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S U M M A R Y

The foundation for a genuine long-term partnership between the United States and Russia is far stronger today than at any time since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Strong U.S.-Russian relations are essential both for Russia to achieve its goals of economic modernization and integration with the West and for the United States to achieve many of its key foreign and security goals. The heightened urgency after 9/11 of the dangers of terrorists possibly acquiring weapons of mass destruction makes cooperation with Russia more important than ever. Presidents Bush and Putin must take advantage of the critical opportunity at their upcoming meeting in Russia to reach key agreements, remove major irritants in U.S.-Russian relations, and initiate a new partnership less burdened by Cold War legacies. ■

Summit with Substance: Creating Payoffs in an Unequal Partnership

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U.S. president George W. Bush and Russian president Vladimir Putin have an important opportunity at their upcoming meeting to reach key agreements, remove major irritants in U.S.-Russian relations, and initiate a genuine partnership less burdened by Cold War legacies. In Europe last summer and in the United States last November, the two leaders established personal chemistry and trust—but the meetings lacked substance. Although Putin's leadership position will not be made or broken on his foreign policies, this time it will be important for his pro-Western orientation to produce a concrete payoff for Russia. As for President Bush, if the summit fails to produce results, then his vaunted Russia policy will be seen to be drifting. Thus both men require real outcomes such as a signed, legally binding nuclear arms reduction agreement and a new institutional relationship with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Perhaps just as important, however, Putin and Bush each must explain to his own country why this partnership is important and what are its key elements.

It is easy to lose sight of how much better U.S.-Russian relations are today, with the news in recent months full of the U.S. withdrawal

from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, trade disputes over steel and chicken, controversy over the U.S. nuclear posture review, and even Russian anger at the Winter Olympics. The very fact, however, that the most contentious issue this spring has been a trade war—not a possible nuclear or even cold war—underlines what a qualitatively different relationship this is.

The United States and Russia are far from being allies. There is still a deep lack of trust, and this will require time and effort to overcome. The two countries can best be described as partners—albeit very unequal ones—that share considerable interests and can help advance each other's national interests. Partners, even allies, do not agree on everything, but the foundation for a genuine partnership is far stronger today than when the Soviet Union collapsed. Early efforts to promote a premature "strategic partnership" resulted in mutual disappointment. But now both sides have more realistic expectations about their opportunities and limits.

September 11 and Fundamental Change in U.S.-Russian Relations

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, led to Putin's key strategic choice to uncondi-



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tionally support the United States and the international coalition in Afghanistan (see box opposite). Russian intelligence sharing, arms supplies to the Northern Alliance, and acquiescence to the U.S. use of military bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have contributed significantly to the success of military operations in Afghanistan. The Russians have also accepted that U.S. military trainers will work to strengthen the capacity of the Georgian armed forces to restore order in the Pankisi Gorge on the Russian border.

Before 9/11, the United States could not have imagined that Russia would accept such a U.S. military presence in Central Asia and the Caucasus, regions the Russians have jealously regarded as within their sphere of influence. The new environment after 9/11 has also contributed to greater understanding on highly contentious issues of the 1990s like NATO expansion and missile defense. The Russian government may not agree with the U.S. decision to abandon the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty or expand NATO, but Putin has acknowledged that these developments do not directly threaten Russian security. Russian energies are now more constructively focused on reaching an arms reduction agreement with the United States and developing a new institutional framework for NATO–Russia cooperation.

Collectively, these developments suggest a profound change in Russian policy that has deep structural roots predating 9/11. More than ten years after the end of the Cold War, Russians view the West—both Europe and the United States—not only as less of a threat but increasingly as an essential partner in addressing both economic modernization needs and security issues. Russians may not be comfortable with the deep power asymmetry of the U.S.–Russian relationship, but Putin and many Russians have reconciled themselves to Russia's position in the world and no longer harbor superpower illusions. Putin's outlook for Russia can be likened to that of Deng Xiaoping, who more than 20 years ago concluded that long-term economic recovery was essential for restoring Chinese international influence as well as bringing prosperity to the Chinese people.

Russian critics of their country's post-9/11 foreign policies assert that Putin has made major concessions to the United States and received little in return. His pro-Western foreign policy has been compared with that of former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, who was similarly criticized for giving a lot and getting little back. What the Russians have so far “received” in the war in Afghanistan is the overthrow of the Taliban government, destruction of al Qaeda bases, and at least a temporary stabilization of the country. U.S. and Russian interests are closely aligned in Afghanistan. Because Putin's primary goal is economic modernization, he is willing to make other concessions that one retired Russian general described as “geopolitical suicide.” What Putin needs to receive are acceptance of Russia as an important member of the West and more support for his economic goals. That is why, for example, U.S. support for Russia's rapid accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a new relationship between Russia and NATO are so important. Unlike Boris Yeltsin, who could be satisfied with symbolic gestures such as Russia's inclusion in some Group of Eight discussions, Putin's more businesslike approach calls for far more substantive ties between Russia and the West that advance Russian interests, not just Western ones.

A closer U.S.–Russian relationship would not rest on Putin alone. Outside Russia, many believe that he has crawled out on a shaky limb in taking such a pro–United States stance. Though he may be far in front of the foreign and security policy establishment, his policies find strong support among the Russian people. Much of the Russian foreign policy elite struggles to shed the vestiges of loss of the Cold War and superpower status, and this contributes to their more negative views of the United States. Survey research during the past ten years, however, has consistently indicated that a majority of Russians has a different view (see figure page 5). Polling from last fall done by the Foundation for Public Opinion indicates that a full 69 percent of Russians support closer ties with the United States, and that 65 percent support the United States and Russia becoming allies. We should take note, however, that in

March 2002, Russian positive attitudes toward the United States dipped to their lowest level since the Kosovo war in spring of 1999.

On the U.S. side, the basis for a new U.S.–Russian partnership rests on a reconfiguration of U.S. foreign and security policy goals, which include (1) successfully conducting the war on international terrorism, (2) a new urgency to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, (3) peacefully managing the rise of China as a great power, and (4) achieving a stable global energy supply. This is obviously not an exhaustive list, but no one would seriously question the weight of these items or that they can be pursued effectively only with Russian cooperation. In fact, no country except Russia could possibly bring as much to the table on these four goals. Russia—uniquely endowed with geography and natural resources—can potentially be extraordinarily important in helping the United States realize these key goals.

Pillars of the New Partnership Nuclear Security and Nonproliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

Nuclear security remains vitally important in U.S.–Russian relations. Though the danger of U.S.–Russian nuclear conflict has virtually disappeared, the new Bush doctrine highlighting the dangers of terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction accentuates the importance of U.S.–Russian cooperation.

It is heartening that the Bush administration now recognizes the importance of signing a treaty to reduce strategic arsenals by about two-thirds over ten years. Signing this treaty will be the centerpiece of the May summit, and failure to do so would be a significant setback. Understandably, because Russian strategists seek a predictable nuclear arms relationship, the Bush administration's initial approach of unilateral reductions secured only by a handshake did not sit well.

The agreement on nuclear weapons reductions should be accompanied by a statement of principles on the role of defenses in the bilateral nuclear relationship. This statement should clarify that any system the United States devel-

ops will not threaten the Russian deterrent (something Washington has asserted all along), and the United States should provide adequate transparency measures for the Russians on this. More broadly on cooperation, Washington should push hard to implement the shared early warning agreement reached with Moscow in June 2000. That agreement could sharply reduce the danger of an inadvertent Russian strike and provides a foundation for broader nuclear cooperation. Cooperation on missile defenses, especially theater defenses, should be encouraged not only for its value in confidence building, but also to employ the Russian military-industrial complex in producing components and technologies. Such cooperation would provide incentives for some of the strongest critics of Putin's accommodating policies toward the United States to mute their opposition.

PUTIN'S ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES ON AND AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

SEPTEMBER 11 Putin reacts to the terrorist attacks on the United States, saying, "We are with you."

SEPTEMBER 24 Putin addresses the Russian people, pledges support for the war on terrorism, and offers the United States intelligence information, access to Russian airspace for humanitarian flights, and acquiescence to a U.S. military presence in Central Asia.

OCTOBER 3 Putin meets with NATO secretary-general Lord George Robertson in Brussels and announces Russia's readiness to accept a profoundly new, cooperative relationship with NATO.

DECEMBER 13 Putin reacts calmly to the U.S. announcement of withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, expressing his commitment to maintaining the current level of U.S.–Russian relations.

MARCH 1 Putin meets with the president of Georgia and announces Russia's support for the deployment of U.S. military officers to the region of the Pankisi Gorge.

Above all, particularly in light of 9/11, the United States should substantially increase support for cooperative efforts to secure the vast Russian arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and fissile materials. The bipartisan Baker-Cutler report (see Related Resources, back page) released in January 2001 recommended a more than threefold increase in annual funding for

basis for a stable state. If cooperation with Russia falters, Afghanistan is almost certain to collapse back into a bloody failed state with warring factions variously supported by the United States, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and others. Failure to maintain a common understanding on the future of Afghanistan will set a poor precedent for future theaters of action.

Today, when terrorists' potential to acquire weapons of mass destruction is the top U.S. security concern, deep cooperation with Moscow is essential.

these threat-reduction programs to \$3 billion. The former Russian biological weapons program should also receive greater attention, both to prevent leakage of dangerous material and to encourage cooperation on developing vaccines in areas where Russian research is more advanced. Developing debt swaps for the approximately \$3 billion of Soviet-era Russian debt to the United States could help to finance new programs, including controlling the acute proliferation and environmental threats presented by decommissioned Russian nuclear submarines.

The War on Terrorism

Many U.S. efforts to combat terrorism will be in states where Russia has considerable legitimate interests, including those directly on its borders. The United States should be as open as possible with Russia about its plans. Because Washington now attaches a higher urgency to terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, it should out of self-interest be ready to offer greater incentives to enlist Moscow's support on issues of sharp disagreement such as Iran and Iraq.

First, however, the United States needs to work closely with Russia in Afghanistan to successfully conclude military operations and to transform the fragile political situation into the

Similarly, the U.S.–Russian partnership will fail if both are not able to agree on how to deal with Iraq and Iran. Although Moscow wants its economic interests in existing Iraqi debt and future oil development to be addressed in the event of a regime change, it understands that the Bush administration is deadly serious about Iraq. This has contributed to Russian support for a new “smart sanctions” regime in U.N. Security Council discussions in early 2002. Moscow would also likely support robust inspections in lieu of a military attack.

There is no love lost between Saddam Hussein and Russia, but there is little incentive for Moscow to support intensive inspections or military action if the United States acts unilaterally in disregard of the United Nations and without at least the moral support of its European allies. Saddam, however, has been effectively buying Russian support with future oil contracts and lucrative Food for Oil contracts. It is very much in the U.S. interest that Russia deliver to Saddam a clear message that Moscow will no longer support Iraqi interests at the United Nations, but Washington must raise their incentives to do so.

Reaching an understanding with Moscow on policy toward Iran may prove more complicated. Russia is inclined to agree with the United

States that Iraq is a rogue state, but that is not the case with Iran. For Moscow, Iran has been an important geopolitical partner in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. U.S. concern over the Russian–Iranian relationship in recent years has been concentrated on the transfer of nuclear and ballistic missile technologies and more recently on conventional arms sales. The Russians deny that they are transferring missile technology and assert that civilian nuclear cooperation in the construction of the Bushehr reactor is in accord with all of the requirements of the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime.

The United States needs to prioritize what is most objectionable in the Russian–Iranian relationship and to provide greater incentives for Moscow to curtail the activities it deems most objectionable. Missile cooperation, especially on long-range cruise missiles, does present a potential threat to Israel and the United States, but Washington should not object to conventional arms transfers that do not threaten its naval presence in the Persian Gulf.

On Iran's nuclear program and other programs for weapons of mass destruction, it would be helpful if the United States enlisted the support of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom to share intelligence with Russia and speak to Moscow with one voice. Russian arms exporters and the Ministry of Atomic Energy—entities that would lose desperately needed income with the curtailed sales to Iran of missile and nuclear technologies—could be partially compensated by business elsewhere, such as components for missile defense and next-generation, proliferation-resistant nuclear reactors.

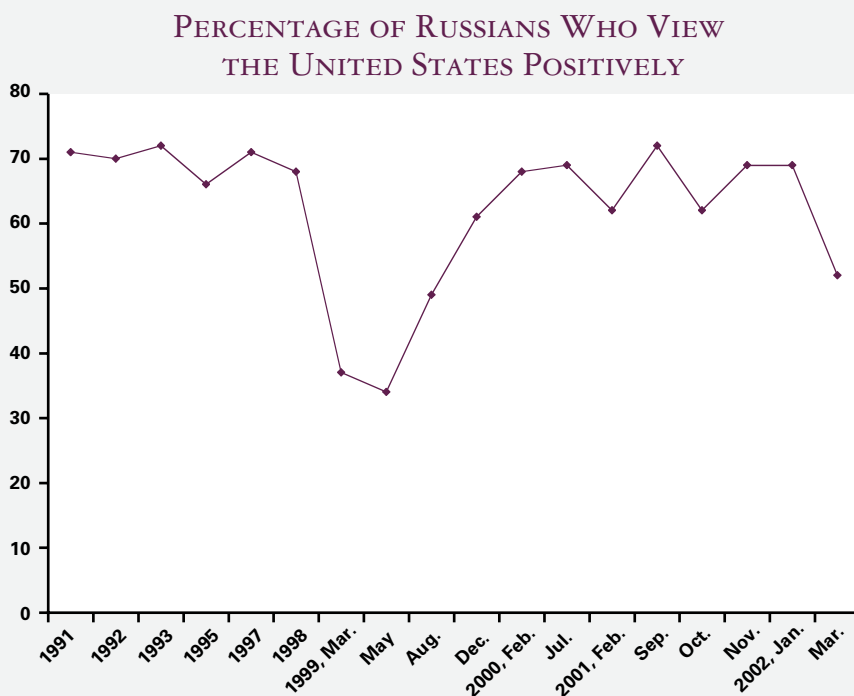
It would be an exaggeration to call the begrudging Russian acquiescence to the U.S. military presence in Central Asia and now Georgia an indication of real partnership, but it can offer creative opportunities for cooperation. Washington broadly shares concern with Moscow about terrorism, religious extremism, and drug trafficking that could sharply destabilize the fragile states in the region. In Central Asia, the United States should work together with the Russian 201st division stationed in Tajikistan, along with local forces, in efforts to counter the drug trade as well as to train local

forces in counterterrorist activities. If the booming heroin trade in Afghanistan and Central Asia is not sharply curtailed, it will continue to fund terrorists and warlords, who in turn will undermine these states.

Russia appreciates that state failure in Central Asia is not in its interests, but it also worries that the United States seeks a permanent military presence and will use it to increase its influence over the region's energy resources. Washington will need to reassure Moscow that its commercial interests will be recognized despite increased U.S. influence in the region. Washington also needs to remember that notwithstanding the power asymmetry, Russia maintains considerable influence in this part of the world that can be used for good or ill. Pretending that U.S. and Russian interests fully coincide or acting as though Russia is too weak to matter would be costly mistakes.

Russian Integration into Western Institutions

Encouraging Russia's deeper integration with three key Western security and economic organ-



Source: VTsIOM (All-Russian Center on Research of Public Opinion), Press Release 8, April 3, 2002 (www.wciom.ru)

izations—NATO, the WTO, and the European Union (EU)—is an essential component of a durable U.S.–Russian partnership. Russia’s pro-Western orientation will only become sustainable through much more intensive interactions with these multilateral institutions. In turn, deeper integration will require that Russia continue to reform the domestic institutions that underpin a market democracy.

Russia’s demand for a new institutional relationship with NATO is a very positive development. Since last fall, the Putin government has quieted its opposition to expansion and focused on replacing NATO’s Permanent Joint Council with a new NATO–Russia council that has been loosely termed “NATO at 20.” Naturally enough, Moscow wants to be involved in discussions on many, but not necessarily all, aspects of NATO policy before rather than after decisions are made by full members of the alliance. It makes sense, for example, to include Russia on such issues as nonproliferation, terrorism, and peacekeeping where its constructive involvement would be essential for success. Fears about such an arrangement amounting to a virtual Russian veto power over NATO’s actions are overblown.

But it will be essential for NATO to work rapidly with Russia to develop a plan so that a new institutional relationship does not become an empty shell like the Permanent Joint Council. NATO should take the initiative to work with Russian military officers to promote Russian military reform. NATO should also be more open to purchases of Russian arms, especially for new member states whose militaries are equipped with aging Soviet hardware. A long-standing Russian objection to NATO expansion has been the loss of arms markets in former Warsaw Pact countries.

Russia’s accession to the WTO will be both a symbolic and substantive step in developing a market economy integrated into the global trading system. WTO membership will give Russia international recourse if other member states raise tariffs or erect other restrictions on Russian exports, but it will not be a panacea for Russia’s most serious economic deficiencies in fighting corruption, strength-

ening the rule of law, and creating a real banking system. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative should continue to work closely with the Putin government to facilitate Russian entry.

In the long term, the EU will be the most important Western institution for Russia, but obviously the one least directly influenced by U.S. policy. Europe is and will continue to be Russia’s largest trading partner, and its dependence on Russian energy will also grow in the coming years. The EU’s further expansion will bring Russia even closer geographically to Europe, which will further increase Europe’s interest in Russia’s stability and reform progress. Europe is a powerful magnet for Russia, and Brussels can apply steady pressure on Moscow to strive for European norms of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the like.

Closer Russian–European ties are in U.S. interests precisely because Brussels may hold more leverage than Washington over Russia’s domestic economic and political development. Although Washington may increasingly see Russian and European positions aligned against the United States on a variety of international security, economic, and political issues—from missile defense to U.S. steel tariffs to the Kyoto Protocol—Putin is no longer following a Sovietlike strategy of using closer relations with Europe to destabilize the transatlantic alliance. The transatlantic relationship could only be seriously weakened by a series of U.S. foreign policy blunders perceived by Europe as egregious unilateralism—certainly not by Moscow’s troublemaking.

Society-to-Society Engagement

Unlike during the Cold War, when state-to-state relations defined U.S.–Russian relations, in the new era society-to-society ties have a growing importance. Economic ties between U.S. and Russian enterprises are expanding, and this will accelerate as Russia makes progress in developing its legal and financial infrastructure. Perhaps the most significant news around last November’s summit was not a state decision at all but Exxon Mobil Corporation’s decision to increase its investment in Sakhalin energy development

by \$4 billion, the largest commitment of foreign direct investment in Russia to date.

Commercial partnerships in the energy field will become more significant in U.S.–Russian relations. But the market, rather than government intervention, should lead this process. However, the U.S. government should allocate more funding for collaborative research with Russian scientists on alternative energies. Two

address Russia's pressing challenges. The first should focus on the needs of one of Russia's most socially and economically depressed regions, the Russian Far East. Because of a shared border with Alaska, increased aid there would serve U.S. interests, and it would resonate with Russians because of their thinly veiled concern about the growing power of China. Second, the United States should undertake a major ini-

Encouraging Russia's deeper integration with NATO, the WTO, and the EU is an essential component of a durable U.S.–Russian partnership.

U.S. actions that would help smooth economic ties would be for Congress to finally repeal the deeply anachronistic Jackson-Vanik Amendment and for the U.S. Commerce Department to declare that Russia is a market economy.

Hundreds of U.S. nongovernmental organizations have worked with their Russian counterparts in a wide variety of fields from nuclear safety to environmental protection to human rights. Because Russian civil society has felt increasingly vulnerable since Putin came to power, Bush should strongly and publicly state during the summit that economic modernization is not the only ticket for Russia's deep integration with the West. Economic progress must be accompanied by the continuing development of an open, democratic civil society; otherwise, Russia will never be the West's full partner. Washington cannot convey the message that it is willing to tolerate a Faustian bargain trading off Moscow's support for the war on terrorism and on security issues in exchange for its turning a blind eye to Russia's creeping authoritarianism and human rights violations in Chechnya.

To confirm for the Russian people that the United States really cares about the future of Russia and not simply a temporary and instrumental partnership, Bush could bring four initiatives to the May summit that would help

tiative on health care, given the true crisis in health in Russia and its grim implications for the future. Third, Washington should institute a generous program to allow thousands of Russian college students to enroll in U.S. institutions. These will be investments not only in higher learning but also in relationships between new generations of Russians and Americans. Fourth, Washington should adapt a more friendly visa regime that will allow Russians to travel more easily to the United States.

Conclusion

A markedly improved relationship with Russia may be one of the most significant benefits for the United States resulting from the shock to the international system of 9/11. Today, when the potential for terrorists to acquire weapons of mass destruction capabilities is the number one U.S. security priority, deep cooperation with Moscow is essential for success. In the long term, a robust U.S.–Russian partnership will be essential for Russia's economic development and its integration into the West. The events of 9/11 created unique circumstances to make possible rapid progress on these goals, and the Bush administration should meet the challenge of strengthening the U.S. partnership with Russia that is so clearly in the U.S. interest and so close to its grasp. ■

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