

## **Fate of U.S.-Russia Relationship Depends on Cooperation**

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The annual G-8 Summit taking place later this week in Germany comes at a crucial time in our relationship with Russia, a key international trade, military, and security partner to the United States.

For decades after World War II, our military and national security was focused mostly on the Soviet Union. At that time, both nations pursued a foreign policy dubbed "Mutually Assured Destruction."

In the early 1990s, with the support of the United States, new Russian leaders began instituting democratic reforms. Though the Russians still have work to do on human rights, as the political landscape in the Soviet Union improved, so did our relationship with Russia. Instead of destruction, our countries have pursued cooperation. Certainly, recent actions by the Russian government to limit freedoms, crack down on journalists and inflict economic damage on its neighbors are cause for concern for the United States. Some of these concerns can and should be addressed through engagement and diplomacy with Russia.

Recently, relations between the United States and Russia have become strained, with the rhetoric between the nations exacerbating the problem. As the G8 meetings commence, it is imperative that the U.S. government engage Russia on the vital security, trade and energy policies important to both nations.

### Security matters

Last week, as co-chairman of the U.S. Senate-Russia interparliamentary working group, I held three days of meetings in Moscow with legislators and top Russian officials, including Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, to discuss our mutual economic and security interests.

The Russians were united on key matters. First, they question U.S. intent with regard deployment of missile and radar systems in Poland and the Czech Republic. Second, they would prefer an extended timetable on independence for Kosovo. Finally, they also identified vital security matters where they and the United States can work together — specifically, halting Iran's nuclear program and the spread of global terrorism. Russian officials were clear that, like me, they believe Iran's ultimate goal in developing nuclear power is to produce a nuclear weapon.

Our delegation's message to the Russians was clear as well: we can work out differences over missile defense and Kosovo and other issues, but the Russians need to step up and assist the global community with Iran and terrorism in Iraq. Cooperation is critical to the success of our relationship.

### Trade matters

Russia has tremendous economic potential. They have registered 5 percent or better economic growth in each year since 1999 and 6.7 percent in 2006. Personal income grew 10 percent in 2006. This growth has affected mostly urban areas, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, and more needs to be done to improve economic conditions in rural areas.

U.S. exports to Russia for the first 11 months of 2006 totaled \$7.8 billion. U.S. foreign direct investment in Russia in 2005 was \$5.5 billion, up from \$3.8 billion in 2004. Russians are buying American products and services; it seemed every fifth car in Moscow was a Ford. But we can do better and raise the standard of living in Russia to advance democratic reforms.

Russia is working to join the World Trade Organization. The United States maintains an obscure trade law, known in Washington-speak as "Jackson-Vanik," that would limit U.S. business investment in a WTO-member Russia because it prevents normalized trade relations between the two countries. Congress needs to "graduate" Russia from this trade provision so U.S. firms can compete with foreign firms on the economically fertile ground in Russia.

### Energy matters

As with other allies, important and controversial matters between the United States and Russia will continue to arise.

For example, energy production and supply is an important national security matter for the United States and its allies. Russia's State controlled energy company, Gazprom, is building an intricate pipeline system that will control natural gas flow to European countries. They plan to expand to North America. Without cooperation and understanding between our countries, this system could leave the United States vulnerable in the future to gas supplies controlled by the Russians.

Mikhail Margelov, my Russian counterpart in the working group, said the U.S.-Russia alliance must be strong for the sake of the future of both countries. He is right. Collaboration can bring about change for the good. Negotiation can resolve conflicts. Strong relations can solidify Russia's democracy.

The Bush Administration should use the G8 Summit as an opportunity to engage Russia on these key security, trade and energy policy matters. It is in the United States' national security interests to have a strong relationship with a democratic Russia.