

World Affairs Council of Philadelphia

2006 Model Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings

Topic 1: United States and Russian Relations

Subcommittee on European Affairs

Chair: George Allen (R-VA)
Ranking Member: Joseph Biden (D-DE)

Members: George Voinovich (R-OH)
Paul Sarbanes (D-MD)
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Christopher Dodd (D-CT)
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Lincoln Chafee (R-RI)

Overview:

The Russian and United States relationship span over one-hundred years, but, contemporary relations stem from the post World War II era. The expansion of Soviet influence into Eastern Europe following Germany's defeat worried liberal democracies of the west, particularly the United States, because of U.S. economic and political ties in Western Europe. The two nations, the United States and the Soviet Union, promoted opposing economic and political ideologies, both competing for international influence is also known as the Cold War. This protracted geopolitical, ideological, and economic struggle lasted from about 1947 to December 25, 1991. Due to policies such as glasnost and perestroika, in addition to several decades of overstretched resources, the Soviet Union collapsed.

In the early 1990's Russia began to restructure its government. Through Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, Russia has once again become a key player in international politics. U.S.-Russo relations are still evolving from a Cold War relationship. In the process, Russia and the United States are slowly moving away from a relationship that was centered on bilateral issues. This resulted in a strained relationship between the two countries. Nevertheless, there is an emphasis on improving the relationship because the United States' cooperation with Russia could result in military, economic, and security benefits.

Background:

Russia is located in Northern Asia bordering the Arctic Ocean, between Europe and the North Pacific Ocean. The area west of the Urals is considered part of Europe, while the area east is considered Asia. The population of Russia is 142,893,540 according to a July 2006 estimate. The current Chief of State is Vladimir Putin. The Russian government consists of a bicameral Federal Assembly.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia has struggled in its efforts to build a democratic political system and market economy to replace the strict social, political, and economic controls of the Communist period. While some progress has been made on the economic front, recent years have seen a recentralization of power under Vladimir Putin and the erosion of democratic institutions.

Post Cold War, Russia has taken several actions that the United States' government views as detrimental to American interests. The Council on Foreign Relations study states that Russia has been retreating from democracy. The Council argues that power in Russia has been

increasingly centralized in Moscow, and that Russian judges are heavily influenced by political leaders. The United States views these actions as counter to democratic practices.

Furthermore, according to the Council on Foreign Affairs task force, Putin has adopted a foreign policy that is often at odds with the West. Two examples of actions counter to U.S. interest include: Russia's efforts to get U.S. forces out of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as its apparent use of its energy resources to intimidate pro-Western neighbors such as Ukraine and Georgia.

Russia's turn to authoritarianism under Vladimir Putin, compacted with the downturn in the country's bilateral relationship with the United States, has resulted in additional strains on the relations between the two countries. According to the report created by the Council on Foreign Relations, "Cooperation is becoming the exception, not the norm. US-Russian relations are headed in the wrong direction." In addition, the report notes that U.S. and Russian interests are far apart on what may be important issues, for example, energy-related issues in the Caspian Basin, counterterrorism, rebuilding states, and human rights. Russia has worked to reduce, if not eliminate the American military presence in Central Asia. The United States and Russia also are at odds over Georgia. Washington has provided strong diplomatic support for President Mikheil Saakashvili's administration, which has clashed with Moscow on a variety of issues. Russia's violations of human rights include the harassment of non-governmental organizations, many of which express discontent with the Russian government's policies. Russia also has refused visas to academic researchers.

Cooperation with Russia

Even though Russian foreign policy is incongruent with the United States, cooperation with Russia would provide benefits for the US. The United States and Russia could cooperate in the economic development of the Russian Far East, a region that has experienced socio-economic deterioration. Revival in that area would have positive reverberations in China, Korea and Japan which could strengthen Asian ties with the United States. Maintaining amicable relations with Russia could provide the United States with lower and more stable oil prices since Russia is already a significant supplier of energy to Europe and East Asia. Russia could become a key player in stabilizing global oil prices.

Stronger relations with Russia could help the security of the United States and the rest of the world. Terrorism could be curbed with the cooperation of Russia because of its strategic military location. Areas such as Central Asia provide access to countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Also, Russia could provide stability for states in turmoil, especially the former Soviet states. Finally, Russia could be the state to bargain with Iran to create better policies regarding nuclear weapons. Russia is the only major power to deal with Iran and its Nuclear Weapons Program.

In this era, there are many positive and negative reasons to improve relations with Russia. While a strong relationship with Russia provides several incentives for the United States, the current policy in Russia is not congruent with the ideals of the United States government. This quandary provides a few questions the United States need to consider. First, should the United States try to strengthen the Russo-American tie, and second, how should the United States go about strengthening the relationship?

Definitions:

Communism: A theoretical economic system characterized by the collective ownership of property and by the organization of labor for the common advantage of all members; A system of

government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian party holds power, claiming to make progress toward a higher social order in which all goods are equally shared by the people.

Perestroika: The restructuring of the Soviet economy and bureaucracy that began in the mid 1980s which intended to increase automation and labor efficiency but it led eventually to the end of central planning in the Russian economy

Glasnost: An official policy of the former Soviet government emphasizing openness with regard to discussion of social problems and shortcomings.

Isolationist: A national policy of abstaining from political or economic relations with other countries.

Links:

<http://www.eurasianet.org>

<http://www.cfr.org/>

<http://www.state.gov>

<http://www.cia.gov>

Questions:

- 1) How would stronger relations affect the United States economically? With security?
- 2) What approach should the United States take when dealing with the isolationist actions taken by Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin?
- 3) In dealing with short and long-term relations between the US and Russia, what would be the best direction, in the best interests of, and the strategy for achieving these goals for the US?

Witnesses:

John Edwards

Co-author of Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do which emphasizes a hard-line approach with Russia.

Jack Kemp

Co-author of Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do which emphasizes a hard-line approach with Russia.

Ian Bremmer

President of Eurasia Group, a political-risk consultancy.

Richard N. Haass, Director, Policy Planning Staff

Believes the United States should cooperate with Russia.

Zbigniew Brzezinski

U.S. national security adviser under the Carter administration

Does not believe a country with a very shaky judicial system, a country that cannot eradicate corruption, can genuinely be a solid ally of the United States.

Dmitry V. Suslov

Deputy Director on Research at the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Moscow, Russia. Believes the best way to strengthen ties with Russia is for Bush administration to convince Putin that it is truly interested in a stable, strong, and integral Russia.

The Honorable Stephen Sestanovich

George F. Kennan Senior Fellow for Russian and Eurasian Studies
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Ms. Amy Myers Jaffe

Wallace S. Wilson Fellow in Energy Studies
Associate Director, Rice University Energy Program
James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy
Rice University
Houston, TX

Andrew C. Kuchins

Director of the Russian & Eurasian Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, says U.S.-Russian relations are "rather precarious" and could spiral downwards.

Lee Feinstein, Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy and International Law

Robert J. Einhorn is Senior Adviser at the International Security Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Previously, he served in the U.S. Department of State for twenty-nine years, and from 1999 to 2001, he was Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation.

Fiona Hill is a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. She was previously Director of Strategic Planning at the Eurasia Foundation.

Jessica T. Mathews is President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which in addition to its Washington, DC, headquarters, maintains a forty-person office in Russia: the Carnegie Moscow Center.