

**"Russian Foreign Policy:
The Return of Great Power Politics"**

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Dr. Mankoff: Thank you to all of you for coming out for this event. It testifies, I think, to the really extraordinary amount of interest in what's going on in Russia right now. I'm particularly impressed that so many of you turned out because you could be listening to General Myers right now.

The title of the talk that I was asked to give is Russian foreign policy and the return of great power politics, and that's also the title of the book that I finished recently. It's kind of an unusual topic in a way. It's, in a way, a little bit counterintuitive.

In fact, I was having a conversation with a senior British politician not so long after the book came out, and he asked me to give about a 30-second summary of the book. I started by telling him what the title was. He kind of scoffed and said, Great Power Politics - Russia's not a great power anymore. And I think that that's actually a very interesting question and one that's certainly open to a certain amount of discussion.

What I'm really trying to get at in the book and what I want to talk about today is more to do with the ideas underlying Russian foreign policy and about what it is that Russia wants to accomplish internationally and how it sees itself participating in the international system. And regardless of what we think about the country's long-term trajectory or its capabilities, I think it's almost indisputable that Russia wants to behave as a great power, it wants to be treated like a great power. And this desire for recognition and respect has been one of the major underlying factors in its foreign policy behavior, not only over the past decade but, really, going back to the years in the immediate aftermath of the end of the Cold War.

So what do I mean by this? I think if you look at the statements of leading Russian officials, politicians, military figures, as well as the documents that are produced by the bureaucracy laying out the strategic approach of the Russian government to international affairs, the things that they emphasize are Russia's role as an independent actor in the international system, a country that has the right and the ability to set for itself the terms of its engagement with other powers and with the international system.

This is not a policy of integration into liberal international institutions, such as the ones that were created by the United States and its allies at the end of the Second World War. It is to promote Russia as an independent actor, one with the responsibility for affairs in its own in what President Medvedev referred to last year as a sphere of privileged interest surrounding its borders. It's a policy that is not seeking integration with the West or with Western institutions.

Now this doesn't mean that the policy that Russian leaders have pursued in the 1990s or more recently is necessarily anti-Western. I think a better way of conceptualizing it, a better way of thinking about it is that Russia's leaders emphasize their country is not Western. That is, it can cooperate with the West when it's in its interest to do so. It can oppose the West when they see it in their interests to do so. But fundamentally, Russia exists in some very deep fundamental way apart from the West. And that its actions internationally are guided by a narrow conception of national interests, which will be determined by the Russian elite themselves and not by any participation in a broader coalition of Western powers or any adherence to a broader conception of liberal internationalist values.

If you just look at the institutions that Russia values and in which its participation has been particularly noteworthy, these are institutions that emphasize the role of great powers acting autonomously. These are institutions like the UN Security Council, where all of the major powers have a right to veto actions. It's groups like the G-8, which is a club of the most powerful and wealthy countries in the world. These are great power clubs. These are not organizations that are created on the foundation of a commitment to shared values; groups like NATO or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Even if you look at the role of the Russian government domestically. If you look at what they're trying to do in terms of social reform, in terms of making the economy more competitive, the language is always couched in terms of increasing the country's competitiveness internationally. It's building up the economy. It's making the population more resilient, more stable, as a way of increasing Russia's ability to play this autonomous great-power political role that its elite aspires to.

So if this is the basic conception underlying the way that the Russian leadership, embodied today by the so-called tandemocracy, a fusion of the words tandem and democracy, of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev, I think it's worthwhile to look a little bit back into the

past to get a sense of where this notion comes from and how much continuity there is with what existed before this tandemocracy came into being. And I think that'll help us think a little bit about where Russia is going in the longer term in the future.

If you go back to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, I think there was a widespread assumption, in Russia to some extent but certainly in the west, that with the throwing off of the shackles of communism, Russia was going to follow a path into the Western world. It was going to join Western clubs, it was going to adopt Western values, and it was going to become a Western-style democracy.

Indeed, this was the path that was followed by most of the Soviet Union satellites in Eastern Europe, in the Baltics, and in other parts of what was once the second world or the Communist block. But it was not a path that was followed by Russia itself. And Russia diverged from this path, I would argue, very soon after the Soviet collapse, in terms of both its domestic and its foreign policy.

In terms of domestic politics, already in 1993 when there was a dispute between then President Yeltsin and the Parliament, the Parliament refused to dissolve itself as Yeltsin ordered and as he was allowed to do under the constitution. It barricaded itself in the Parliament building, the so-called Russian White House, and President Yeltsin resolved the standoff by calling out the Army and shelling the Parliament.

Now, needless to say, this isn't how conflicts between the Executive and Legislative branches are resolved in most democratic countries. I think whatever happens with the debate on health care, you're not going to see President Obama shelling the Capitol.

Nonetheless, this is how President Yeltsin dealt with the opposition that was building up to his rule in 1993. And then with the Parliament summarily dispersed in this way, Yeltsin proceeded to push through a constitution that concentrated power very heavily in the hands of the President. This is a hyper-residential constitution, modeled on the one that exists in 5th Republic France, but it concentrates even more power in the President's hands than the French constitution.

Under Yeltsin, this was not seen as necessarily a problem. He was a more authoritative leader, there were different competing centers of power in the newly reconstituted Parliament, and having a single source of authority was, in some ways, the only way of making the

system effective. However, of course what happened is that when there was a leader who came to power with more authoritarian tendencies, the same leverage and the same institutions, the same documents that were created in the Yeltsin era were used for the hyper-centralization of power that we have in Russia today.

In terms of Russia's foreign policy, I think the divergence from what was expected of Russia, that is progressive convergence and integration into Western institutions, also began around this period, about 1993, '94, '95. In 1995, the Russian government adopted a document called *The Strategic Course Towards Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States*.

This was basically a strategic blueprint that laid out Russia's strategy for dealing with its one-time partner republics in the Soviet Union. It essentially gave to Moscow, gave to the Kremlin, the authority to meddle in the internal affairs of these countries. It was essentially a recognition that Moscow considered countries like Ukraine, Georgia, and the other post-Soviet republics somehow less than sovereign, and this continues to be a major, major source of instability between both Russia and these countries and in terms of Russia's larger relationship with the international community.

Although the term has disappeared from official discourse in Moscow, you still very often hear the distinction being made between what's known as the near abroad and the far abroad. And what that essentially means is that there are two classes of foreign countries.

There is the far abroad, which is most of the world and countries that Russia has regular diplomatic relations with. And then there is the near abroad, with are the countries that once belonged to the Soviet Union and that are somehow a little bit less than sovereign and that Russia deals with not entirely on the basis of interaction between equals but on a kind of either patron/client or older brother/younger brother sort of paradigm.

This view of the former Soviet states is still very widespread within the Russian elite and it has taken a very, very long time and you're only beginning to see a process whereby the government in Moscow, the bulk of the Russian elite, is really internalizing the notion that these are truly independent states, that they have their own national identities, and that that they ultimately will have to have the right to make their own choices about the nature of their foreign engagements.

And so, again, this was an approach that started to be taken in the years around 1993, '94, and '95. Before that,

the man at the helm of Russian foreign policy -- a guy by the name of Andrey Kosyrev, who was the Foreign Minister up until 1995, '96 - was pursuing a course of rapid integration with the West. He really did think of Russia as being a Western country and wanted to bring it into Western coalitions. The problem was that there was simply very little support for this course within the Russian elite or the Russian public at large.

Kozyrev remained in power as Foreign Minister until 1996, but there was no support for what he was trying to do, and he was essentially isolated. And among the rest of the Yeltsin era elite, there really was a lot of support for Russia standing up for its own interests, for being an autonomous independent great power acting on the international stage as other great powers, including the United States, which continues to be the main frame of reference, the main prism to which Russians -- the Russian elite, at least -- thinks about its own role.

Again, this was already occurring in the mid 1990s when Yeltsin was still President. Of course, during this era too there were some major clashes between Russia and the West, Russia and the United States, and I think it's important to keep these in mind when we think about the deterioration of relations between Moscow and Washington, Russia and the West, over the course of the past decade.

Beginning in 1994, the question of NATO expansion was a very, very difficult issue in the bilateral relationship and in the broader scope of relations between Russia and the West; the attack by NATO forces on Serbia in 1999 over the ongoing ethnic cleansing in, first, Bosnia and then Kosovo, which was very strongly opposed by Russia. It was another one of these instances where the relationship was very much in crisis during a period when there was essentially pro-Western leadership in power; when Yeltsin, who was very much considered to be kind of our guy, was still running the show. And so I think that testifies to some of the structural underlying difficulties that continue in this relationship and that have continued even since that era.

Yeltsin left the stage at the end of the old millennium, on the last day of the last month of the old millennium. He stepped down unexpectedly and handed over the reins of power to the man, who up until that time had been Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin.

Putin, at the time, was something of a political unknown. He was a one-time KGB agent who had served in Germany during the Cold War, had later worked in the office of the St. Petersburg Mayor during the early 1990s, during a period of fairly rapid economic reforms.

Putin is in a lot of ways a contradictory figure and, I think, his contribution to Russia's foreign policy and to its relationship with the West has also been somewhat contradictory. It's worth pointing out that when Putin first came to power, his accession was welcomed not only in Russia but in a lot of the West as well; in many ways, because he was the antithesis of Yeltsin.

If you remember, the last years of Yeltsin's rule were marred by continued health crises, with Yeltsin being incommunicado for long periods of time. In part because he was having heart difficulties and had surgery and other health crises; in part because he was often, as they do in Russia, drunk. [Laughter]. And these two problems, of course, are not unconnected.

And when Putin came to power, he was seen as the antithesis of the kind of bumbling buffoonish Yeltsin. He was a sober, competent, healthy, younger, vigorous man who really could take the reins of power and drive the ship of state in the direction that he wanted it to go.

More than that, he was seen as being kind of coldly unemotional, non-ideological, and sort of willing to work pragmatically with the West to advance Russia's national interests. And in the first few years of Putin's administration, I think this actually did happen.

It's worth remembering that the era from about 2000 to 2002 was one of rapidly warming ties between the United States and Russia. This was beginning even before the attacks of September 11, 2001, but it was a process that really took off after 9/11. In fact, Putin was the first foreign leader to call then U.S. President Bush after the attacks, offer his sympathy for the victims, and offer his support in prosecuting what came to be the Global War on Terrorism.

And this support was not only rhetorical; there was some very real, very concrete Russian assistance in terms of getting U.S. forces into Afghanistan, in terms of intelligence sharing, because Russia had very good connections on the ground in Afghanistan dating back to its own intervention in that country in the last 1970s.

And so, as a result there was a very significant warming of ties between the two sides, and Putin even indicated early on that he would try to tone down the rhetoric, tone down the difficulties over the question of NATO expansion. This was an era when another round of NATO expansion was being proposed, culminating with the admission of the Baltic states in, I believe, 2002.

And Putin initially said something along the lines of well, we don't like it but if NATO ceases to be what it was during the Cold War and becomes a more modern security alliance devoted to the transnational problems that all of us face, then we're not going to make a big deal if it chooses to expand and take in new countries, even if those new countries are these near-abroad countries like Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Now, of course, things didn't quite work out as those of us who were looking at the U.S. and Russia and hoping for a widespread improvement in relations had hoped during that era. And I think there are a couple of reasons for that.

One, I think, is because of the basic misunderstanding about what it was Russia was trying to get when it made this approach to the United States, to President Bush, in 2001/2002. The support that Russia offered for the mission in Afghanistan was predicated on a couple of things.

One was Russia's own interest in checking the spread of Islamist militancy out of Afghanistan into Central Asia, which it still considers something of a strategic buffer zone and as well into the Muslim regions of Russia itself. Of course, this was right after the period of the most instability, the greatest level of violence in Chechnya, and Russia was very worried about a continued expansion of this kind of Islamist militancy, both within its own borders and around it. And so it had no interest in seeing a Taliban-ruled Afghanistan consolidate its position in South Central Asia and spread the drug trade, spread militancy, beyond its borders.

Secondly, there was, I think, a fundamental calculation that was made by members of the Russian elite, that for the first time, really, since the end of the Cold War, Russia was in a position in 2001/2002 where the United States really needed it or where it could position itself as an indispensable ally to the United States in what was unfolding as being the single most important geopolitical military campaign of the era and that, of course, was the Global War on Terrorism.

Much the way that British Prime Minister Tony Blair did. I think Putin was trying to position Russia as the critical ally, somebody whose opinions and needs would have to be taken into consideration as the United States was making its calculations for prosecuting the unfolding Global War on Terror. And so this was not a fundamental, civilizational choice about belonging to the West, about sweeping aside the disagreements of the past, about trying to do, once again, what Andrey Kozyrev had tried to do a decade earlier; this was a hard-headed strategic decision

that Putin and other members of the Russian elite thought was in their national interest.

I think, however, that this gesture was largely misperceived in the West and that, as a result, it became very easy for the leadership of the United States and its allies to think that Russia was now on board, that Russia's objections, Russia's interests, could be swept aside because it was in the camp of those that were with us in terms of fighting the battle against the Taliban, against international terrorism.

So as a result, a kind of disconnect broke out and Russia continued acting in the ways that it had been acting, especially around its own borders, in ways that the West, the United States, found destabilizing and threatening. As a result, these areas have continued to be sources of major tension between Russia and the United States.

This is certainly true in Georgia, where a war broke out last year and where tension is still very, very high between the pro-American administration of Mikheil Saakashvili and the breakaway republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which are sponsored and recognized by Russia and a couple of its allies and nobody else.

Also during this time, since 2001/2002, the Russian economy was growing very rapidly almost the entire time; in fact, right up until last year. And this underpinned Putin's effort to reassert Russia's power, to once again secure for it the kind of autonomy on the world stage that he, like Yeltsin, thought that the country, by virtue of its size, history, and importance, as well as its military strength, deserved to have.

Throughout the years of Putin's presidency, the Russian economy grew by an average of over seven percent a year. This included rising personal incomes, rising disposable incomes on the part of the population, which contributed to Putin's overwhelming popularity.

At the same time, much of the money that was coming in to Russia was then being channeled into strategic initiatives; spending on the military, in particular, was increased by double-digit percentage figures every year since 2004, although admittedly starting from a fairly low base.

And so this economic boom that Russia was experiencing, much of it fueled by high oil prices, allowed it to play this more autonomous geopolitical role that its elites had sought for it for many years. So what had fundamentally changed was not the underlying preferences; it wasn't the underlying strategic goals of the government, it was rather

its capacity to pursue them and its ability to pursue them unencumbered by the need to defer to its allies or its partners, such as the United States.

Of course today much of the shine of that economic boom is wearing off. Russia has suffered a fairly bad recession along with much of the rest of the world, although its policy response has been less effective.

So now the government projects that in 2009 the GDP for the country is going to decline by somewhere between nine and ten percent. And this, I think, is going to put something of a hamper on the government's ability to continue pursuing the kind of assertive, maybe aggressive, foreign policy, particularly around its borders, that we've come to associate with Putin, which isn't to say that things are necessarily going to be easier.

Certainly, the economic downturn of the early 1990s didn't have a basic fundamental impact on the geopolitical preferences of the elite. That is to say, even though the economy was in freefall for much of the early 1990s, with hyperinflation, with the collapse of industrial production, with Russia going through a recession that was more severe than the Great Depression in the U.S., none of that was sufficient to convince the elite to move away from this kind of great-power model of foreign policy and move towards a more integrative welfare state-based kind of approach, where there would be less spending on strategic geopolitical priorities and more spending on domestic initiatives and, therefore, a kind of retrenchment of the country's international strategic objectives.

The current economic crisis, while it's severe, is certainly not on the scale of what the country went through in the early 1990s, and so I don't think it's going to, at least in the short run, have any more of an effect on the way that the elite thinks about the country and its foreign policy priorities.

Now it's true that as former Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar has pointed out, periods of economic crisis in Russia have coincided with various kinds of reform, political, economic, and social. In general, the population during periods where they're suffering in their pocketbooks is less committed to these kinds of large-scale geopolitical reveries of the elite.

And so if this is a crisis that really is enduring deep long-term, then it's possible that you could begin to see a kind of move away from some of these more ambitious goals that the elite has pursued. But at this point, it's really too early to tell. And I think a lot is going to depend, as it always has, on the price of oil.

One interesting place to look, actually, and one place where I do think that you're starting to see a kind of transition actually has to do with the military and military reform.

Military reform in Russia is something that leaders have talked about ever since the end of the Soviet Union. As you all probably know, the Russian military that was inherited from the USSR was still based on mass mobilization, on overwhelming numbers, on fighting a kind of industrial technological war of the kind that was fought during World War II and that the Soviet Union tried to fight in its other conflicts later in the 20th Century, such as in Afghanistan.

There has been a push to move away from that model towards a more mobile, more technologically sophisticated, more highly educated force ever since the end of the Soviet Union, except there hasn't been a lot of progress on that front. The military industrial complex, the brass, has been very resistant to moving forward with these kinds of reforms.

The conflict in Georgia last year exposed, I think, a lot of the shortcomings of the prevailing model and created a real political impetus for pushing through with these reforms. And now the guy who is the current defense minister has been very insistent that the reforms will be pushed through.

Medvedev and Putin have been behind him politically, which is important, because he's from outside the normal elite. He doesn't have a military background. He's actually a furniture salesman by trade, which is kind of an interesting background for a defense minister.

Nonetheless, this push for military reform is going ahead. It is making progress. There's money behind it. And they're trying to downsize the military, to lay off, in particular, a lot of the officer corps so that they can move to a smaller force not based on mass mobilization but based on a smaller number of more technologically sophisticated, more mobile units.

They're still encountering the same kind of resistance, and so it's a very slow process. And whether or not it succeeds is still very much an open question.

However, the fact that there is so much political push for it now and that, in the face of the opposition of the military industrial complex and the officer corps, the political authorities are still pushing ahead with it, I think, is an indication that they have internalized some of

these lessons of the war in Georgia. That the kind of conflicts that Russia is going to have to deal with in the near-to-medium-term future are going to be not the kind of grand superpower conflicts that the military had been trained for ever since World War II, but are going to be these regional conflicts. It's going to be asymmetric warfare. It's going to be the kind of conflicts that the United States has been training for since the start of the Global War on Terror.

And this has implications for thinking about what the priorities of Russia's foreign policy are. Because if you have a military that's predicated on fighting terrorism, that's predicated on fighting transnational threats, it's not focused on state-based threats. It's not focused on keeping up the rivalry with the United States and with other major powers.

And this means that in the long run, if Russia is going to succeed, and if it does push ahead with its military reform, it's going to have to find a way of toning down the rhetoric in terms of the confrontation with the United States. It's going to have to find ways of working pragmatically with Washington, because it's simply not going to be able to present an effective counter to the power of the United States and its allies.

So what does that mean for the future? Where are we now? As you all know, Vice President Biden, earlier this year, popularized the term "reset", seeking a reset in the relationship between Moscow and Washington, and we're still pushing forward with this.

I think the fundamental idea behind this, on the part of the United States, is an acknowledgement of some of the mistakes that we've made in the past, recognizing the legitimacy of many of Russia's concerns about the U.S. taking Russian support for granted, about U.S. propping up and supporting governments in regions that Russia considers strategically sensitive, that have a kind of anti-Russian bias, and really just ignoring Russian concerns about strategic stability in Europe and in the former Soviet Union.

So far, I would characterize the Russian response to this as being cautiously receptive. They're certainly encouraged by the idea that the United States is going to take some of these concerns more seriously and the United States is reaching out for once and actually seeking Russian input as it seeks to craft new security structures in Europe and the former Soviet Union.

However, there are still major areas of disagreement. These are very serious areas of disagreement where I don't

think there is much prospect for resolution in the near future. Most notably is the fate of the former Soviet Union, the CIS.

Countries like Georgia are still considered by Russia to be part of its sphere of privileged interest. And while the United States has backed down for the time being on the question of, say, NATO expansion into Georgia, there is no indication that the U.S. or its allies are giving up on the idea of encouraging democracy, encouraging these countries to act autonomously internationally to reduce their dependence on Russia.

And demographics, social, and political changes over time are pushing those countries in that direction anyway. The prevalence of the Russian language throughout the former Soviet Union is declining. Russian influence in its former colonies is on the wane along with it, and this is a process, I think, that in a lot of ways is irreversible. But that doesn't mean that the process is going to be smooth or easy.

And there is still, I think, a major lack of trust, both within the U.S. towards Russia and within Russia towards the United States. And overcoming that lack of trust is going to be very, very complicated and, I think, will be a long drawn-out process. I think we're making steps in that direction, but there is no magic bullet.

There are a number of issues where, I think, success in the near- to medium-term is possible, and these are the areas that the Obama administration so far has been focusing on; areas like arms control; negotiating a follow-on agreement to the START I treaty, which expires in December; moving ahead with Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization.

While I think it's important in and of itself to move ahead with these areas where agreement is possible, I think we need to keep our expectations realistic though. Some of these larger problems, in terms of figuring out what Russia's role on the international stage is going to be, still remain. And I think even if we can make progress in these areas where agreement is possible, it's not necessarily going to change the overall scope of the relationship, which isn't to say that we shouldn't try. I just would encourage everybody to keep their hopes realistic.

One important area where I do think there is the prospect for really moving forward is on regional security. And this is something that has been talked about. Last year, President Medvedev suggested signing a new Euro-Atlantic security treaty, something that would create an

integrated security space encompassing the United States, its allies and Europe, and Russia and its former satellites in the former Soviet Union.

The Russian proposal is very vague, and they still haven't really filled in the details, and there have been different ways of conceptualizing what this could look like, different ways of thinking about it.

Former National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, recently had a piece in *Foreign Affairs* where he talked about creating bridges between NATO and the post-Soviet analogue, CSTO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and this is one way of thinking about building bridges, building a kind of collaborative security space. There are other ways.

And I think even the process of negotiating what that is going to look like is important as a way of building trust, which remains one of the biggest problems in this relationship. It's a way of keeping the channels of dialogue open on what are really the most divisive and some of the most difficult issues.

For now, I think the values on the two sides simply remain too far apart for real integration. Russia doesn't adhere to the basic fundamental liberal values that we hold as being constitutive of membership in the West. That is to say, the ideas of liberalism and democracy, which are at the heart of the United States and its alliances, such as NATO, are not that widespread within Russia and I don't think can serve as the basis of a partnership with a Russia that doesn't believe in them.

So the trick then is to find ways of reaching out to Russia, finding ways of building bridges that don't necessarily rest on those shared values, because those values aren't there, but the overwhelming need to tone down the temperature in the relationship, to work together in those areas where it is possible to work together, I think is of overriding importance.

Russia simply has to accept the legitimacy of the post Cold War international order, and it has been very reluctant to do that up to this point. I think, again, this goes back to the question of building trust. It feels that the international order that emerged with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War has been fundamentally anti-Russian, that it's still predicated on the notion of containment.

You often hear Russians talk about the comparison between 1919 and 1991. If you go back to 1919, at the end of the First World War, the victorious powers, the entente

attempted to build a security structure in Europe that essentially excluded Germany.

Germany was the defeated power. It was forced to pay reparation. It ultimately faced occupation of some of the territory it claimed until it paid that reparation. It was not allowed to build up its military and throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, these restrictions on what Germany was able to do, its continued treatment as an enemy -- even though the government that had acted aggressively towards the Western powers was now gone and Germany was now a democracy -- its exclusion from the security structure that was being built up in Europe in the time, contributed to the growth of resentment, which ultimately led to the emergence of a rejectionist regime in Germany and thus to the start of the Second World War.

The dynamic on the part of the victorious powers in the Cold War towards Russia is not as stark, but from the Russian perspective looks similar. This is not to say that Nazism is on the march in Russia or that there is going to be the analogue of World War II anytime in the future.

Nonetheless, I would argue that the fundamental lessons are the same; that building a security system that excludes Russia, that doesn't allow it to play a constructive role, that doesn't give it incentives to act in ways that are conducive to cooperative security and collective security means that it will fundamentally remain outside that system and it will remain fundamentally antagonistic towards it in ways that are not good for stability in the region, that are not good for us, and that are not good for Russia.

Ultimately though, Russia itself is going to have to decide the question about what it means to be a great power in the 21st Century. The notion of great-power politics that I talk about in the book and that I have been talking about today is very much a 19th Century idea; that you have a concert of major powers that among themselves have the right and the authority to determine how the international system functions, that have the ability to impose solutions on problems involving smaller powers simply by virtue of their size.

That's a notion that we in the West have largely parted ways with; certainly since the Second World War. Power today is as much based on integration, on trade, on the economic foundations of power, on shared values, as it is on these more traditional notions.

Russia itself is ultimately, I think, going to have to come to that realization, but it's a process that we have very limited ability to influence. It's a question that the Russians themselves ultimately will have to resolve. We

simply have to give them space to do that and ensure that in the process we follow essentially the dictates of the Hippocratic Oath and do no harm. And if we do that, I think, the future, moving ahead, will look at least a little bit better than the last couple of decades have been in terms of the relationship.

Thank you.

[Applause].

Question: Can you talk about Ukraine and [inaudible] the elections there?

Dr. Mankoff: Yeah, Ukraine is probably the most dangerous flashpoint right now. You probably know that in 2004 there was a contested election there, and the Russians massively intervened in the pre-election campaign, supporting the pro-Russian party, which was headed by a guy named Viktor Yanukovich. He was immediately declared the winner after the vote had been conducted, even though he was behind in all of the exit polls. The opposition charged that fraud had been committed. The Russians rushed to recognize Yanukovich as the legitimate President of Ukraine. The opposition, which was largely pro-Western, took to the streets. This was the genesis of what came to be called the Orange Revolution. Ultimately, Yanukovich withdrew. The pro-Western Orange parties came to power under a fellow named Victor Yushchenko, who is still the President today.

There's going to be another election in Ukraine in January. The dynamic is not quite as bad this time, in part, I think, one, because Yushchenko is very unpopular and even though he is running for reelection, his chances of being reelected, I think, are very, very low.

Secondly, because the Russians have been a little bit more restrained in terms of their intervention with the parties; their direct intervention in the electioneering. They're not backing a particular candidate this time. Both Yanukovich and the current Prime Minister, Yulia Tymoshenko, have some connections with Russia, and I think the Russians are willing to work with either of them should they come to power, and I think they're trying to, to the degree possible, maintain a hands-off posture for the election itself.

Now, they can do that because it seems very unlikely that Yushchenko is going to be reelected. Were he somehow, or some other pro-Western candidate, suddenly to appear who looked like he really would have the ability to win the election, it might be a different story.

That said, the Russians haven't entirely refrained from intervention in the internal politics of Ukraine. It's kind of outside the direct conduct of the elections, but they're still kind of meddling around with the question of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea, which has been a major bone of contention between Yushchenko, the Yushchenko government, and the Russians.

On the status of language, which Yushchenko has tried to introduce Ukrainian as the single national language and sort of push out Russian. And so it's very much, it's a very polarizing debate.

And the issue of Crimea is particularly dangerous because one, about 60 percent of the population is ethnically Russian, and secondly, because the Black Sea Fleet is based at Sebastopol in the Crimea, at least it is until 2017, when the lease expires.

And so, there have been reports of the Russians doing things similar to what they did in Georgia a little more than a year ago, about giving up passports to thereby make their ethnic Russians of Crimea citizens de facto of Russia and, therefore, giving Moscow an excuse to intervene should they choose to do so.

On the part of the United States, I think we also took a bit of a lesson from what happened in 2004 and afterwards. The involvement of U.S.-based NGOs was very controversial in the Ukrainian election and some of the other elections in the former Soviet Union.

Groups like IRI, International Republican Institute, and NDI, National Democratic Institute, are nonpartisan. They don't go into these countries supporting a particular candidate or a particular party. They work to promote transparent elections and to help with party building and to sort of help train people in the conduct of democratic elections.

The problem is that in countries like Ukraine, the parties that go in for that sort of thing tend to be pro-Western. And the pro-Russian parties are still a little bit behind the curve when it comes to kind of modern electioneering, and so what it looks like to somebody looking at this from the Kremlin or somebody with a kind of conspiratorial eye in a country like Ukraine is that the assistance of foreign NGOs is going towards anti-Russian parties only, because they are the ones who are taking advantage of these opportunities.

And so I think we're trying to be more cautious this time around as well. I think both sides recognize the stakes involved.

Ukraine is very fragile. Its economy is in very bad shape. They had the dispute over energy supplies with Russia this past January as well as a couple of other times in the past. There's fear that there could be another dispute over energy supplies this January, right before the election.

Some have raised the specter of civil war in Ukraine between the Russian speakers and the Ukrainian speakers. I think that's a little bit farfetched, but I think the potential for certain kinds of civil disorder, especially in areas like the Crimea, is very real.

And so it is a flashpoint, and I think that's one of the areas where this idea of thinking about a broader cooperative security relationship is very important. Thinking about how to make relations between Russia and the Western powers in the former Soviet Union less an object of contention, I think, is one of the major priorities, moving ahead.

Question: [Inaudible] about the Russian military strategy [inaudible]?

Dr. Mankoff: Yeah. Honestly, I don't know a lot about that, so I don't want to say something that's not true.

Obviously, the Russians are interested in asserting their influence over Arctic territories. They planted a flag on the bed of the sea at the North Pole a couple of years ago.

To a large extent, I think this has to do with resources. Some of the largest oil and gas fields that have been identified are offshore in the Arctic Circle north of Russia, and they're still struggling with the technological challenges of exploiting those. But they want to be sure that when they are able to do so, that their claim to sovereignty over it is not contested.

In terms of the Baltics, I don't think I can really say anything to that, unfortunately.

Question: If you were a U.S. policymaker, what steps or behaviors on the part of Russia [inaudible]?

Dr. Mankoff: [Laughter].

Question: [Inaudible] they don't feel trusted, they don't feel respected. Upon what basis would we give them that trust, that respect?

Dr. Mankoff: Yeah. You know, I always go back to President Reagan's formulation of trust but verify.

And in terms of specific areas where I think we could look for behaviors that would lead us to be a little bit more trusting, in terms of a policy towards Georgia, for example --

Question: Not invading --

Dr. Mankoff: Well, that would be a good one, but yeah, even, you know, taking a step down from invading, following through on agreements on withdrawal of Russian forces from Georgian territory; allowing, opening cross-border trade with Georgia; just sort of working to turn the temperature down in that relationship. And I think the Russians have been resistant to doing that so far. I think that would be one really sort of bellwether area that we could look at.

Some others, I mean, you know, Afghanistan and Central Asia, I think, is another one. You know, the Russians have been largely helpful in this area, but they've also been putting pressure on the Central Asian countries to limit the ability of the United States to move equipment through them. There was the whole spat over the status of the air base in Kyrgyzstan earlier this year.

Again, it's not that the Russians don't want us to succeed in Afghanistan; I think that it's that they want us to succeed on their terms. But, I think, getting to a point where we feel like what we're trying to do in terms of operating in and through Central Asia is not being hindered by Russian resistance, I think would be another way.

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