CARNEGIE COUNCIL *for Ethics in International Affairs*

The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations in the 21st Century

Public Affairs

Angela Stent, **Joanne J. Myers**

Transcript
Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: Good morning. I'm Joanne Myers, director of Public Affairs programs, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to our members and guests.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our speaker, Angela Stent, whose reputation as a leading Russian expert precedes her. Today she will be discussing her recently published book, entitled *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russia Relations in the 21st Century*.

It's no secret that since the collapse of the Soviet Union almost 25 years ago, the post-Soviet U.S.-Russia relationship has been marked by periodic cycles of cooperation, followed by a mutual drifting apart. We've been hearing a lot lately about Sochi, Snowden, Syria, and the ongoing political crisis in Ukraine. Even so, these are only but a few of the most recent irritants that are troubling the current relationship between the Obama and Putin administrations.

The questions which naturally follow are:

- Why has it been so difficult to develop a productive and more predictable post-Cold War U.S.-Russia partnership?
- What's preventing this relationship from moving forward?
- And can this frosty relationship ever begin to thaw?

These are just a few of the salient questions that come to mind. While the answers are complex, in *The Limits of Partnership*, our speaker addresses them in a most thoughtful, lucid, and compelling way.

Dr. Stent is known for her work as both a scholar and a practitioner. Currently she is the director of Georgetown University's Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies. Having served as an advisor on Russia under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, she earned praise for her astute analysis and insights about this complex relationship. She also served as a national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia at the National Intelligence Council.

But Angela's familiarity with Russia does not stop here. She also taught a course on U.S.-Russia

relations at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. This on-the-ground experience provided contact with the next generation of educated and upwardly mobile young Russians, who no doubt contributed to her perceptions of new attitudes and thinking about the U.S.-Russia partnership.

In addition, for the last decade, she has participated in the Valdai International Discussion Club, a forum that brings together foreign Russian experts with top Russian officials, politicians, journalists, and academics to debate Russia and its role in the world. This gathering served as an added opportunity for her to hone her perceptions of key Russian policymakers and opinion leaders, including President Putin.

Because of Russia's nuclear weapons arsenal, its strategic location bordering Europe and Asia, and its ability to thwart American interests, this partnership will continue to be an important one. To help us understand how this administration and those in the future might be able to salvage this relationship and overcome the legacy of suspicion and skepticism, please join me in welcoming a person who just may have the key that will unlock the riddle that has been for so long wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma—that is, Russia today.

Remarks

ANGELA STENT: Thank you. Thank you very much, Joanne, for that generous introduction.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'm delighted to be here. I am a great admirer of this institution. I read its publications and I think you're doing great work.

Vladimir Putin had quite a year in 2013. He was named the most powerful man in the world by *Forbes* magazine. He was named the International Person of the Year by *The Times* of London, and the third most admired person in the world, after Bill Gates and Barack Obama. That's pretty good.

Then I was going to mention the trifecta of Snowden, Syria, and Sochi, but Joanne beat me to it. But I'll mention them again. They, I think, represent three facets of the relationship and why it has been so difficult to craft a productive relationship with Russia.

Snowden obviously represents, really, the nadir of the bilateral U.S.-Russia relationship since President Putin came to power. Even though the White House implored the Kremlin not to grant Snowden political asylum in Russia, it did. This has been a major cause of a breach, really, in the relationship. So the bilateral relationship at the moment is really under strain.

Then came Syria. That, of course, is an example of the multilateral issue, where we are working with the Russians. We're cooperating with them. They took the initiative because of our own, I would say, dithering, and introduced the process by which we're disarming Syria of its chemical weapons. And we're working quite well with them.

Sochi again represents this mixed, complicated relationship. Our athletes are going to compete, as they should. We'll be competing with Russian athletes. We are working with the Russians on counterterrorism. We have been, really, since 9/11 and before. But it's difficult to cooperate with them on some of these issues at Sochi now, because they think it's very important for them to protect some of the information that they don't want to share with us. So we work with them on these issues, but it's complicated.

Now, what you also see, at least in the last six months, is a visible wariness in the United States of Russia. Last August, after the White House announced that it had canceled the summit between

Presidents Obama and Putin, President Obama called for a pause in U.S.-Russia relations, he said, to reassess where Russia is going and what our interests are. Then he said of Putin, obviously again as a result of what happened with Snowden, "He's got that kind of slouch, looking like a bored kid in the back of the classroom."

Needless to say, the Kremlin took some offense at what President Obama had said, and it was left to the foreign minister, Lavrov, to say, "We are mature adults." I would say—and we could come back to that—probably the most productive personal relationship in the U.S.-Russia relationship now is between Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov.

Anyway, as you know, no high U.S. official is going to attend the opening ceremony of the Sochi Olympics. Neither are any high-level European officials that I know of. There are two reasons for that. One of them is granting political asylum to Edward Snowden. The other one, of course, is Russia's legislation penalizing the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, trangender] community.

But Secretary Kerry and Secretary Lavrov are meeting constantly, particularly on the Syria issue and on the Iran issue. But relations have definitely soured, and I would say it's really since 2010. The height of that relationship—and I have a photo of it in my book—was when President Medvedev —remember him?—visited the United States and President Obama took him to his favorite eatery, Ray's Hell Burger, a wonderful gourmet hamburger joint in Arlington, Virginia, which has now closed.

So this is a difficult and a complex relationship.

But we are far away, of course, from the days of the Cold War and the threat of a nuclear armageddon. I wrote my last book [*Russia and Germany Reborn*] on the end of the Cold War and the unification of Germany. We know that Russia today is not the Soviet Union. Relations with Russia remain critical for U.S. foreign policy, and the two countries have to engage each other. The question is, how? That's what we're always striving to find.

That's why I wrote the book. I was trained as a Sovietologist. Looking around the room, I don't think I have to explain to this audience what a Sovietologist is. Sometimes when you have millennials in the room, they're not quite sure what that was. I'm a recovering Sovietologist, which is what I say.

My interest in Russia, of course, intensified and I think was sharpened when I did these two stints in the U.S. government. I was very lucky that in both times, I was not a political appointee, so I was able, as an expert, particularly to bridge the Clinton and Bush administrations in the Office of Policy Planning in the State Department. That has given me insights about what it's like to work with administrations of both parties.

My academic work has really also made me appreciate how much the U.S.-Russia relationship has been on a rollercoaster since the collapse of the Soviet Union, since Christmas Day, 1991, when Mikhail Gorbachev announced the end of the Soviet Union. It really has gone through these cycles of booms and busts.

I have counted four resets since 1991. I go into all four of them in my book. Those resets were all attempts to improve the relationship, to redesign it, to think about a better way of handling things.

The book asks, when looking at these resets, why it's so challenging to do this and how it might evolve in the future. For the past 10 years—and Joanne already mentioned it—I have been a member of the Valdai Discussion Club. We've met every year. We've had dinner with President Putin. We had dinner with him in Sochi, by the way, in the wonderful presidential dacha, the mansion

on the Black Sea coast, overlooking the mountains and the palm trees simultaneously. We have had dinner with him in the Kremlin, in his house in Moscow, and in a wonderful restaurant—that was a couple of years ago—called Le Cheval Blanc, The White Horse, where they actually train the horses for the Russian leadership. Of course, as you know, Mr. Putin likes to ride horses.

The important thing about Valdai, I will just say, is that you listen to the messages, what we hear from the president and some of the other top Russian officials, and what they would like us, as foreign Russian experts, to go away with. I should say, we went twice to Sochi. The first time was just after Russia had gotten the Olympic Games. In 2010, it was a construction site—a horrendous traffic jam. I gather that's not true anymore.

Some people in this country argue that since the Soviet collapse, Russia doesn't loom as large in American priorities as it did when it was the Soviet Union. That's true, but it remains important, again for the reasons that Joanne already mentioned, and that's its location—obviously in the world's heartland, really, astride two continents—the fact that it is the other nuclear superpower, and the third reason is its permanent seat and veto on the United Nations Security Council. Therefore, it can enable the United States either to pursue its interests or it can thwart them; it can block them.

So it's very important for us to work with Russia because of these three important factors, and also because it is a global and a regional player.

Let me look briefly at the four resets.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, no one was prepared for this. Very few people actually anticipated it. What they saw was a chaotic situation. But I give the George H. W. Bush administration and also General Scowcroft, the national security advisor, and others with him very high marks for focusing on the most important thing, which was ensuring that Russia became the only nuclear succession state in the post-Soviet space and doing everything it could, in conjunction with senators Nunn and Lugar—the Nunn-Lugar act—to make sure that nuclear weapons and materials were secured and to try and ensure that all of these nuclear scientists in these closed cities, who were facing unemployment, did not sell their services to the highest bidder in what used to be called a rogue state or a terrorist nongovernment actor. [*Editor's note: Check out David Speedie's 2012 interview with Senator Lugar on nuclear weapons reduction*.] And I give them very high marks for that.

They were less focused on the domestic evolution in Russia, and one can argue that they should have given a larger aid packet to Russia. That's something we can talk about. But they performed a very, very important service. They are quite fondly remembered in Russia by the officials who were around at the time because of what Russia feels was a very respectful way of dealing with Russia.

But, of course, George H. W. Bush was only in power for a year after the Soviet Union collapse. Then came the Clinton administration. Bill Clinton's reset was much more wide-ranging. It was more interventionist. It was very focused on what was happening inside Russia. You had economic assistance. You had support for what was known as shock therapy, the rapid transition, it was thought, to a market economy. It also involved getting Russian support for NATO's involvement in the wars in the Balkans, in Bosnia, and in Kosovo. Of course, the Kosovo War led to a near-rupture in U.S.-Russia relations.

There was also the personal Bill-and-Boris relationship. If you read the book, you'll see that the personal relations between the presidents are disproportionately important in the U.S.-Russia relationship, because we don't have that many stakeholders in the relationship. We don't have that many groups around the country that have a stake in the relationship with Russia or vice versa. So

these top leaders—their relations become disproportionately important.

It's very interesting if you look at that Bill-and-Boris relationship. President Clinton says in his memoirs that he dealt with President Yeltsin, or he tried to understand him, as he understood his own alcoholic stepfather. He writes quite a lot about that in his own memoirs. Yeltsin, who also writes about Clinton, says that he regarded him as his younger brother. For a while, they had quite a close and personal relationship.

But in the end, Russia felt let down by the Americans, particularly because in the Kosovo War they didn't want to support American military action against Serbia. I'll just read you one excerpt about how that reset basically ended. This is the last time they saw each other when Yeltsin was president. They saw each other afterwards. It was an OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] summit in Istanbul. President Clinton had made a speech where, on the one hand, he praised Yeltsin for what he had done for Russia, but he criticized Russia for its conduct in Chechnya in the North Caucasus. He said that Russia should reconsider what it was doing in Chechnya.

I'll just read you this excerpt:

> "Some minutes into the speech, Yeltsin demonstratively threw off his earphones and almost staged a walk-out. When the two men met alone, Clinton put his feet up on the table. 'Is your leg hurting you?' asked Yeltsin. Shortly thereafter, following a tirade from Yeltsin, Clinton left the room. Once they were the younger and older brothers. Now they appeared to be antagonists. The Bill and Boris show was over."

So it didn't end well in 1999, although subsequently ex-president Clinton did visit ex-president Yeltsin, and I think the relationship improved.

The third reset was initiated not by the United States, but by Russia. It was Vladimir Putin's initiative. He called President Bush after the 9/11 attacks. He offered help to the United States in terms of establishing military bases in Central Asia for the conduct of the war in Afghanistan. Russia supported the United States in those early months of the war in Afghanistan, providing information, because, after all, Russia knew much more about Afghanistan in 2001 than the United States did, having been bogged down in a war—not as long as we've been bogged down there, but anyway.

The leaders seem to have established quite a good personal relationship. You all know the phrase. When they first met in Slovenia a few months before 9/11, President Bush, when asked about President Putin, said, "I got a sense of the man. I looked into his eyes and I got a sense of his soul."

If you read President Bush's memoirs, he then says later on he maybe re-evaluated it. But at the time, they did establish a good relationship.

What was the problem? The problem was, I think, that President Putin believed that by supporting the United States in Afghanistan, the United States would treat Russia—and I'm now quoting from a Russian colleague who said this; it's not my phrase—he said what Putin wanted was an equal partnership of unequals. In other words, Russia wanted to gain the respect that it thought it hadn't had in the 1990s from the United States, to be treated as an equal, and that essentially the United States would recognize that Russia had special interests in its own neighborhood.

I will come back to that.

Then what happened? Well, you have the Iraq War; the color revolutions in Russia's backyard; you

had NATO enlargement, not only to Central Europe, but then ultimately to the Baltic states; and then you had the Bush administration pushing Ukraine and Georgia to get at least a membership action plan to join NATO. Of course, it ended in the Russo-Georgian War in August of 2008. That really caused the relationship to spiral downwards.

I'll read you just a brief excerpt. This is August 2008. It's the day after the war has broken out. It's the Beijing Olympics, and President Bush has gone to them.

> "At the opening ceremony for the Beijing Olympics, Bush was seated in the same row as Putin. Despite the heightened tensions as a result of the war, they asked the person who was seated between them to change seats so that they could have a conversation."

Needless to say, that person did change seats.

> ""Putin called Saakashvili"—that is, the Georgian president—"a war criminal. Bush told Putin, 'I've been warning you Saakashvili is hot-blooded.' 'I'm hot-blooded too,' Putin retorted. Bush stared back at him. 'No Vladimir,' he said. 'You're cold-blooded.'"

So that was how that relationship ended, although again Putin still sometimes says positive things about President Bush, and I know when President Bush recently had a medical problem, Putin sent him apparently a very warm note.

Anyway, that too was a complicated relationship.

So that was the third reset, initiated by Putin, that also then ended in August of 2008.

The fourth reset is the Obama reset. It got off to a good start, even though at the beginning there were hints of problems to come. This is the last excerpt I'm going to read you. It was kind of prophetic. This was now in 2009, when Secretary Hillary Clinton had her first official meeting with Foreign Minister Lavrov.

> "When Secretary of State Hillary Clinton held her first meeting with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Geneva in March 2009, she handed her Russian counterpart a small gift box. With reporters eagerly looking on, Lavrov unwrapped the gift and found inside a red button emblazed with the English word 'Reset' and the Russian word '*Peregruzka*.' Lavrov took one look at the button and, with a surprised look on his face, exclaimed, 'You've got it wrong.' He had been given a button with the Russian word for 'overload.' The Russian word for 'reset' was '*perezagruzka*,' not '*peregruzka*.'"

I have to add that two letters were wrong—you'd think we would have enough linguists in our own government who would have known that.

> "Clinton brushed aside this embarrassing mistranslation with a joke, and they both bantered about the fact that the agenda was, indeed, overloaded. The Russian newspaper *Kommersant*'s headline the next day read 'Sergei Lavrov and Hillary Clinton push the wrong button.'"

One can have fun with all of the verbal—overload/reset. What does it mean? Anyway, that was how it started.

This reset, I would say, was based on more limited expectations. President Obama never used the kind of soaring rhetoric about Russia that either Clinton or Bush at different times used. He has always been very careful about how he has talked about Russia and how he has talked about—well, at least President Putin.

That reset achieved quite solid results in the first Obama term. We had the New START treaty limiting nuclear weapons, a very important treaty, cooperation in Afghanistan, which goes on until today —particularly at times when our relationship with Pakistan was very troubled and we couldn't use those transmit routes, we've been working with the Russians on the northern distribution network —cooperation on Iran. Russia finally, when presented with evidence of what Iran was doing in 2010, then agreed to support much tougher sanctions in the United Nations. Russia has finally joined the World Trade Organization. I think it took at least 18 years to negotiate that, but it did.

But I would argue that that reset was successful—and again we come back to the personal relations —largely because it was driven by two younger post-Cold War, more or less, presidents, President Obama and President Dmitry Medvedev. And, of course, there was this interesting arrangement between 2008 and 2012, the so-called tandem, when Mr. Medvedev was in the Kremlin, Mr. Putin was the prime minister. It was difficult for the U.S. administration sometimes to figure out how this worked. I do go into that in the book.

Medvedev did come to the United States. As I said, he dined on hamburgers. He went to Silicon Valley. He opened his first Twitter account. It really seemed as if these two leaders understood each other. Even though it was very tough negotiating, for instance, the New START agreement, they were able to drive this forward.

This all happened even while, you may remember, we expelled 10 so-called sleeper spies, just after Mr. Medvedev had come here. But it really wasn't a major problem for the relationship. We got over all of that.

But once Mr. Putin announced in September of 2011 that he was going to return to the Kremlin and that Mr. Medvedev was now going to become prime minister—and, of course, Russians, who are great chess players, used the word the "castling" move for that—then it became more difficult. You had a series of demonstrations in Russia in December of 2011 against what the protesters thought were falsified parliamentary elections, and Putin specifically said that the United States was responsible for supporting these people and that Hillary Clinton personally had paid people to go into the Bolotnaya, into the square, where they were demonstrating.

The Russian blogosphere is lots of fun to read. It's very open. You can imagine some of the things that people wrote after that—"Where's my money from Hillary Clinton?"

Each side has its narrative about what happened in those four resets, and they still drive the bilateral relationship. We mustn't forget that the legacy of the 1990s still casts a shadow over the U.S.-Russia relationship, because we see that time, in general—not all Americans, but many—as a time of greater pluralism in Russia, freedom of expression, and decentralization of power. Most Russians—not all of them, but many Russians—see it as a time of weakness, humility, poverty, and chaos. Putin has repeatedly said that he saved Russia from collapse when he became president in the year 2000.

So we live both with the Cold War legacy, which still causes mistrust, and with the legacy of the 1990s.

My book also goes into the question of how we make Russia policy. In this country we like to highlight the differences between Democrats and Republicans. But in researching this book and having worked in both administrations, talking to American officials from all administrations since 1991, it's clear that there has been a great deal of continuity in the U.S.-Russia relationship, irrespective of who is in the White House. It's really easy to understand that, because the presidential inbox, as someone who served on the National Security Council pointed out to me, hasn't really changed that much in the last 22 years.

I focus on six sets of issues in this book. This shows you again the continuity in these issues.

- The first one is dealing with the Cold War nuclear legacy and with missile defense issues. That has been on the table since the beginning, since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The attitudes towards arms control have been different, clearly, between Bush, on the one hand, and Obama. But, still, there's a lot of continuity in some of these issues.

- The second set of issues is deterring the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, particularly paying attention to the Iranian and the North Korean nuclear programs. There we've been working with Russia—now, I would say, more successfully, sometimes less successfully.

- Thirdly, regulating U.S.-Russia relations in the post-Soviet space. It's very much on display in the last couple of months in what's happening in Ukraine. This is an issue that we have constantly had to deal with, with the Russians, be it Georgia, Ukraine, or some of the other post-Soviet states.

- Fourthly, trying to design a Euro-Atlantic security architecture in which Russia has a stake. Obviously, I discuss NATO enlargement, a little bit of European enlargement, EU enlargement, and why it has been so difficult to include Russia in a new security architecture and why Russia really still feels apart from this, that it's not part of this system.

- Fifthly, dealing with the evolution of Russia's domestic political system. That's a very thorny subject. It's a sensitive subject. We see this in the disagreements that we've had on issues such as Russia's treatment of NGOs, some of its other social legislation. We passed the Magnitsky Act last year, not giving visas and freezing the assets of people we think are involved in significant human rights abuses, particularly having to do with the lawyer Sergei Magnitsky, who died in prison. [*Check out Ambassador Jack Matlock's 2013 Carnegie report on the Magnitsky Act*.] The Russians then passed the Dima Yakovlev Law, which prevents Americans from adopting Russian children. You had the retaliation there. So this goes on and on. Sometimes in different administrations they have paid less attention to what was happening domestically in Russia and sometimes more attention. But this has been a constant theme and it has been the subject of controversy.

- And the sixth set of issues—and they are newer—is how we deal with the uprisings in the Arab world and the transition away, hopefully, from autocracy to more democratic systems..

These are all challenging and ongoing problems. But I do have one chapter in my book that focuses on the economic relationship, and that is more of a good-news story. Our economic relationship with Russia isn't that great, but at least that's one area where it's depoliticized, where you have often younger Americans and younger Russians interacting in the private sector. They have a completely different kind of relationship than the ones who deal with politics.

I'll just give you one vignette. Once a year, I attend a conference where you have American and Russian people from the private sector. A couple of years ago, it was the young ones, the ones that were running Internet and social media. They started to say—and this is where the Americans and the Russians were completely together—"Yes, soon you'll be able to read Tolstoy's *War and Peace* on your hand-held device." Then the older Russians and Americans—this was a generational thing—said, "Oh, how horrible, how terrible. No, no, no, this must never happen, or couldn't happen."

So the economic relationship, and even the energy relationship, is a thing apart and often functions better, obviously, than parts of the political relationship.

Now, what would be some of the barriers to improving the relationship? I think one of them is that both sides still have a rather different understanding of what an improved relationship would look like. A recurring problem, I think, has been the disparity between where Russia fits into U.S. priorities and where the United States, at least until recently, fits into Russian priorities. America has loomed larger in Russian priority—again, at least until recently—I would say, than vice versa. Russia is a very important, I would say, second-order priority for the United States. Yet it has the ability to have a major influence on whether we can accomplish our first-order priority goals.

The Russians understand that. Again, it comes back to this equal partnership of unequals, and it makes it difficult sometimes to interact with them.

Until recently, I think we have been seen in Russia as the one country that could guarantee Russia's status as a great power, as a major world player. But I think Russia has moved away from that now, because President Putin's idea of what drives the world has changed, and I think Russia now looks upon the United States, as it does on Europe, as a declining power. I think that has changed the calculations for Putin.

Putin's major goals—and I think he has really achieved them recently, for the last 10 years at least—have been, first of all, to ensure that Russia has a seat at the table on all major international decisions. Russia should have a voice, it should maybe have a veto power also, on these important issues. He has always wanted to ensure that the United Nations Security Council is the main institution that will decide these issues.

Putin also wants to prevent the further enlargement of NATO and the European Union. I think at the moment he has achieved that, too. I wouldn't say *he* has achieved it; the European Union isn't interested in enlarging because of its own problems. Even what it's offering Ukraine isn't membership. It's something far short of that.

Putin's major goal now is to focus on the creation of a Eurasian Union, of a closer integration between Russia and the other post-Soviet states, so that this bloc, if you like, could then interact with the United States and EU.

U.S. foreign policy goals, particularly since President Obama came to power, have focused on withdrawal from Iraq, stabilizing Afghanistan prior to the exit of the NATO forces, on counterterrorism, on containing Iran's nuclear program, global nonproliferation, and, again, the transition away from autocracy in the Arab world. Russia has been a partner on all of these issues. We cannot achieve what we want in any of these fields without cooperating with Russia. Again, we do need, and we are fated to cooperate with, Russia as we go forward.

What you see today, however, is Russia defining itself as an alternative civilization. That's why I say Putin no longer expresses interest in being integrated with the West. Russia presents itself as a

status quo power. It presents itself as a country that supports the absolute sovereignty of other countries—more or less (you could ask about Ukraine). And it presents the United States as a 21st-century version of the Soviet Union. In fact, Russian officials sometimes say that we're the ones that want to go around doing regime change around the world and installing governments in our own image. That's what the Russians say, and that's how they appeal to the outside world and say that the United States is the one that's trying to destabilize the global order.

The other message that we've heard very much from Putin recently is that orthodox Christianity is the true harbinger of traditional Christian values—he has said that quite often recently—that Western Christianity, particularly Protestantism, has lost its way. It's immoral because it supports things like same-sex marriage and all of the other issues that are lumped together there. And the other message from Putin and his colleagues has been that traditional Christian values are very similar to traditional Muslim values. That's very important in a country like Russia, where you have all of these different ethnic groups and quite a lot of religious tension.

I heard Mr. Putin a couple of weeks ago on one of the Sunday talk shows saying—this is vis-à-vis now the LGBT legislation—70 countries in the world, he said, have legislation like this and in seven of them, they execute people. But his message was that "we're not out of line. You, the United States and Europe and Canada, Australia, a few other countries—you're the ones that are out of line."

You're going to hear this message much more, that Russia is now the harbinger, if you like, of a new international conservative movement.

I think I should wind this up now. Just to say that we are working with Russia on Syria. We're working with them on Iran. This is a compartmented relationship. It's a selective partnership. It has its limits.

My conclusion here is that what we have to try and do is to avoid future resets. We have to avoid the next American administration coming into power and saying, "Boy, we're really going to find a new and better way of dealing with Russia." I think we have to be more realistic. We have to cooperate with Russia on these important multilateral issues. We have to recognize that Russia has a different world view than we have, and it also has a different view of the drivers of international politics. Therefore, that does limit the extent to which the bilateral relationship can move forward.

You mentioned the word "golden key." Successive administrations have thought they could find this key, and they haven't. I think what you see now for the rest of the Obama administration—I doubt that there are going to be any new bilateral initiatives. Our administration would like to have another arms control agreement. The Russians don't seem to be interested in that. So it's unclear what any initiatives would be. I think we're now going to sit this out until the next administration.

Finally, I guess I would say this book tells what I hope is an interesting story. It shows, really, why we're fated to cooperate with the Russians, but also why we should avoid future resets.

Thank you.

Questions

QUESTION: Susan Gitelson.

Thank you for a fascinating and comprehensive explanation of your theme. You stressed the importance of the presidents of the two countries. Yet we know in our own country that the president can't make foreign policy the way he would like to. He has to deal with the Congress and the private

sector and many others. What about Russia? The image of Putin is very much the autocrat, the authoritarian head of everything who can decide one way or another. What do you see as the role of the parliamentarians—we don't hear about them very much—and the NGOs and the oligarchs and others in the private sector?

ANGELA STENT: Thank you very much. You raise an important point that I do go into in the book. The U.S. Congress, in my opinion, in the last 20 years, has not been a force supporting better U.S.-Russia relations. Most of the people in the U.S. Congress who care about Russia care about it in a negative way. They've been the ones pushing—for instance, this Magnitsky legislation was not something that the White House wanted. It was pushed by the Congress.

Now, we can get into that. There has been a small Russia group in the U.S. Congress at various points, but they have never done much.

We should not fall into the trap of thinking that Putin is this autocrat who makes all decisions. But when you come to the question of who makes foreign policy decisions, the Russian Duma does have an input, because they are the ones that passed the legislation, for instance, preventing adoptions of Russian children by Americans. But as we understand it, that legislation—they are responding to signals from the Kremlin.

What you sometimes see is that the Duma will pass legislation or have debates that seem more, in the case of the United States, critical of the United States, more radical than what the Kremlin says, and then maybe the Kremlin walks some of that back, or the Russian foreign ministry does say something different.

So there are obviously differences of opinion here. But the main decision power resides still in the Kremlin.

Now, you mentioned the oligarchs. As we understand it, you have President Putin and then you have different groups around him who he works with. The original oligarchs from the 1990s, many of them, have gone or they don't really play much of a political role anymore. Obviously we're all familiar with the case of Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who was recently released from jail. But many of those people are now just tending to their business.

The new oligarchs are people largely who came from the security services, who knew Mr. Putin when he was in the KGB or when he was in St. Petersburg working for the mayor there. They have their interests. They have economic interests abroad. Therefore, they do also have an influence.

We do understand that many of the people in the private sector in Russia—although even the term "private sector" is complicated, because the state is very involved in a lot of large corporations—those people don't want a very bad relationship with the United States or the West in general. Many of them have bank accounts there. Their families go to school there. So those people want a limit on that.

But I think the final question of how the decisions are made is something that everyone, in the U.S. government and outside of it, struggles with trying to understand, because obviously it's much less open than it is here.

QUESTION: Anthony Faillace.

Maybe you could outline what you think Putin thinks Russian's foreign policy priorities are? And how

would that differ with the Russian public, such that we can identify what they would like?

ANGELA STENT: As I say, he has said that his number-one priority for this term—he's in office until 2018—is creating this Eurasian Union. He has a Customs Union already with Kazakhstan and Belarus. Armenia is going to join, and I think Kyrgyzstan. The question is Ukraine. But to create this political, economic organization that will re-create a bloc, as I said, that's what he is focusing on.

Then I would say the relationship with China—Russia also has announced its pivot to Asia, not quite the same pivot as ours. But the relationship with China is better now than it has ever been. The trade relationship is very strong. They meet regularly, and they support each other on all international issues.

But Russia, too, wants to diversify its partners in Asia. Putin went to Southeast Asia recently. The Russo-Japanese relationship, although quite fraught still over the territorial questions, is improving. So Russia is trying to broaden its ties in Asia, because ultimately it also has to question what Chinese longer-term goals are.

Those, I think, are basically two priorities now.

Then you see Russia coming back in the Middle East. The Russian-Egyptian relationship has now picked up, since Morsi was ousted. Russia isn't back in Egypt as the Soviet Union was, say, prior to 1973, but it has made inroads there. It's obviously the major backer of President Assad in Syria. You have an entirely new phenomenon, which is the development of quite a close Russian-Israeli relationship. You have the Russian-Iranian relationship. So Russia now has many different partners in the Middle East and is also focusing on that area.

I think all of those things are priorities for Putin. I think, from his point of view, probably the relationship with the United States also is a lower priority than it was before, and he has decided that Russia can be a major player, a major power, with global influence without seeking the kind of partnership with the United States that he might have done 10 years ago.

QUESTION: First of all, thank you very much. Just terrific. John Hirsch, International Peace Institute.

Can you say anything about a Russia after Putin? In other words, how long do you think he's likely to be there? What kind of legacy will there be that could conceivably be carried over? Will there be a big shift after that? Any comment you might have on that.

ANGELA STENT: You've asked the 64,000-ruble question—the million-ruble question by now.

Vladimir Putin is in power until 2018, but he could run for another six-year term. When he is asked about this, he says probably what any politician would say, which is, "I might. I'm not going to tell you now." No one wants to be a lame duck. So I don't know how long he will be in power.

But the real issue is the question of modernization. When Dmitry Medvedev was in the Kremlin—and one believes that he probably believed this—he wrote articles, he said things, that Russia has to move away from its total dependence on energy exports, really, it has to modernize its economy, it has to have more high tech, more manufacturing, it has to produce things that people want to buy, and it has to modernize its political system.
Obviously one of the issues in Russia, as in many of Russia's neighbors, is the question of corruption and how much that hinders the modernization of the country.

Now, Medvedev said all the right things and, I think, tried to begin this process, but was resisted by vested interests. There we come back to the new oligarchs, people who have a vested interest in not modernizing the system because they would stand to lose economically.

Russia faces a number of other issues—falling growth rates. This year the growth rate is going to be 1.4 percent. Russia did rather well after the financial crisis compared to other countries. Because Alexei Kudrin, the former finance minister, had set up these various funds, they saved a lot of money. They didn't let all their oil revenues go to their head, so to speak, when oil was $130, $140 a barrel. So they had those reserves.

But they have low growth rates, and they are not predicted to rise for the next few years. That's one problem.

Demography—Russia's population is shrinking. The male life expectancy still hovers around 60, which, for a highly developed country, is quite amazing. The worst statistic in Russia is male mortality rates for young men between 18 and 30. Those rates are similar to those in sub-Saharan Africa. This is, again, for a country that's highly developed.

So they have a demographic problem. The birth rate has risen a bit, but still, you have to wait 20 years until that manifests itself.

So what are they going to do about that, their labor force, their military force?

Then they have crumbling infrastructure. You see with Sochi now that they have put a lot money into it. They have built all these beautiful hotels—although I gather not all of them have furniture yet, and the opening ceremonies are on Thursday. But they have a problem with roads, with bridges. They have to invest money in their physical infrastructure.

Then the other problem I would mention is the brain drain. Putin is popular in the provinces, outside of the major cities. But the educated urban elite, particularly the younger ones, in places like Moscow and St. Petersburg and other cities don't support him, and many of these people are leaving. They're voting with their feet. Of course, unlike the Soviet Union, anyone can leave Russia.

So he and his successor have to deal with these basic problems. Otherwise, the trajectory is quite bad.

Nobody knows what comes after Putin. Some people believe that even, let's say, if he doesn't run again in 2018, he will pick a successor who will carry the system on. Then how does anything change? This is what we get stuck with when we try and think about how things could change —avoiding any kind of major catastrophe or anything. Nobody knows. Or it could be gradual. You could have someone younger coming in and maybe they will begin this slower process of modernization. But they have to come to grips with some of these issues.

The last point on this is that as long as oil prices remain around $100 a barrel, they can manage.

QUESTION: Richard Valcourt, *International Journal of Intelligence*.

I'd like to go back to two aspects of Russian foreign policy that you briefly touched on. The first one deals with Russian support of American activities in Afghanistan. To what extent did that serve as a cover for Russia's own actions against the Chechens and Dagestanis and so on? They're pretty cruel there. But this gave them an opportunity to do that.

The second is with Ukraine. To what extent do we go beyond the former Soviet territories to Russian impact on the European Union, particularly Germany with the Schröder situation and so on, on energy matters?

ANGELA STENT: Afghanistan-Chechnya: If you go back to the 1990s, at the beginning, when the First Chechen War begins in 1994—actually, President Clinton in the beginning said that for Yeltsin, he was like Abraham Lincoln, and he had to keep his country together. President Clinton then obviously walked back that remark and, from the excerpt I read, was then more critical.

The problem, I think, for the United States has been, how do you deal with this, and what do you say about it? The movement in Chechnya began, really, as a separatist movement, and then it became much more Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, partly as the situation deteriorated there.

When President Bush was in office, and after Putin offered support for the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, at that point President Bush said their struggle with North Caucasus terrorists is similar to our struggle with al-Qaeda. But then that changed also as time went on.

Russia, I think, in the beginning was very ambivalent about the NATO effort in Afghanistan. Given what happened to Russia, it wasn't really quite clear that it wanted NATO to succeed. But I think more recently it realized that it doesn't want the Taliban to come back to power, because it could affect Russia much more directly.

Then Russia's other major concern about Afghanistan, which they feel we don't pay enough attention to, is the drug question. They think that we haven't done enough to stop the export of poppies, heroin, and that Russia and its neighbors have a terrible problem now with drug use.

But by now, I think Russia and the United States are on the same page, in a sense, about what they want to see happen in Afghanistan, which is a more stable country without the Taliban in power. That may not happen. Russia has recently been increasing its contacts with some of the people it has been dealing with in Afghanistan.

So I would say there was ambivalence, but maybe less than there is now.

The other thing is, we don't say very much anymore about what's happening in the North Caucasus, particularly since the Boston Marathon bombings, and even before. We understand that this is not only a Russian problem, but it became our problem, too. But the problem is, with the counterterrorism cooperation, we don't always have the same definition of who a terrorist is. But now that al-Qaeda seems to be more active also in Russia itself, maybe that gap will narrow. But that's still a very sensitive issue.

Then cooperating on the intelligence level on terrorism—it's difficult. It happens, but it's painstaking.

Ukraine: I was just at the Munich Security Conference. It was interesting for me. They had the opposition leaders from Ukraine on the stage. I heard a German message, from Foreign Minister Steinmeier, from President Gauck, and some of the other German officials—a much stronger message on Ukraine.

I think one of the reasons why the European Union was only working on the Eastern Partnership—and obviously that's really an initiative from Sweden and Poland, not from Germany—is to offer Ukraine something that is short of membership—never promise them membership, but sort of incentives to clean up their own corruption and have a more efficient

economy and energy use.

But I think, now that the violence has grown there—the German tendency has been obviously to focus on Russia and not to do anything that would jeopardize the German-Russian relationship. But that relationship is also now not exactly what it used to be. Mr. Schröder is still on the board of Nord Stream. But the general relationship, I think, has also deteriorated, and the German public's mood on this is different.

That's why I think now Germany has agreed with some other EU countries that they have to offer Ukraine a more attractive economic package, although I don't know how that's going to work out.

QUESTION: Marlin Mattson, Weill Cornell Medical College.

I appreciated your comments on the use of the LGBT population by President Putin. I was wondering if you could expand on that some in terms of the dramatically heightened focus on that group at this particular point in time.

ANGELA STENT: I think it's an interesting question. One could ask, from a kind of objective point of view, why Russia, for instance, introduced this legislation. The legislation penalizes what it calls homosexual propaganda. In other words, it says it's not against gay people, but if people use propaganda to influence children—so the focus always comes back to children.

It's obviously something that the Russian Orthodox church has supported, and I do think, from what one knows, that a large number of the Russian population support it—obviously not all of them.

On the other hand, there was a story, I think it was *The New York Times,* a couple of days ago pointing out that in some cities, like Moscow and St. Petersburg, there is quite a lively gay scene. There are restaurants, nightclubs, and everything, and those people live their lives just as they did before. So it's a mixed situation.

But I think it's part of this move to try and present Russia as a conservative alternative to the decadent West. It has taken up also the theme of same-sex marriage. I think as the Russians have seen legislation passing in European countries, the United States, Canada, wherever, they, for whatever reason, have decided—and they look globally. In fact, at the last Valdai conference, which was in September, there was a man there who does a lot of global public opinion surveys. When the subject came up, he said to me—I asked him about this privately—he said, "Well, look at my data and you'll see there are a lot of countries in the world that actually support the Russian view."

So I think the Russians have also—the Kremlin, whoever—realized that there's an audience out there, a global audience, that's quite receptive to this.

I think a lot of this has to do—well, the external aspect of it is presenting Russia as, if you like, the leader of these issues. Then domestically it's appealing to a large constituency there that just isn't used to this. Again, it has to do with the return of the Russian Orthodox church. I think we have to remember that even in this country there are people who would support the things that Putin is saying. So I think part of it is a political calculation.

QUESTION: John Richardson.

I want to suggest to you that maybe a historical view would suggest that the policy towards Russia should be sort of laissez-faire. It has been the greatest military power in Europe for 200 years. They

were in Paris in 1813. They were in Berlin in 1945. They then went east in the 19th century. There were Russians all over the place in Europe before the First World War. There were churches everywhere. They even want to build one now in Paris, I think.

Ukraine may be a problem, but Hungary didn't last in 1956; Czechoslovakia didn't last in 1968. Occupying Ukraine won't last. The attraction of Europe to the Russians is really quite strong historically. Therefore, I think we should just leave things alone.

ANGELA STENT: I think that's a very defensible point of view. I think you're quite right that there are millions of Russians who basically live in Europe now—obviously large numbers in London, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, and other countries. Russian civilization is clearly much more European than Asian. Asians don't regard Russians as Asians. So when people talk about Eurasian, you have to think about what that means. But even Putin himself says, "Our culture is European."

The problem with laissez-faire is, at what point does an organization like the European Union, which sees itself as a normative organization based on values—at what point does it say, "Well, it's fine if there's violence in Kiev and if the Ukrainian police are beating people up or whatever, and it may be supported, at least indirectly, by Russia. That's their business, and we should stay out of it"?

I think that would be harder for the European Union to do. I think with the United States, we in fact, in the case of Ukraine, weren't paying very much attention to it after Yanukovych came into power.

It's a defensible point of view, but I think it's hard to argue that with the publics and the parliaments of a lot of European countries, and in the United States as well.

QUESTION: Thanks for your time. Andrew Medvedev, Morgan Stanley.

It seems to me that the framework for assessing some of these things is, effectively, who needs who more? Ultimately, if that's true, right now, based on your talk, it sounds like we need Russia for our choices that we have made around the world more than the other way around, and they know that. Is that the right framework? If so, is that the right alignment? How do we move past that, either through our choices or changing the balance, such that we can achieve our objectives, from a moral leadership perspective and so on?

ANGELA STENT: That's a great question. You're quite right. I think at the moment the Russians believe that we need them more than they need us, and I think probably, objectively, that's true.

I think the problem with moving beyond this framework is that we are still stuck in a Cold War time warp, in the sense that the most important issue still between us is that we're the world's two nuclear superpowers. So we have a very peculiar relationship that no other country has with Russia, because this nuclear legacy is so important. In a sense, it has made it more difficult, in my opinion, for us to develop a more broad-based relationship that, let's say, takes account of the 21st-century globalized world.

I think the other issue that makes it difficult to move beyond this, in fact, comes back to economics. The main thing that Russia exports is energy, and then military hardware. We don't need either of those things. So our bilateral trade—I know that's not the only measure—with Russia is about $40 billion. Just for comparison with China, I believe it's about $500 billion.

We have a small group of very active people in the private sector who are doing well in Russia, but overall it's not an economic relationship that would drive the ties and would maybe change them. For

instance, in the case of China again, we have lots of groups in this country that are very actively involved in China economically and lobby Congress.

So I think those two things, the nuclear legacy and the fact that our economic relationship is still very much at the beginning—I know that the administration is trying to push this much more—I think that makes it very difficult for us to develop a new framework for interacting with Russia. There has to be one, because if we don't develop a new framework, then I think we are sort of doomed to repeat, if you like, these ups and downs, partially trying to improve the relationship and then moving back from it.

I think, to some extent, it would take a mindset that moves beyond this conception, from our point of view, of Russia in terms of nuclear weapons and then the lack of an economic relationship. I'm not sure that we have people at the moment in the administration that are receptive to that.

JOANNE MYERS: Your reputation preceded you and it will certainly follow you once you leave. That was terrific. Thank you so much. It was just wonderful.

Audio
Sochi, Snowden, and Syria--these are just a few of the issues complicating the U.S.-Russian relationship, says Georgetown's Angela Stent in this dynamic and informed talk. But, because of Russia's strategic location, nuclear arsenal, and presence in the UN, it's a partnership worth working on.

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