandon, or leave for another; switch. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**change** – *tr. v.* To alter; to make different; to cause to pass from one state to another; as, to change the position, character, or appearance of a thing; to change the countenance. Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary.

**change** – *v.* 1 to make different in some particular. 2 to make radically different. 3 to give a different position, course, or direction to. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

## “Russia”

**Russia** – *n.* A former empire of eastern Europe and northern Asia. Originally settled by Slavs from the third to the eighth century, the region was long a conglomerate of independent principalities until Moscow gained ascendancy in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. The empire achieved the height of its power and territorial influence under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great in the 17th and 18th centuries. The early 1800s were a period of reactionism, and although some liberal reforms were effected in the late 1800s, discontent remained and led directly to the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, an internal power struggle, and the formation of the USSR in 1922. Officially Russian Federation. Formerly Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. A country of eastern Europe and northern Asia stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean. It was proclaimed a republic in 1917 after the Russian Revolution, and as a constituent republic of the USSR (1922-1991), it constituted 75 percent of the country's total land area. In 1990 Boris Yeltsin became president of the Russian republic, and in 1991 he was reelected to the position in the republic's first popular election. When the Soviet Union disintegrated later that year, Yeltsin took control of the central government, and with Belarus and Ukraine, Russia formed (December 1991) the Commonwealth of Independent States, which was then joined by most of the other breakaway Soviet republics. In March 1992 Russia signed a treaty with most of the remaining Soviet republics, establishing the Russian Federation. Moscow is the capital. Population: 141,000,000. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition.

**Russia** – *n.*

1. a former communist country in eastern Europe and northern Asia; established in 1922; included Russia and 14 other soviet socialist republics (Ukraine and Byelorussia and others); officially dissolved 31 December 1991
  2. formerly the largest Soviet Socialist Republic in the USSR occupying eastern Europe and northern Asia
  3. a former empire in eastern Europe and northern Asia created in the 14th century with Moscow as the capital; powerful in the 17th and 18th centuries under Peter the Great and Catherine the Great when Saint Petersburg was the capital; overthrown by revolution in 1917
  4. a federation in northeastern Europe and northern Asia; formerly Soviet Russia; since 1991 an independent state
- WordNet 3.0.

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<sup>1</sup> Infoplease.com. "Timeline: Russian Federation". <<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/russiatime4.html>>

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of State. "Background Note: Russia". <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>>

<sup>3</sup> American Academy of Arts and Sciences. "Designing U.S. Policy Toward Russia: Strategic Assessment". <[mhtml:http://www.amacad.org/russia/intro.mhtml?intro\\_files/frame.htm](http://www.amacad.org/russia/intro.mhtml?intro_files/frame.htm)>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Russia." <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>> April 2009.

<sup>5</sup> American Academy of Arts and Sciences. "Announcing New Carnegie Grant for 'U.S. Policy Toward Russia.'" <<http://www.amacad.org/news/usRussia.aspx>> August 29, 2008.

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<sup>6</sup> Bradley, Bill. "The Russia Opportunity." *Foreign Policy*.

<[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4768&page=0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4768&page=0)>. March 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Stevanovich, Stephen. "U.S. – Russia Relations Headed in Wrong Direction, Concludes Council Task Force Chaired by Edwards and Kemp." <<http://www.cfr.org/publication/10020/>>. March 5, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> The Commission on U.S. Policy Toward Russia. "The Right Direction for U.S. Policy Toward Russia." <<http://www.nixoncenter.org/RussiaReport09.pdf>> March 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Associated Press. "Mixed Results for Obama's Moscow Summit." *MSN.com*. July 7, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> "Resetting the U.S. – Russia Relationship," *The Huffington Post*. July 7, 2009.