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*CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY*

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**Testimony before the  
House Foreign Affairs Committee**

**July 7, 2011**

**Rethinking Reset: Re-Examining the Obama Administration Russia Policy**

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July 7, 2011, Washington, D.C.

*My name is Ariel Cohen. I am Senior Research Fellow for Russian and Eurasian Studies and International Energy Policy at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own, and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.*

For the past two years, the Obama Administration has touted its Russia “reset policy” as one of its great diplomatic achievements. In March 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, with a red button symbolizing a new “reset” policy with the Russian Federation. Symbolically, as the result of incompetent translation, the inscription on the button read “overload” instead of “reset.” Ever since, President Obama has 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.

The grave error made in assessing who was in charge led to a chain of strategic miscalculations in relations with Moscow. While grooming Medvedev, the Administration agreed to cut U.S. strategic nuclear forces under the New START, abandoned the original program of missile defense deployment in Poland and the Czech Republic, engaged Russia in futile missile defense talks, pursued a policy of geopolitical neglect in the former Soviet Union, and toned down criticism of the violation of political freedom in Russia. However, the reality remains that Medvedev has only limited capacity to deliver and looks increasingly unlikely to continue in office. Putin still is Russia’s “national leader” and the real power behind—and on—the throne.

Even with Medvedev as President, Russia is still willing to use force to achieve its geo-economic goals as well. Control of energy corridors from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea and beyond was an objective of the Russian military operation against Georgia in August 2008. This year, Gazprom opens the Nord Stream pipeline from Russia to Germany, with spurs to other European countries, increasing their dependence on Russian energy. This has been clearly confirmed by incidents over the last two decades involving delays in energy supplies to Azerbaijan, as well as the Baltic States, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine and other countries. From the American perspective, Russia’s energy nationalism and continued collusion

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with anti-American regimes in Iran, Syria and Venezuela are troubling long-term geopolitical trends and should be sources of frustration in Washington.

In the last two and a half years of “reset”, despite the rhetoric about needed improvements in the rule of law, Russian whistleblowers died in jail or were severely beaten; Russian courts continued to sentence political opponents to lengthy prison terms for crimes they had not committed; peaceful demonstrators were beaten and incarcerated; and the state refused registration to democratic political parties. And things are likely to get worse.

Based on the “reset” record, 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 even if he nominally remains in office. However, the Administration cannot publicly admit its mistake, as this would undermine the very notion of this over-personalized “reset” policy.

### **Obama’s “Reset”: Neglecting American Values and Interests**

The “reset” announced by the Obama Administration in February 2009 was part of the White House’s broader “new realism” in U.S. foreign policy, a bizarre hybrid that combined a reluctance to defend human rights in Russia, China, and Iran with apologies for alleged “crimes” caused by American exceptionalism. The Administration revised down the scope of American priorities in Russia and Eurasia; de-facto allowing Russia to build what President Medvedev called “a zone of privileged interests” in the former Soviet Union, effectively denying these countries a democratic path of development and close relations with the Euro-Atlantic zone.

This pseudo-realism has adulterated fundamental American interests and abhors the use of force to protect them. One could argue that that brand of “realism” had already shown its shortcomings in the 1980s, when it ignored the revolutions that ended the Cold War. The Obama Administration failed to understand that there is no escape from both protecting US interests and pursuing moral imperatives in politics, even in world politics.

Underlying the Obama Administration’s “reset” of relations with Russia was its supposed promotion of democracy and human rights even as it sought engagement on the two countries’ common interests. The state of democracy inside Russia is, in fact, being addressed by Washington and Moscow: Michael McFaul, the President’s Senior Director for Russia on the National Security Council, who President Obama nominated to be the next U.S. Ambassador in Russia, is the leader of a bilateral working group on civil society for the U.S. side, in partnership with Vladislav Surkov, Putin’s and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev’s political architect.

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Beyond domestic political engagement, the Obama Administration's "reset" policy has primarily been a series 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.

### **Popular Front on the Offensive: Putin Returns?**

Whoever occupies the Oval office is facing a complex system of U.S.–Russian relations. These include nuclear nonproliferation and arms control, the supply of US and NATO troops in Afghanistan via Russian territory, human rights and Islamist extremism in Russia, the energy and sovereignty concerns of U.S. friends and allies, and the Iranian quest for weapons of mass destruction, to name just a few. The Obama Administration cannot address these issues by pretending that Medvedev and his narrow circle of supporters wield the real power. In fact, it is the Putin group—which includes the key energy, military and security services officials, businessmen, and the leadership of the United Russia ruling party—that exercises the ultimate power.

Now Putin, no great friend of America, is likely to move back from the Prime Minister's office to the Kremlin in the spring of 2012, raising tough questions about Obama's Russian policy.

Putin has publicly disagreed with Medvedev, his handpicked successor, on a number of key policy issues, many of them vital to U.S. interests. While Medvedev has generally articulated positions which are considered liberal in Russia, Putin has consistently criticized the US and stuck to the statist line. Some of the issues on which the two have apparent differences include the role of freedom in the country, the legacy of Joseph Stalin (Putin called him "an effective manager"), and the collapse of the Soviet Union (Putin called it "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century, while his protégé thinks the Bolshevik October putsch was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe for Russia).

The two have also argued on modernization (Medvedev wants a broad-based rejuvenation of the state, including the political system, while his mentor emphasizes boosting Russia's military capabilities through science and technology – just as the czars and the Soviets did); Libya (Medvedev wants to work with the Allies, while Putin blames the US for destabilization of the Middle East); and persecution of former oil magnate Mikhail Khodorkovsky (Medvedev said that the man does not represent any danger to the public, while Putin intervened in the ongoing trial and demanded that he continue to sit in jail).

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Putin also supports “friendship” with China and Venezuela and good relations with Iran. At various points Putin accused the U.S. of supporting Islamist terrorists in the North Caucasus in order to dismantle Russia, illegally intervening in Iraq, being responsible for the global economic recession, and toppling regimes in the Middle East through promotion of social media. Putin pays lip service to the fight against corruption, and directly intervenes in prominent court cases.

Putin formed his worldview in the KGB and by reading Russian nationalist philosophers, including some with fascist sympathies. Pro-Putin elites include the top officers of the security services and the armed forces, the military-industrial complex, state company bosses, and a part of the business class. They are a mix of statist, imperialists, and nationalists. They support a future for Russia that is rooted in its imperial past and Christian Orthodoxy.

Last month, worried about his own and his party’s declining popularity and anxious to outmaneuver Medvedev, Putin launched the Popular Front, a political contraption that would consist of United Russia, women’s and environmental organizations, sympathetic businessmen, and trade unions. Putin may allow communists and possibly Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s ultra-nationalists in the next Parliament, but no real democratic opposition. This could spell the end of the feeble multi-party system in Russia.

Free from concern about a serious U.S. response, the Kremlin has continued to prosecute Putin’s political enemies:

- In June, the Russian Justice Ministry denied registration to the Party of People’s Freedom (PARNAS), a new party created by prominent opposition leaders, such as the former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov; former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov; former Duma Deputy Chairman Vladimir Ryzhkov, and former Deputy Energy Minister Vladimir Milov -- an early indication that December’s parliamentary elections will be neither free nor fair.
- In May, prosecutors opened a criminal investigation of anti-corruption whistleblower Aleksey Navalny for what he said was revenge for exposing alleged fraud at Russian state companies.
- In December 2010, former oligarchs Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev were sentenced, in their second trial, to additional lengthy terms in Siberian prisons on charges of embezzlement and money laundering. On May 31, the European Court of Justice ruled that the Russian state had seriously violated Khodorkovsky’s rights during his arrest and trial detention. Despite Medvedev’s talk about Khodorkovsky not being a threat to the public, the courts continue to reject his appeals for an early release.

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## **The Cost of US-Russian Relations is Too High**

While the gains from the “reset” relationship have been exaggerated, the cost in terms of U.S. diminished security, geopolitical losses and moral authority has been high. The Obama Administration has disavowed linkages between its Russia policy components, as it placed punishing Russian misbehavior in one area by withholding concessions in another off limits.

There is good reason to believe, moreover, that Russian leaders do not take White House efforts to promote freedom and human rights seriously. They know that the U.S. Administration is chained to the “reset” and will do little more than verbally object to the Kremlin’s abuses of human rights and the rule of law. The talk of democracy is “for domestic [U.S.] consumption,” said one official Russian visitor to Washington last fall. This perceived American softness is perhaps one reason why Medvedev told the *Financial Times* on June 18, “Let me tell you that no one wishes the re-election of Barack Obama as U.S. president as I do.” Nowhere is the Russian interest in the Administration’s policy as clear as in the area of arms control and missile defenses.

## **U.S. Missile Defense: Next Casualty of the “Reset”?**

The Administration may be jeopardizing U.S. and allied missile defenses. The New START treaty is a cornerstone of President Obama’s dangerously naïve policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament known as “getting to zero”, i.e. achieving a world without nuclear weapons. This is particularly pernicious when North Korea and Pakistan are building up their nuclear forces, and while Iran is unveiling its nuclear missile arsenal is threatening to unleash a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, which may involve Saudi, and also possibly Egyptian and Turkish efforts to acquire deployable nuclear weapons.

Instead of moving to address some of these potential threats, the Obama Administration first announced its decision to abandon the original U.S. ballistic missile defense plans—the so-called third site for missile defense—in Poland and the Czech Republic. The timing of the announcement was as insensitive as it was embarrassing: on the 70th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Poland. Second, as *The Telegraph* reported in February, the United States agreed to provide the Russians with sensitive information about the U.K.’s Trident submarines—Britain’s strategic deterrent—to win Russia’s agreement to New START, despite earlier objections of the British government.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Moore, Gordon Rayner, and Christopher Hope, “WikiLeaks Cables: US Agrees to Tell Russia Britain's Nuclear Secrets,” *The Telegraph*, February 4, 2011, at

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In such an environment, the US should work to protect and develop its missile defense capabilities. However, the preamble of the New START treaty just ratified last year is a Trojan horse that establishes a link between strategic offensive and defensive weapons. This connection enables the Russians to threaten withdrawal from the treaty if the United States continues to expand its ballistic missile defenses.

Moreover, the Obama Administration is conducting negotiations with Moscow that may lead to curtailment of U.S. missile defenses in Europe. 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. The U.S. House of Representatives is clearly aware of this danger, as its version of the defense bill contains a provision that would prevent the Administration from spending any funds on providing the Russian Federation with sensitive U.S. missile defense technology. It is imperative that the United States refuse to accept any limits on its ballistic missile defenses. At the same time, the Administration should insist that Russia bring its massive short range nuclear arsenal on par with that of the U.S.

### **Dangers and Disparities in Short Range Nuclear Weapons**

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union deployed thousands of short-range nuclear weapons capable of being used against military and civilian targets. Russia's current military doctrine focuses on deterring the U.S. while winning regional conflicts. This doctrine allows the use of nuclear weapons "in response to large-scale aggression with conventional weapons in situations critical to the national security of the Russian Federation and its allies." It does not exclude preemptive nuclear strikes in situations critical to Russia's national security and state survival. Russia's most recent draft national security strategy imagines possible future military conflicts over energy resources and emphasizes the need to modernize its armed forces.

During the recent wars in Chechnya (1994–1996 and 1999–2004) and Georgia (2008), Russia's conventional military forces were generally unprepared and ineffective. As a result, Russia has come to view its nuclear arsenal, especially its advantage in short-range nuclear weapons, as an important component of its national power in regional conflict along its periphery. The Kremlin realizes the strategic significance of using its short range nuclear weapons to gain political leverage, especially as it pertains to NATO member states.

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/wikileaks/8304654/WikiLeaks-cables-US-agrees-to-tell-Russia-Britains-nuclear-secrets.html> (June 20, 2011).

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In the past, Moscow has threatened to deploy Iskander short-range nuclear missiles in Kaliningrad, a Russian exclave on the coast of the Baltic Sea, between the borders of Poland and Lithuania. Recently, Russia's Army General Makhmut Gareyev, President of the Academy of Military Sciences, went so far as to say that "The nuclear weapons of all major nuclear powers are ultimately designed to be used against Russia, whether we want to admit it or not." This statement, regardless of its obvious paranoia, goes a long way toward explaining Russia's insistence on its short-range nuclear weapons overhaul. For Moscow, nuclear arms are the weapon of choice in certain situations. Short-range nuclear weapons are likely to be used when Moscow faces a threat that it cannot counter with conventional weapons. Short-range nuclear weapons are thought to have de-escalation qualities by demonstrating Russia's will to resolve a conflict by using them early.

Russian nuclear policy is characterized by a perceived need to use short-range nuclear weapons in many scenarios. For example, the Russian leadership has stated that if the NATO alliance were to use precision conventional weapons against Russian troops, Russia would be forced to respond with short-range nuclear weapons. Conflicts on its borders, especially in Chechnya and the Northern Caucasus and with China (over the Far East), or conflicts involving strategically important Central Asia, might also prompt Moscow to use short-range nuclear weapons.

Russia's military exercises conclusively demonstrate that Moscow sees nuclear weapons as having both offensive and defensive applications. In September 2009, during the *Zapad* ("West") military exercise, the Russian air force reportedly practiced using short-range nuclear weapons against Poland, a NATO ally. In July 2010, Russia conducted *Vostok* ("East"), a large-scale military exercise in the Far East, and simulated a low-yield nuclear strike consistent with its policy of using short-range nuclear weapons in regional conflicts. The enemy in this exercise was China; the Russians worry about the numerical and potential technological disparity between the two countries.

Finally, the Russian military industrial base is undergoing a radical reform that will significantly reshape its personnel, technology, and organization. The goal of this reform is to reduce the Soviet-era military bureaucracy and develop small but well-equipped rapid deployment forces. Russian military spending is limited at times due to the country's poor economic performance. Especially after the recent global economic crisis, Russia found it challenging to provide the funding to maintain a large and effective conventional army. The ambitious new \$640 billion procurement package seeks to overcome these difficulties. In the meantime, Moscow will continue to regard Russia's nuclear weapons as a force equalizer against more technologically advanced or powerful nations.

Russia views its nuclear arsenal generally, and its short-range nuclear arsenal in particular, as a vital and legitimate means to counterbalance conventional superiority by NATO and a variety of plausible threats from China, as well as a powerful deterrent in regional conflicts. In tactical nuclear weapons negotiations, Moscow is all but certain to make far-reaching demands, which will result in another treaty that is lopsided in Russia's favor and leaves the U.S. exposed to threats by other countries and non-state actors.

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It is never too early in the arms control treaty process for Senators, individually and in groupings, to exercise their power to advise the President and his Administration. This is the case, in part, because the Administration can make significant concessions even in the course of organizing future negotiations. Senators should make their concerns known even absent a public statement by the President regarding the U.S. negotiating stance. Indeed, this is precisely the path that 41 Senators took on March 22, 2011, in sending President Obama a letter expressing their concerns about what may be contained in a new arms control treaty with Russia.

### **Energy Nationalism Threatens Friends and Allies**

Russia's energy nationalism should also be a source of frustration in Washington. From an American perspective, growing European dependence on energy imports from monopolistic Russian oil and gas exporters is a negative long-term geopolitical trend.

Energy issues spill over into the realm of the geopolitical balance-of-power. When energy prices skyrocketed in 2007-2008, Russia quickly evolved into an assertive anti-status quo power that challenged the U.S. and its allies on many fronts, especially in the territory of the former Soviet Union, as the 2008 Russian-Georgian Five Day War and continuous pressure on Ukraine demonstrated. There are also ongoing frictions in the Balkans and the Middle East, where Russia has opposed Western policies. This happens both because of the ample funding available to finance a more ambitious foreign policy due to energy revenues and the self-assurance which comes with general economic prosperity, as well as from Moscow's tendency to use energy as a foreign policy tool. As oil prices rise, it is safe to expect Russia's cockiness to return.

Russia's strategic goals include preventing countries around its borders from becoming pro-American as well as increasing control over the transportation of Russia hydrocarbons through the territory of its neighbors. Furthermore, the Kremlin aims to control the export of oil and gas from neighboring countries by directing their flow via the Russian pipeline system. By locating pipelines and gas storage facilities in Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, Russia connects them to Moscow with ties that bind. Sometimes, these ties also include lucrative personal economic deals, as demonstrated by the employment of Gerhard Schroeder as Chairman of the North Stream gas pipeline consortium, and similar arrangements for other prominent European politicians.

Russia is willing to use force to achieve its geo-economic goals as well. Control of energy corridors from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea and beyond was an objective of the Russian military operation against Georgia in August 2008. This has been clearly confirmed over the years by incidents involving delays in energy supplies to Azerbaijan, the Baltic states, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine, to mention a few. . Many argue that Moscow's

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international energy behavior leaves its partners insecure and makes observers doubt that Russia is a responsible player, especially when unconstrained by competition and powerful investment sources.

Despite the fall in energy demand across Europe, Russia raced to secure its natural gas market share and bypass Ukraine, the principal transit country. It is building Nord Stream and South Stream pipeline systems. Europe may diminish its dependence on Russian gas by boosting an alternative pipeline, Nabucco, but in order to do so, it requires U.S. political support for Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan to cooperate on this mega-project. However, unlike the Clinton and the George W. Bush Administrations, the Obama Administration has downgraded Eurasian energy on its priority list. Very little political support materialized, which jeopardizes the future of Nabucco. However, it is primarily the European Union members' responsibility to diversify its sources of natural gas. Unfortunately, so far, no necessary leadership from Europe has materialized in this case.

In sum, the developed world economies and energy net importers in general will benefit from greater stability, security, transparency, and the rule of law in energy-exporting states, to ensure that oil and gas remain readily available, ample, affordable, and safe. However, the Kremlin views energy as a tool of assertive foreign policy and uses it broadly, often without much concern for diplomatic niceties. If current trends prevail, this decade may see the Kremlin translating this energy monopoly into increasing foreign and security policy influence in Europe. In particular, Russia is seeking recognition of its "zone of privileged interests" in the post-Soviet space and Eastern Europe. This has already affected geopolitical issues important to the West, such as NATO expansion, ballistic missile defense, the tension around the status of Kosovo, and Moscow's increasing influence in the post-Soviet space.

### **Mounting Pressure on Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine**

In addition to energy dependence of the post-Soviet states, there are broader geopolitical concerns with Obama's foreign policy toward Russia and Eurasia. In July 2009, Vice President Joe Biden visited Ukraine and Georgia. The mere fact that he ventured there two weeks *after* President Obama's visit to Moscow indicates that the White House has downgraded its relationship with these two countries.

Biden correctly rejected Russia's claims to a 19th-century-style sphere of influence, but he fell short in addressing the national security concerns for both states. This was an ominous development. In the run up to the Ukrainian presidential elections in January 2010, the Kremlin began ratcheting up the pressure on Kyiv and encouraging separatism in Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine, especially the Crimea.

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Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the Caucasus a year ago, in July of 2010. She told the Georgians that democracy is going to provide them with security. Senior State Department officials said that South Caucasus nations “over-securitize” problems of their region. However, Moscow is not paying attention to this rhetoric. Since the 2008 Russian-Georgian war ended, it is building up its four military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russia extended its presence in the Black Sea naval base of Sevastopol (Ukraine) until 2042 and in the Armenian military base of Gyumri until 2044, with barely a peep from Washington. These steps ensure Russia’s control over strategically important Black Sea and the Caucasus region. Moscow is uneasy with the US presence in Central Asia necessary for the resupply of our troops and NATO forces in Afghanistan, and has repeatedly signaled that it wants the US to leave.

In the last two years, Russia has also been playing a dangerous game in Belarus, demanding the sale of state-owned enterprises to Russian business and slowly but surely isolating the country from its Western neighbors and the Euro-Atlantic zone. Clearly, the heavy-handed policies of President Alexander Lukashenka play into Moscow’s hands, but if Belarus is absorbed into Russia as a result of Moscow’s geopolitical game, the re-establishment of a long Polish-Russian border in Europe may become a destabilizing security factor.

To summarize, the Administration’s approach to the “reset” policy with Russia creates the impression that it effectively recognizes Russia’s zone of privileged interests in the former Soviet empire and beyond. At times, it seems that the Administration is more committed to the “reset” policy with Moscow than to U.S. friends and allies.

### **The Iran-Venezuela Gambit**

President Obama’s gambit to secure Moscow’s help on Iran remains highly uncertain. While Russia (and China) and the US voted to impose watered-down sanctions on Tehran, Moscow is already dialing back its support, denouncing US unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The Iranian agenda is clearly separate from that of Russia, the Kremlin views Iran as a geopolitical wedge against the U.S. and its allies in the Gulf region and the Middle East. Russia’s commercial interests in Iran span from billions in arms sales and the transfer of nuclear and space technology to lucrative oil and gas contracts for state-controlled Russian companies. Therefore, Russian support for Iran’s nuclear program and arms sales are not only lucrative but reflect a geopolitical agenda that is at least 20 years old. While Medvedev did not completely rule out sanctions, Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov all but rejected the imposition of stronger sanctions on Iran.

In June 2010, the United States was able to pass the fourth round of sanctions against Tehran’s regime through the United Nations Security Council, and Russia annulled the sale of the S-300

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anti-aircraft missile systems to Tehran. These were valuable accomplishments. Yet in August 2010, Russia supplied enriched uranium to Iran's civilian reactor in Bushehr, violating the spirit of the sanctions and handing the ayatollahs a victory in the face of increasing international pressure. The reactor began initial operations in May 2011. The chances of additional Russian support for UN sanctions against Iran remain minimal. The "reset" policy on Iran has run its course.

Meanwhile, Russia remains the principal geopolitical patron of the ailing Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. He recently announced that his nation will purchase dozens of Russian tanks, helicopters, and other arms for over \$2 billion, signaling growing military and strategic ties between the two countries. Russia supplied Kalashnikov assault rifle factories to arm 500,000 Venezuelans. Russian companies are getting exclusive energy deals courtesy of Chavez. This anti-American and anti-democratic alliance in which Russia remains active in the Western hemisphere bodes ill for the U.S. and its allies.

### **Conclusion: Time to Reset the "Reset"**

The Obama Administration and Congress need to recognize that the "reset" 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. Twenty years after the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism, Russia's anti-American policies should be over.

In order to reaffirm America's priorities when dealing with Russia, the U.S. should concentrate on its own national interests, as well as the values of freedom and justice. Facing these unchanging political realities and impending threats to U.S. interests, the U.S. should rethink its strategy for engaging with Russia's leadership.

The Administration needs to stop its policy of "pleasing Moscow" and instead add pressure on Russia to start a "reset" of its own policies. In particular, Congress should ensure that missile defenses are developed for the benefit of American troops and allies and prevent the Administration from granting far-reaching concessions to Russia in negotiating short-range nuclear weapons deals.

Congress has an important role to play in changing the relations with Russia in the energy field for the better, for the benefit of the Russian and American peoples and our European allies. It is time to make the Russian oil and gas sector more transparent and open to foreign investment while curbing the use of energy as a geopolitical tool, which endangers Russia's neighbors.

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Congress should send a strong signal that it cares about America’s friends in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and expand US ties with those who reach out for freedom. Finally Congress should enable the U.S. to 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, which is what the bipartisan S. 1039, the expanded “Sergey Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act” bill aims to do.

Certainly, the Russian people can benefit from its relations with America. Russia, and important emerging market, a large consumer, and a cornucopia of raw materials, should have 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.

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